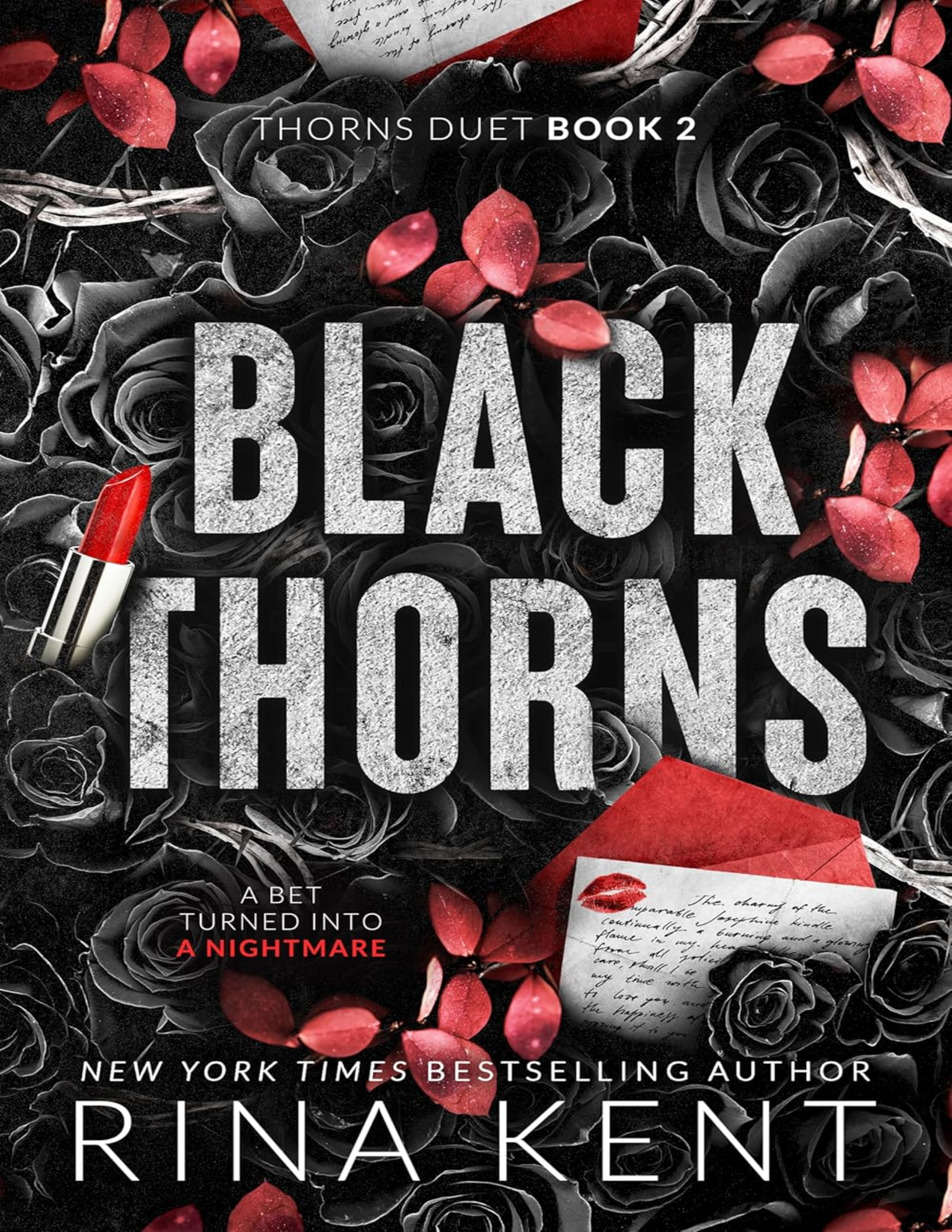




THORNS DUET **BOOK 2**

BLACK THORNS

A BET
TURNED INTO
A NIGHTMARE

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

RINA KENT

BLACK THORNS

THORNS DUET BOOK 2

RINA KENT

Black Thorns Copyright © 2021 by Rina Kent

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise without written permission from the publisher. It is illegal to copy this book, post it to a website, or distribute it by any other means without permission, except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.

