Chapter 4

The elevator door opens and I step in and push the main floor button as I hear footsteps running towards me. The elevator door starts closing when a hand grabs it and it slides back open.

Cranston grins at me as he slips in.

I sigh.

“Cranston, I haven’t seen you in years, now you are everywhere, and about to everywhere for five years. I need a little alone time now.”

He laughs. “I just wanted a ride to the main floor. I have a date, gotta get them in before the big day.”

I roll my eyes.

“What about you? Going out tonight? You’ll only technically be single for another month.”

“No, I’m staying in.”

“Alone?”

“Yes.”

He looks thoughtful for a second.

“Do you have cats? Or any pets?”

I can’t help a laugh at the random question. “No! I’m not some crazy cat lady. I don’t have time for pets. I’m at work too often.”

He nods, his hands in his pockets as he leans against the elevator wall.

“Why don’t you come out with me tonight?”

I give a short laugh. “On your date? No thanks.”

“Well, it’s more of a meet up with some friends.” His eyes roam downwards, taking in my outfit.

“You could wear what you have on now, just lose the suit jacket. Lots of people go out in their work outfits.”

I shake my head. “Does anyone you hang out with have a real job?”

He puts his hands up to his heart in mock hurt.

“Ouch!” He grins. “Yes, they do.”

I smile and roll my eyes, looking straight into the elevator door as we come to a stop and the door opens.

Cranston pushes off the wall and follows me out of the elevator.

“Come on, come out with me. It’ll be good for us, we can catch up, get to know our future spouses a little more.”

My stomach does the now familiar flip at the thought of getting married.

“I have a bottle of wine waiting for me at home.”

Cranston wraps an arm around my shoulders and waves his other one in front of us. “I’ll buy you ten bottles of wine when we go out.”

“That’s exactly what I’m afraid of.”

“What do you mean?”

I sigh and stop outside our building, immediately getting bumped by some guy walking quickly down the sidewalk.

Cranston steps back against the building wall and pulls me closer to him and away from the crowd.

“It just seems like when you come around, I make poor decisions that I wouldn’t normally make.”

He tilts his head at me, his brow furrowed. “Like today?”

“Yes! Yes, today! And Hawaii, remember?”

“Hawaii?” He looks confused for a second and then his brow clears. “Oooh, you mean where we hooked up at the party.”

“What! No! We never hooked up!” I punch him in the arm, then try not to show how much it hurt my fist.

He grins at me and lifts his biceps to flex and give it a kiss.

Oh god. This is who I will call my husband in a month?

“Well, that’s a shame, I was hoping we had hooked up that night, it was totally my intention.”

I gape at him.

“Cranston!”

“What?” He lifts his hands up. “You were hot, legal…you seemed like you were getting drunk so you could work up the courage to get it on.” He moves his hips in a circle at the last few words.

I roll my eyes and turn around, taking three steps before he catches up to me.

“Sorry! Just being honest.”

I throw a hand up. “I’m going home.”

“I’ll come with you, where do you live?”

What? I glance over at Cranston. He’s looking ahead at the pedestrian light.

“Cranston, you have plans, go do them. I have a plan to be alone.”

He grabs my waist at the light to keep me from crossing. I look up and see the red hand.

“Plans can change.”

I weigh my options. Either I take Cranston home with me and have to deal with him alone all night, or I go out with him and duck out early while he flirts with some random girl.

“Okay, I’ll go out with you to your meet up tonight.”

Cranston looks down at me in surprise as he pushes against my back so we can cross the walkway.

“Really?”

“Sure.” I shrug.

He grins. “Great!” He looks around him. “Are you close? We can swing by your place before going to mine so I can change.”

“Why don’t you go home and I’ll meet you there?”

He looks suspiciously at me, then turns and throws his hand out, a taxi immediately pulling over.

Huh. Impressive taxi skills.

“Actually, you already look great, so we can just go to my place first and then out.” He starts leading me into the taxi.

“Oh! But…”

It’s no use. I’m in the back of the taxi. I usually avoid taxis unless I’m in a huge rush. I live only a block from the office in a small flat, so I always walk. If I have a longer drive, I use my dad’s driver. But, I really don’t go out often, I even have my food delivered.

Cranston tells the taxi where to go, only four blocks away.

I decide to check my emails so I pull out my phone.

I have about thirty missed calls from Erica, fifty texts, and hundreds of emails.

Crap.

I send off a text to Erica to let her know that I am fine and left after having emergency work conferences with my dad.

Part of our contract was that the contract stayed quiet, with everyone signing non-disclosure agreements. We all easily agreed on that.

“Damn. That’s a lot of missed messages.” Cranston is looking over my shoulder.

“Hey! Privacy!” I bring my phone up to my chest.

Cranston holds his hands up in mock surrender. “Sorry.” He looks out the window and I look at his handsome profile. He really is incredibly good looking.

