

The Ruined Bride of Velvet Nights by Brick Moving Ant

Chapter 64

- Chapter 10
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- Chapter 10
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- Perhaps it was because he first shared his family stories so openly that I found it easier to speak.
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- Hesitating, I said,
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- "My mom passed away, and my dad, like yours, cut ties with me."
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- That year, at my mom's funeral, a sea of people came, all dressed in black.
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- The master of ceremonies gave a long eulogy, but I couldn't fully understand it. My mind wandered midway.
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- I remember looking at my mom's photo, where she seemed to smile at me, and I smiled back.
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- The next second, I was slapped to the ground by my father.
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- He roared, "Your mom's dead! How can you still smile?"
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- Everyone turned to look at me as if I were some kind of monster.
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- In that moment, I was terrified.
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- Tears welled in my eyes, but I bit my lips and didn't dare make a sound.
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- In the first year after my mom's passing, my dad often sat in the living room at night, flipping through her letters and photos.
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- By the second year, he had packed her belongings into a few boxes and pushed them into a dusty corner.
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- By the third year, he had remarried.
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- The new stepmom dumped the boxes into the yard, saying she wanted to burn them all.
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- I desperately rummaged through the pile and saved the camera, holding it tightly to my chest.
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- I burned myself in the process.
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- 09:23
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- Chapter 10
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- From then on, the camera became the only thing left of my mom.
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- Later, my younger sister was born.
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- The love and attention of the whole family shifted to her.
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- I grew up as if invisible, turning eighteen without anyone noticing.
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- I went to college to study medicine.
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- On the day of enrollment, my dad handed me a thick stack of money and said,
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- "You're an adult now. Don't come back."
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- I nodded and counted it—30,000 yuan.
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- 30,000 yuan severed the blood ties between us.
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- At university, my teachers and classmates praised me for being well-suited to be a doctor,
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- saying that I could stay calm no matter the situation.
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- When I started working, this became my professional strength.
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- Everyone admired my composure, but only I knew—I was too scared to stop.
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- Sometimes I wondered if, on the day of the funeral, I hadn't angered my dad,
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- would he still have abandoned me?
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- Over the years, I've grown used to suppressing my emotions,
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- believing that if I ever laughed freely again or shed tears recklessly,
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- I would lose something even more important.
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- At this point, I let out a small sigh.
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- These memories, buried in my heart for so long, had never been shared with anyone before.
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- 09:23
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- The Ruined Bride of Velvet Nights
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- 54.9%
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- Chapter 10
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- Joseph's brows furrowed deeply. The usual faint smile at the corners of his lips had disappeared.
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- His tone was unusually serious.
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- "Zoey, have you forgotten? You were only five years old at the time."
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- I froze, a little puzzled. "What?"
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- He said, "Crying and laughing are a child's privilege.
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- You've been suppressing yourself because no one ever let you be a child."
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- His voice was soft, but it struck me like a thunderbolt.
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- After the funeral, my dad stopped speaking to me for a long time.
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- Later, when my sister was born, my needs were always pushed aside.
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- At college, I had to juggle my studies and find ways to support myself.
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- Trying to recall, I realized there wasn't a single moment when I had been cared for as a child.
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- I knew I had no one to rely on, so I understood that my tears and laughter didn't matter to anyone.
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- It was better to bury them deep inside.
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- Lowering my head, I said bitterly,
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- "Yeah... but I'm an adult now. It's impossible to act like a child anymore.
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- To laugh when I want to laugh, or cry when I want to cry..."
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- Just as I finished speaking, a sudden jolt ran through my ribs, like a mild electric shock.
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- Startled, I let out a strange yelp and turned to look.
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- It was Joseph poking my side.
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- With a playful smile, he said, "Who says it's impossible?"
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- I tried to dodge, but he grabbed me.
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- 09:23
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- The Ruined Bride of Velvet Nights
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- Chapter 10
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- It was as if there was a switch on my waist—I couldn't stop laughing, no matter how hard I tried to keep my mouth shut.
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- I burst out like a deflating balloon.
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- "Stop! Don't poke me! It's so ticklish! Hahaha... I'm begging you!"
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- I struggled to escape but was cornered by him.
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- I laughed so hard that tears were streaming down my face.
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- "Mercy, Dr. Joseph! Let me go!" I pleaded.
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- He bared his teeth in a grin and reached out again.
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- I curled into a ball, bracing myself, but the expected sensation didn't come.
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- Peeking out cautiously, I saw him extend his hand with his palm open.
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- In it was a piece of candy.
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- Smiling, he said, "Here, a reward for the little one."
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- I stared at him, stunned, and then collapsed weakly against the wall.
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- Unwrapping the candy, I popped it into my mouth.
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- It wasn't good—cheap artificial fruit flavor, sickly sweet.
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- But it made my eyes sting, as if burning.
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- Joseph crouched down, pulled me up, and held me in his arms.
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- "Cry," he said softly. "It's okay, I know it hurts."
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- The warmth and strength of his embrace broke down the last of my defenses.
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- How long had it been since I felt understood, cherished?
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- So long that I had started to believe I didn't deserve it.
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- 09:23
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- The Ruined Bride of Velvet Nights.
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- 55.2%
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- Chapter 10
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- And yet, here in a foreign land on the other side of the world,
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- he used a piece of candy to comfort me, just like a child.
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- In that moment, the tears I had held back since I was five years old finally came pouring out, all at once, twenty years later.
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- He kept gently patting my back, letting his clothes soak up my tears.
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- At some point, I didn't even know when, I cried myself to sleep in his arms.
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- 09:23