This novel is entirely a work of fiction. The names, characters and incidents portrayed in it are the work of the author's imagination. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events or localities is entirely coincidental.

ALSO BY RINA KENT

ROYAL ELITE SERIES

Cruel King

Deviant King

Steel Princess

Twisted Kingdom

Black Knight

Vicious Prince

Ruthless Empire

Royal Elite Epilogue

EMPIRE SERIES

Empire of Desire

Empire of Sin

Empire of Hate

Empire of Lust

LIES & TRUTHS DUET

All The Lies

All The Truths

THORNS DUET

Yellow Thorns (Free Prequel)

Red Thorns

Black Thorns

KINGDOM DUET

Rule of a Kingdom (Free Prequel)

Reign of a King

Rise of a Queen

THRONE DUET

Throne of Power

Throne of Vengeance

DECEPTION TRILOGY

Dark Deception (Free Prequel)

Vow of Deception

Tempted by Deception

Consumed by Deception

HATE & LOVE DUET

He Hates Me

He Hates Me Not

To a deep, raw love that follows no rules.

AUTHOR NOTE

Hello reader friend,

If you haven't read my books before, you might not know this, but I write darker stories that can be upsetting and disturbing. My books and main characters aren't for the faint of heart.

This book contains themes of consensual non-consensual. I trust you know your triggers before you proceed.

Black Thorns is the second book of a duet and is not standalone.

Thorns Duet:

#0 [Yellow Thorns](#) (Free Prequel)

#1 [Red Thorns](#)

#2 [Black Thorns](#)

Sign up to Rina Kent's [Newsletter](#) for news about future releases and an exclusive gift.

BLURB

A lie turned into a nightmare.

She broke my heart.

Broke me.

Broke us.

Only one thing could mend the gaping wound she left behind.

Her.

Naomi.

All mine for the taking.

All mine for owning.

All mine.

PLAYLIST

You Broke Me First – Conor Maynard
The Man Who Can't Be Moved – The Script
Still Loving You – Scorpions
Stuck – Villain of the Story
Decay – Villain of the Story
Someone You Loved – Our Last Night
Falling Apart – Michael Schulte
Into The Fire – Asking Alexandria
Bones – Galantis & OneRepublic
Let Me Be Sad – I Prevail
The Dark of You – Breaking Benjamin
Scary Love – The Neighbourhood
Up in the Air – Thirty Seconds to Mars
Bright Lights – Thirty Seconds to Mars
Why Did You Run? – Judah & the Lion
Fake Smile – Thousand Below

You can find the complete playlist on [Spotify](#).

PROLOGUE - SEBASTIAN

he weak are meat. The strong eat.

Mom bought a painting with that proverb inked in bold Kanji characters.

I don't think she really understands what those words mean. She probably thought it was pretty and fit our house's decor and decided to buy it.

T Mommy is that way. She likes things super-fast, then hates them just as fast. And she's not very good at Japanese, but Daddy doesn't like me to say that in front of her.

He's a superhero, my daddy, and superheroes don't like to make other people feel bad.

But like all superheroes, he's busy all the time. Mommy and Daddy work hard so I can eat and study with my friends.

Although I don't really have friends. They call me 'Blondie' in a weird English accent because I have light hair and green eyes like a 'freak.'

I asked Daddy why I don't have Asian eyes and black hair like everyone else, and he told me it's because I'm American, not Japanese. But I was born in Tokyo and that still doesn't make me Asian?

That's stupid. I should look like them so no one will make fun of me.

Or ignore me.

Mommy says that when they have money, they'll transfer me to an international school where there are foreigners like me. But I just want to have fun with everyone in my class.

They look at me funny when Mommy arrives to pick me up in the middle of the day.

I usually go home last. Today, I'm leaving early.