I look down at his large hands and a thought pops into my head.

“Hey, don’t you have any texts to send? Emails?”

He shrugs his shoulders. “Nah. It’s after 5:00, I don’t work past 5. I’ve already made plans to meet up later, so no need to be on my phone.”

I stare at him. I can’t comprehend anything he just said. I can’t imagine just staring out the window when there are unanswered emails, which there always are unanswered emails.

“Wait, did you say work? Do you actually work?”

He gives me another of his grins. “Actually, yes, I do. I just don’t do it from the office much, and I never tried to move up to management.”

I have to admit, I’m shocked. I’ve never seen him in the building or even heard anyone mention him, except when they would see him in a tabloid.

“What do you do?”

He shrugs his shoulders. “I dab a little in marketing.”

I mouth dab a little in marketing to myself. What does that mean? How do you ‘dab’?

“Oh, here we are!” Cranston reaches into his pocket and hands the taxi driver some money as he opens the door and extends his hand to help me out.

I know this building. It was renovated about five years ago into super upscale, modern condos. It’s also notorious for being a bachelor’s pad.

Of course.

I follow him in the building where a doorman smiles and greets us.

We go past all the elevators to a locked one where Cranston pulls a key from his wallet to swipe it and the door opens.

Of course. Penthouse.

The Whittingtons love their penthouses.

He places his hand on my lower back and gently pushes me into the elevator and pushes the ‘P’ button, before leaning back against the elevator wall and looking at me.

I’m really out of my element here. I never go out. I never hang around guys unless it’s an office setting.

I mean, I haven’t even went on a date in over a year…since my dad put me in charge of the entire marketing and sales departments. I just never had time, it wasn’t a priority.

Never went on a date for over a year, yet here I am getting married in just a month.

I let out a small snort of laughter.

Cranston raises his eyebrow.

“What’s so funny?”

“Nothing.” My face flames.

“Oh, come on. Don’t keep secrets from your husband.” My stomach does a swoop. Husband.

I shake my head.

“Come on. Let’s not be distant, even if we are just a contractual marriage, let’s be open with each other, let’s be friends. No secrets.”

He smiles at me and taps my forearm.

I shake my head with a smile. “Fine. I was just thinking that I haven’t been on a date in over a year, but I’m getting married in just a month.”

Cranston’s eyes go huge. “Whaaat? You haven’t went on a date in over a year?”

“Don’t make a thing out of it.” I roll my eyes.

His eyes wide, he gives me another up and down look. “Why in the hell haven’t you went on a date? It obviously wasn’t because guys didn’t ask you.”

“Well, I-I was busy.” I shrug my shoulder. “Let’s not talk about it.”

He doesn’t look away from me. “What about s*x?”

I gasp in surprise and turn to shove his arm. “Stop!”

“Seriously? Do you just have booty calls since you don’t have dates? How do you find them? Can I get on the rotation.” He grins at me.

“Oh my god! I knew I shouldn’t have said anything.” I roll my eyes and laugh. “I’m never telling you anything again.”

“Ok, ok, fine. I want you to tell me stuff, so I’ll stop.” He moves to stand by me as the glowing buttons get closer to the ‘P’ one.

I feel him glance at me.

“Do you just use toys?”

“Cranston!” I shove him into the elevator wall as the door slides open with a ping.

I laugh as I step out of the elevator door, my mouth falling open.

Wow. It’s gorgeous. All white modern minimalistic furniture and décor with pale wood flooring and big windows everywhere that showcase an amazing view of the city’s skyline.

It’s spacious too. Way more space than he needs.

“Make yourself at home. There’s wine in the kitchen, help yourself. I’m going to hop in the shower. Feel free to look around.” He smiles at me and heads down the hall to the right.

I make my way slowly through the open living space to the huge kitchen with tons of white cabinets and white marble counter tops.

I run my hand across the smooth surface of the huge kitchen island.

I love this apartment. It’s exactly like what I wanted, but it would have been out of my price range, as I wanted to buy the apartment off of my salary two years ago, not with my trust fund or with my dad’s help. I wanted to be independent.

It’s really clean. He must have a maid. I think of my own messy apartment and I’m thankful I didn’t have him come over to see it.

I spot the wine fridge, and scan the bottles until I find my absolute favorite bottle of pinot grigio. I search a few cabinets before I find a glass, and spend even longer looking for the wine opener. Nothing is left on the countertops, everything seems to have a designated place hidden away in a cabinet or pantry.

I pour myself a generous glass and walk around the apartment, admiring the view. I make my way slowly down the hallway, looking at the cool paintings on the wall of metallic looking ocean waves.

I reach an open door and I peek into what looks like an office. One big wooden desk sits in the corner where you can have a view. A closed laptop sits on it. Behind the desk is a big built in bookcase, filled with books and framed photos, which I go closer to look at.

