

# The Ruined Bride of Velvet Nights by Brick Moving Ant

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- While we talked. Mike slipped out, phone already pressed to his ear.
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- No doubt calling Carol to get her butt down here ASAP.
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- "Let's move quickly." 1 urged. "Time is critical with organ donation, right?"
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- The team started wheeling the bed toward the door.
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- "Stop!" Mike blocked the doorway, practically dripping sweat.
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- "Dr. Anderson, what are you doing?" the coordinator asked, baffled.
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- "Mike, move. Don't interfere with Dave's final wish," I snapped.
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- "He's not... I mean, you can't... Please, just wait," Mike sputtered, nearly blowing the whole charade.
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- "Dr. Anderson, step aside or I'll have to report this to the chief of surgery," the coordinator said
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- firmly.
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- "The family hasn't even had time to say goodbye," Mike pleaded.
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- "Organs first, goodbyes later. There are people dying while we stand here arguing."
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- "Get your hands off my son, you heartless witch!"
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- Carol burst through the door like a hurricane.
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- "How dare you try to carve him up before he's even cold!"
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- "Mom, this isn't butchery – it's organ donation," I explained, trying to keep my voice level.
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- "Who gave you the right?"
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- "I'm honoring Dave's wishes."
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- "Bullshit! My son would never agree to this. I absolutely refuse!"
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- Carol shoved past the transplant coordinator
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- "Get out! Nobody's touching my baby boy."
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- The coordinator left reluctantly, shooting me an apologetic look.
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- Mike sagged against the wall, finally able to breathe again
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- Dave was probably thanking his lucky stars on that bed, thinking he'd dodged a bullet
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- "My poor baby..."
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- Carol threw herself onto Dave's body with all the drama of a soap opera star.
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- "How will I go on without you?" Then she whirled on me, mascara running down her cheeks.
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- "This is all your fault, you gold-digging tramp! You worked him to death!"
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- She came at me with her French-manicured claws out.
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- I saw red.
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- In my previous life, it was Carol who'd rushed Dave's "body" to cremation.
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- She'd been in on the whole scam.
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- "Back off, Carol. You want to talk about who killed Dave? Look in the mirror!" I shoved her away.
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- She stumbled back, mouth hanging open. "How dare you! I would never hurt my son!"
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- "Oh really? Why do you think he was always hustling for more money? Because his mommy dearest has a gambling addiction and keeps maxing out credit cards at the Hard Rock Casino!"
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- "I only lost a couple hundred grand..."
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- "A couple hundred grand? Jesus Christ, Carol."
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- "Do you know what the median income is in this city?"
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- "Most people don't see that kind of money in five years."
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- "And let's not forget your little 'accident last month that cost us twenty grand in medical bills, Don't think I don't know what really happened."
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- "You weren't 'rear ended at the mall. You got caught fooling around with Susan's husband at the country club,"
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- "That's a lie!" Carol's face turned scarlet,
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- "Save it. I saw your ER report,"
- 
- "The whole club is talking about how you've been working your way through the married men's golf league,"
- 
- "If you're that lonely, join Match.com like a normal person instead of breaking up marriages."
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- "You shut your mouth!" Carol lunged for my throat.
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- 1 sidestepped and she slammed into the crash cart, knocking herself out cold.
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- "Carol!" I rushed to check on her, helping the nurses get her onto a nearby gurney.
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- Mike hovered anxiously nearby.
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- "Mike, help her! We need a nurse in here!" I ran into the hallway shouting.
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- While the medical team swarmed in, I grabbed Dave's personal effects bag and started wheeling him toward the service elevator.
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- Outside, the funeral home van was already waiting.
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- I slipped the driver five hundred bucks to take the fastest route to the crematorium.
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- Carol and Mike's calls started flooding my phone.
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- I hit "decline" on both.
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- In the back of the van, it was just me and Dave.
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- I dug through his clothes until I found his phone case. Inside was his lucky hundred-dollar bill – "for good fortune," he always said – and folded with it, the Mega Millions jackpot ticket.
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- One ticket, forty plays, worth two hundred million dollars.
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- With this kind of money, I could rewrite my whole future.
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- I pulled back the sheet and noticed Dave had wet himself.
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- The organ donation threat must have scared him senseless.
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- It confirmed he was still conscious, just paralyzed.
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- "Looking for the Mega Millions jackpot ticket, honey?"
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- "Wondering how I knew about it? Let's just say I've seen how this plays out before."
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- "In my last life, you and your high school sweetheart lived it up in your beachfront mansion while I
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- worked the pole to pay off your debts."
- 
- "I got HIV, and when I finally tracked you down, you ran me over like roadkill. What kind of monster does that?"
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- "You love playing dead so much?"
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- "Fine. This time we'll make it permanent."
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- "Once you're in that crematorium, you'll know what it feels like to really burn."
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- Dave's eyelids twitched.
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- "Scared? Having second thoughts? Too bad, baby."
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- "Today, you're going up in smoke for real."
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- Carol and Mike kept calling. I put my phone on airplane mode.
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- Thirty minutes later, we pulled up to Sunset Hills Cremation Center.
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- I thought we could get started right away, but there were six families ahead of us.
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- The receptionist told me it would be at least three hours before they could take him.
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- My stomach dropped. Carol and Mike had to be on their way by now.
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