My pretty teacher, Satomi *Sensei*, takes my small hand in hers. She has short hair and a soft smile like the angels from my bedtime stories.

Sensei guides me to the door and everyone murmurs about the 'Blondie' who's ditching.

I'm not ditching.

"Everyone stay quiet, now." *Sensei* stares over her shoulder at them and speaks in Japanese. "Sebastian-kun is meeting his mother. Okay?"

"Okay!" they echo.

"Don't worry about them." She smiles at me.

"Okay," I murmur in Japanese and stare at my feet.

Because I speak both English and Japanese, sometimes it takes longer to figure out what I should be saying, so I just stay silent.

Sensei guides me through the door of the classroom, where my mom is pacing the hallway.

"Is everything all right, Mrs. Weaver?" *Sensei* asks her.

Mommy stops pacing and smiles. "Everything is great. We just miss Sebastian so much and want to have lunch together."

Her golden blonde hair falls down her back and always gets everyone's attention whenever we're in public. That and her name, Julia.

She pulls me from *Sensei's* side and wraps her clammy hand around mine.

I don't get to wave as we hurry down the corridor. Her heels make so much noise in the empty hallway of the school. She bows in greeting at the principal and one of the teachers and I do so as well.

As soon as we're out of view, her smile drops and her lower lip trembles. She looks like the characters in anime before they cry. Like Gon from *Hunter*

X Hunter when he couldn't find his father.

"I still have class, Mommy," I say in English.

She doesn't like me to talk in Japanese at home, even though Daddy is fine with it.

"Not today, sweetie." She ruffles my hair, but it's stiff and hurts.

"But *Sensei* doesn't like us to be absent."

"She'll forgive you this time." She ushers me to the back seat of our car.

My eyes light up when I see who's in the driver's seat. "Daddy!"

"Hey, champ." He turns around and grins at me.

My daddy, Nicholas Weaver, is my best friend. When I told him that I don't have friends at school, he said he'd be my temporary best buddy until I find others. But he'll always hold the number one spot.

He reaches a fist in my direction and I throw my yellow bag to the side so I can bump it, giggling as Mom fusses with my seatbelt.

It's then I notice that there's something beside me.

A painting.

The painting with the bold Kanji letters on it that should be in our living room.

I tilt my head to the side and read it again, out loud, in Japanese, "The... weak...a-are...meat. The s-strong...eat."

"Good boy!" Daddy exclaims from the front seat. "Your Kanji is getting better, Bastian."

"I'm second in my class!"

"That's my boy." He grins, but it's strained, just like how Mommy patted my head earlier.

After making sure I'm strapped securely in my seat, she gets in the front and Daddy drives away from my school.

"Why is the painting here?" I frown.

"It's a family legacy, Bastian." Mom watches the side-view mirror, seeming distracted. "It needed to come with us."

"But it shouldn't be in the car."

"It'll be where we want it. Okay, sweetie?"

“Okay. Where are we going?”

“Somewhere new.” Dad smiles at me through the rearview mirror.

“But I don’t want somewhere new. I want to be with *Sensei*.”

“Stop being a brat, Sebastian!” Mom snaps in an impatient tone.

“I’m not a brat.” I pout.

“No, you’re not.” Daddy gives her a look, then grins at me. “You’re our good boy.”

“But Mommy called me a brat.”

“She doesn’t mean it. Right, Julia?”

Mom sighs, then turns around and gives me an open juice box. “You’re not, sweetie. I’m sorry.”

“That’s okay, Mommy.” I snatch the bottle of juice and slurp while swinging my legs, bumping against Mommy’s seat.

“You’ll have friends in the place we’ll go to, champ.”

I nearly choke on my juice as my eyes bug out. When I speak, I draw the word out, “Really?”

“Really. We’ll all start anew. What do you think?”

“Okay!” I bounce in my seat, rocking back and forth.

Mom puts on anime soundtracks and I sing along with them while I drink from my juice.

Sometimes, Daddy sings with me and I giggle because his Japanese is so funny. Mom’s, too. I think it’s because they’re from America and learned Japanese when they were older, unlike me.