There’s a picture of a young Cranston standing in-between his mom and dad in front of a huge yacht.

That's the yacht he was talking about today! Wow, that was a long time ago. That must have been one of the last vacations we ever went on together. I think I must have been around eight or nine. I smile as I remember my favorite part was when we went to Paris afterwards and I was so excited to order for everyone in French, my mom beaming at me across the table while my dad clapped.

I move down the shelf to look at another picture frame. This one is an older Cranston, wearing his graduation cap and gown, with his arm around his mom. I smile. I always like Cranston's mom, she was always nice to me, almost like a second mom, at least until she moved away after the divorce.

I take a sip of the wine and look further, laughing at the next picture.

I can't believe it. It's a picture of Cranston, his dad, my dad, and me in a private jet. I must be six years old. Cranston and I are making silly faces, bottles of sparking waters and candy in our hands, our dads are clinking champagne glasses.

Our first company private jet. They were so excited, they brought us along and we raided the mini fridge and watched tv.

I wonder why he framed this photo?

"Hey, that was a fun trip, remember it?" I smile as I turn to answer before stopping, my mouth hanging open.

Cranston is wearing jeans without a shirt on, a towel in his hand that he is using to dry his hair.

I close my mouth as I stare at his sexy abs and wide, buff shoulders. He might have been joking around when he kissed his bicep earlier, but they really are strong, the lean muscle type, not the overly bulky.

He waves a hand over his broad chest. "Like what you see?"

I swallow and look back at the photo. "I remember this. The first company jet."

He walks up behind me and I smell his body wash. He smells amazing, especially compared to his party boy smell earlier today.

He reaches a long muscular arm around me and tilts the photo towards us.

"Remember, they took us to Disney world."

'Oh yeah! I forgot."

He pulls his arm back but wraps his hand around my upper arm as we look at the photo.

"That was the only time I remember my dad not stepping away for a call or leaving early. He just, hung out with me all day. It was pretty cool. Unexpected too."

I nod. That's pretty sweet.

I take a sip of my wine and bring the glass back in front of me when Cranston lifts it from my hands and sniffs it before taking a sip.

"Oh, this is my favorite! Nice pick, Bree." He hands it back to me and turns to walk out of the room. I watch his sexy back as he goes.

I'm suddenly very aware that I haven't had s*x in over a year. I bite my lip for a moment and then shake my head.

Cranston calls from the other room as I make my way back to the living area.

"Pour me a glass, will you?"

I pour him a glass, topping mine off a little more, and pull my phone out.

More texts from Erica.

E: Where did you go? I went to drop some files for you to sign at your flat and you weren't there?

E: Bree?

E: Bree, I'm getting worried about you!

Oh jeez. How sad is it that my assistant is worried because I left work and I'm not at home, because that's the only place I could ever possibly be except the office.

I already feel the wine, probably because I haven't drank this much in a long time, usually maxing out at 2 glasses a day, maybe three if I work late from home.

I'm currently on my fourth glass.

B: I decided to go out tonight.

My phone pings with an instant reply.

E: What? It's a Thursday night.

B: Yes. I just needed to go out, stressful day.

E: !!!!

E: OMG! Good for you!

I laugh.

"What's so funny?" Cranston comes into the room with a fitted gray tee, and I'm just slightly disappointed that he put a shirt on.

"My assistant. I gave her the shock of the year by telling her I'm going out tonight." I hand Cranston his glass.

He raises his eyebrows at me as he takes a sip.

"Sounds like you definitely need to get out more. And you definitely need to have s*x more."

I nearly spit out the wine I just drank and ogle at him.

“Cranston, you can’t say stuff like that!”

He grins.

“I say it how I see it.”

“And you are saying that you can ‘see’ that I need more s*x?”

“Oh yeah.” His eyes are wide in a hell yeah look.

I scrunch my nose.

“Again, happy to help you out with that.” I roll my eyes as I take another sip and throw my hand out to slap him. The back of my hand hits his lower abs, dangerously close to his private area.

“Woa now, I can’t help you out if I have damaged goods.” He makes a face as he covers the front of his pants with his hand.

I laugh and drain my glass.

“Ready to go?” He drains his glass and sits it next to mine.

I nod as I take off my suit jacket. He c***s an eyebrow at me.

“Oh, you’re ready to go.” He grins and grabs my waist.

“Cranston! I just don’t want to take my suit jacket, don’t be ridiculous.” I go to step back, but my heel turns, and I start to go down. Cranston pulls me close against his hard chest and I instinctively wrap my arms around his waist.

“Sure you don’t want to stay in?” Cranston’s eyes burn into mine as his hand moves to the back of my neck, massaging it gently.

I gulp and nod, forcing myself to unwrap my arms from around him, feeling my face burn.

He grins at me, “Okay then, let’s go.”