

The Ruined Bride of Velvet Nights by Brick Moving Ant

Chapter 38

• Chapter 5

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- Our team had won gold at the competition, which meant automatic acceptance to
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- Stanford—basically a golden ticket.
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- Initially, I had declined the offer.
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- Because I wanted to attend UC Davis with Zephyr.
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- My mom and Zephyr’s mom had been best friends since college.
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- Zephyr and I grew up together—sandbox to high school, the whole cliché.
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- But after his parents’ nasty divorce, Zephyr’s grades tanked.
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- He completely checked out of school, becoming the textbook rebellious rich kid.
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- He fell in with guys who were already dealing, started smoking, drinking, getting into fights—living
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- like there was no tomorrow.
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- He became the school’s resident bad boy with a capital B.
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- Yet girls still flocked to him, buying into that whole “damaged but desirable” fantasy.
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- I couldn’t stand watching him destroy himself.
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- I tried to reach him, understand him, drag him back from the edge.
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- I used my status as his desk mate and class rep to force tutoring sessions on him.
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- I played the childhood friend card to chase away his sketchy friends, practically frog-marching him home with me instead.
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- I monitored him, pursued him, convinced I could be his salvation.
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- Behind my back, everyone talked:
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- Phoebe Johnson isn’t even Zephyr’s girlfriend, she’s just obsessed with him.
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- Phoebe’s nothing but a desperate slut, following Zephyr round the pigry.
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- Phoebe’s just a pair of tits with legs, throwing herved at guys, Bourne Zegy set food for scad
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- I pretended none of it got to me.
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- Until I heard Zephyr saying worse things himself.
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- All my devotion and persistence suddenly felt like the world’s sickest ja
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- As thrilled as I’d been when Zephyr kissed me in the dark,
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- I was equally destroyed hearing those words.
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- I still can’t stop myself from remembering that deep, wet kiss in the darkness.
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- That rush of desire stealing my breath, branded into my memory.
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- That was my first kiss.
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- My first time being touched like that by anyone.
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- But looking at those scraps of fabric on the floor that barely qualified as clothing
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- Replaying everything that happened today,
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- The humiliation and shame came crashing back
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- Tears fell.
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- I slapped myself hard across the face.
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- Get it fucking together, Phoebe!
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- No more fantasies.
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- No more obsessing over him!
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- I threw those things violently into the trash.
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Just like I was throwing away that pathetic, humiliated serton of myself.

I soaked in the shower until the hot water ran out, scrubbing mowry lack of my dis

Trying to erase every ghost of his touch from my body.

I didn’t sleep at all, and by morning I was burning up with fever.

I had to take another half day off.

I dragged myself to school in the afternoon, dizzy and disoriented, to submit my application for Stanford’s early admission program.

Just as I left the teacher’s office, someone grabbed my wrist and yanked me into a confined space.

Zephyr’s stupidly handsome face loomed inches from mine, his messed-up hair framing those eyes, the smell of cigarettes clinging to his clothes.

He wasn’t smiling. His grip on my hand was painfully tight as he backed me against the wall

“What the actual fuck, Phoebe? You suddenly too good for me now?”

“Ghosting my calls, leaving me on read, you trying to make me look like some desperate loser?”

“Where’d you disappear to that night? Why weren’t you wearing my little present, huh? Not shurry enough for you?”

His eyes narrowed, his tone mockingly casual but dripping with menace.

When I finally registered where we were, I snapped fully awake.

He had dragged me into a stall in the boys’ bathroom!

I trembled with rage, bile rising in my throat.