I don’t know America. Daddy said I don’t need to, because we’re never going there.

We drive for a long time, passing many people and tall buildings that look like ghosts. After a while, I’m tired of singing.

I think I fall asleep, because when I wake up, Daddy and Mommy are talking quietly, like they usually do when they don’t want me to know ‘adult’ stuff.

But I’m not so little anymore. I’m a big boy and I wanna know grownup stuff, too.

So I peek through my half-closed eyes and pretend I'm still asleep.

Mom is turned in her seat and faces Daddy while he focuses on the road. Beads of sweat cover her forehead and the hairline of her bright-like-the-sun locks. If she gets sweat on her hair, she'll probably tell us she's having a 'bad hair day' later.

Her shaky fingers run through her strands over and over again. "Maybe you should call your father, Nick."

Daddy tightens his hold on the steering wheel. "I'm dead to my parents. I can't just call them."

"But this is a life or death situation. Surely, they'll help their firstborn."

"You were there when they said they'd only attend my funeral. I wouldn't be surprised if they had a hand in quickening the process."

"They wouldn't do that! You're their son."

"A son who not only refused to inherit his father's political legacy but also married a commoner who doesn't fit the Weaver image. Believe me, I'm no longer their son."

Tears shine in Mom's eyes. "So it's my fault?"

"No." Daddy takes her hand and places a kiss on the back of it while still focusing on the road. "I would choose you over all the socialites Mom arranged for me to date a hundred times over if I had to. What we have is real and I'm lucky to have you."

She snuffles. "I'm lucky to have you, too, Nick. I don't know how I would've gotten through this mess without you."

"We'll be okay."

"No one steals from them and gets away with it," she whimpers. "They'll hunt us down and hurt Sebastian... What if they take away our baby and... and..."

"Hey...we're here. No one will hurt him or us."

"But what if they do? I wish I'd never done it."

"It's useless to think about things that can't be changed, hon."

"I...I don't know what the hell was wrong with me when I decided to take it... I just...just wanted to help pay off our debt. We were working so hard to

make ends meet and...Sebastian needs to be in an international school, and... I stupidly thought one item in the midst of twenty others wouldn't be discovered."

Daddy grabs her hand tighter. "We'll be fine. We have each other and our boy. That's all that matters, right?"

"Right." She smiles a little through her tears and I want to smile, too. I love when Mommy is happy after she cries. It means she'll be better and spoil me and Daddy.

She leans over and kisses Daddy on the mouth. "I love you, Nick."

"Love you, too, Julia."

I'm about to open my eyes and say I love them, too, even if I didn't understand most of what they said.

It's okay if I don't have my beautiful teacher anymore. I can just get another one. All that matters is that I'll be with my parents and I'll also have friends.

But before I can say anything, a loud sound of screeching tires pierces through my ears, and the last thing I see is a large truck.

Crash!

There's impact, there's Mom's scream and Dad's curse, and then there's... nothing.

For a while at least. I'm thinking there's nothing.

But then our surroundings burst into my ears all at once and it hurts. There's a long buzz that I can't get rid of.

A mixture of sounds erupt all around me. Sirens. Shrieks. Strangers talking.

Whimpers. I think they're mine.

Mommy...?

Daddy...?

Where are you?

I want to search for them or at least hear their voices, but they're not among all the strangers talking. They're just not there.

Why can't I find them?

And why is everything black?

That's when I realize my eyes are closed, and when I attempt to open them, I can't. Even my body doesn't move.

All I can hear are voices, noises coming at me from all directions, and none of them are my parents.

I'm scared.

Mommy, Daddy. I'm scared.

I strain and my eyes flutter open a little, just a little. Someone is asking me in Japanese if I can hear them and someone else's shadow falls over me.

Another shadow reaches out a black hand and takes the painting from beside me. I want to scream no, that it's ours. It's my mommy's.

But I can't speak. I can't move.

The last thing I see before the world goes black stays with me forever.

The weak are meat. The strong eat.