# The Ruined Bride of Velvet Nights by Brick Moving Ant

Chapter 68

- Chapter 14
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- When I woke up, the faint scent of antiseptic lingered in the air.
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- I had been transferred to a hospital back home.
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- The doctor told me I had spent two full weeks in the ICU.
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- My internal organs were severely injured, and I had taken a bullet to the shoulder.
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- But by some stroke of luck,
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- my spleen wasn't ruptured, and the bullet hadn't caused an exit wound.
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- The blood loss wasn't severe, and that's how I managed to survive until the peacekeepers rescued
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- me.
- I knew clearly in my heart–it was because Joseph shielded me twice.
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- He saved my life.
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- I reached out to everyone I could, trying to find any trace of him.
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- But they all said the chaos at the time made it impossible to recover Joseph's body.
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- With casualties mounting, Doctors Without Borders had suspended its projects in North Kivu.
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- I had no chance to go back and look for him.
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- Just like that, Joseph vanished.
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- Every night, I woke up screaming, gripped by terror.
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- His dying moments replayed endlessly in my mind, refusing to fade.
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- The doctor diagnosed me with PTSD.
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- I began taking medication, attending therapy sessions, even resorting to alcohol.
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- But nothing worked.
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- Everyone urged me to try starting anew, to stop dwelling on the past.
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- But… how could I?
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- He died for me.
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- This thought became an unshakable shadow, always hanging over me.
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- It made me hate myself for still being alive, hate that it wasn't me who died,
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- and hate this world for not granting him a happy ending.
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- Countless times, I stood on the edge of a rooftop, wanting to follow him.
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- But every time, at the very last moment, I would pull myself back.
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- This life was one Joseph gave everything to save.
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- I no longer had the right to abandon it.
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- Six months later, I returned to work after my leave.
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- But I could no longer face cameras or photographs.
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- I ended up requesting a transfer to a behind–the–scenes role.
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- Time passed, day by day, yet I remained a walking corpse, lifeless and hollow.
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- My colleagues couldn't stand it anymore and encouraged me to meet new people,
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- even dragging me to a blind date.
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- I had no interest and only wanted to say a few polite words and leave.
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- But then I met Jackson.
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- The moment I saw that face–
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- a face identical to Joseph's–I froze.
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- 58.3%
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- It took every ounce of strength I had not to break down in tears right there.
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- Later, I found out he was the brother Joseph had once mentioned.
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- At first, treating him as a stand–in did bring me some comfort.
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- Those mundane, ordinary days were so wonderfully tempting.
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- When he worked late, I would cook dinner and wait for him to come home.
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- On our days off, we'd curl up on the couch and watch movies together.
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- On the nights when nightmares woke me in terror,
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- just seeing him lying quietly beside me would let me drift back into sleep.

These were the everyday moments Joseph and I could never have.

I lost myself in them, almost believing the lie I had created.

If I could spend the rest of my life this way, peacefully and quietly, wouldn't that be nice?

But dreams always end.

They were never the same person.

Joseph had promised to come home with me and visit my mom. How could he have given her

camera to someone else?

He had risked his life to protect me. How could he stand by while others humiliated me?

He said he found his purpose in me.

How could he ever see me as a weak, unworldly woman bound by family constraints?

I regretted it.

His body had not even been laid to rest, and I was already escaping reality,

living a self–deceiving life with his shadow.

09-21

The Ruined Bride of Velvet Nights

Chapter 14

How could I do this to him?

So I had to leave, even if I wasn't ready to face the truth.

But I had to find him.

I should have gone long ago.

I need to go back there myself and bring him home.

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