

THORNS DUET BOOK 1

RED THORNS

A BET
TURNED INTO
A DISASTER

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR
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To your deepest, darkest fantasies.

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 and child assault. I trust you know your

triggers before you proceed.

Red Thorns is the first book of a duet and is not standalone.

Thorns Duet:

#0 Yellow Thorns (Free Prequel)

[#1 Red Thorns](#)

#2 [Black Thorns](#)

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BLURB

A bet turned into a disaster.

Sebastian Weaver is the star quarterback and the college's heartthrob.

Rich. Handsome. Bastard.

Everyone's attention flocked toward him and all the girls dreamed to be with him.

Not me.

At least, not until he made a move on me.

See, I thought I was stronger than Sebastian's charms.

I thought I could survive being his target.

I thought wrong.

Little did I know that he will make my most twisted fantasies come true.

Fantasies I didn't know existed...

PLAYLIST

Infra-Red – Three Days Grace

Oh My My – Blue October

Paralyzed – LANDMVRKS

Can You Feel My Heart – Bring Me The Horizon

In the Dark – Bring Me The Horizon

I Don't Know What to Say – Bring Me The Horizon

Another Life – Motionless in White

Blank Space – I Prevail Learning to Survive – We Came As Romans

Breathe Into Me – Red

Is it Just Me? – Sasha Sloan & Charlie Puth

Auslander – Rammstein

Tattoo – Rammstein

Sehnsucht – Rammstein

Heartless – The Weekend

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

PROLOGUE

AKIRA

Dear Naomi,

I'm your new friend.

Or at least, I hope to be.

Teachers in school told me it's a good idea to have a pen pal to help improve my English. So I

thought, why not learn from someone who's living in the States, huh?

You must be wondering, why you? Good question.

I observed you once. Don't ask me where, because I want to keep that a secret.

But back then, I noticed two things about you.

One, you have a beautiful smile that reminds me of peach blossoms and falling snow. Don't make

me choose between the two, because I dig both. So imagine my surprise when I found both of those

traits in something as simple as your smile.

Two, you're so real that if anyone attempted to get inside you, they'd probably drown from how

deep you are.

I volunteer to take a tour, though. If you'll let me.

Did that come off too strong? Forgive me. I tend to do that with people I'm eager to learn about.

And there aren't a lot, for your information.

You must be wondering, how the hell does this freak know my address? Which is another good

question, but I'd rather not answer that right now.

Not because I'm a stalker, though you probably think I am at this point, but because I'm not even

sure you'll see this, let alone reply.

Before I move on to the boring chore of introducing myself, let me tell you what compelled me to

write this letter.

And yes, I know I mentioned the teachers, but we both know that's an excuse to get your attention,

a lame one at that.

My real reason is: I want to get to know you.

The girl behind the rare smiles and the ‘fuck the world’ attitude. The girl who wears her black

hair short and her lips pink. The girl whose headphones seem to be her only friend (what do you

listen to, by the way?).

That might give me a few points on the creep meter, but I wanted to be honest with you. No

secrets and no lies.

I promise I’m not a dick—not for long, anyway. And I’m not some sort of an otaku as you’re

probably thinking right now. If you don’t know, otaku is a geek in English, or so I was told.

Now that all of that is out of the way, allow me to do the introductions.

clears throat

I’m Akira and I was born in Japan. Tokyo, to be exact.

In Kanji, Akira is written with the characters for ‘sun’ and ‘moon,’ so I’m sort of like the whole

package, having both sunlight and moonlight. Am I a catch or what?

I'm a senior in high school, so we're similar in age and you don't have to worry about old

geezers. Unless that's your thing. I'm not judging.

So now, the million-dollar question: Can you be my friend, Naomi?

Awkward silence.

More awkward silence.

Did that sound pathetic? Desperate?

Probably. At any rate, interpret it in your own way and let me know your reply.

If you don't want to, simply don't send back anything. I'll move on after a week or so.

But if you do reply, I'll probably do a year's worth of victory dances.

Just don't get any ideas about what this is. I can only be your friend, Naomi.

If you go and fall in love with me, I'll have no choice but to disappear.

And that's just sad.

And unnecessary.

IMPATIENTLY WAITING,

Akira

NAOMI

THREE YEARS LATER

Everyone harbors a secret.

Some are mundane; others are downright twisted.

Apparently, my whole existence falls under the latter, because my mom is keeping it

hidden like it's some sort of national intelligence.

Or maybe it's international, considering where she came from.

I kick the pebbles in my way as I unhurriedly make my way to cheer practice.

Blackwood College is one gigantic building with an ancient feel to it. A few towers stand proudly at every corner as if they're the watchdogs of this place—or that's what I've thought ever since I

enrolled here.

Once again, courtesy of my dear mama, who hasn't only made sure I study in rich people's private

universities, but also that I play the part by cheering and being in the popular crowd.

Who even likes cheering in college? Certainly not me. I'd rather live my twenty-one-year-old life

listening to hard rock and having as little contact with humans as physically possible, thank you very

much.

I'm not an antisocial who thinks stepping over people is okay. I'm merely an asocial who likes to

leave them alone in hopes they'll do the same in return.

No luck thus far.

I stare up at the building whose walls I'm privileged to be within. A building that's as ancient as

this town, located on the outskirts of New York City. Old, corrupted money constructed what others

consider a place of elite education.

Well, maybe it is. Or maybe I'd appreciate it better if I didn't have to wear tight, tiny clothes that

reveal my belly and strain against my sports bra that I wear in a fruitless attempt to flatten my huge

breasts. 'Huge' per the cheer captain's words.

Why don't I just quit? Excellent question.

The answer is simple and boring—Mom.

As much as I have a love-hate relationship with the woman who gave birth to me, I haven't

forgotten how much she struggled raising me on her own all these years. When I was young and

depended on her, she worked several part-time jobs and barely slept to keep a roof over our heads.

So when she begged me to make an effort about being in the cheer squad, I couldn't shoot her down.

She just likes seeing me in the spotlight, I guess. She wants me to make it so we don't give the

racist pricks any chance to look down on us just because we're of Asian heritage.

That's the only reason I'm still part of this nightmare.

At least, I hope it is.

My footsteps are heavy at best as I shuffle through the entrance to the football field. Clear sky

extends for as far as I can see and the early fall's sun shines down on the terrain. Due to the great

weather, the captain and our coach decided we'd practice our routines outside.

There's some important home game at the end of this week between our football team, the Black

Devils—stupid name, considering the only thing devilish about them is their uniforms—and their

biggest rivals from New York.

The cheer squad is lined up near the sidelines because, surprise, we're not allowed to disturb

their majesties while they're practicing. It's already stupid that the squad exists for their benefit, but

they have the nerve to treat us like we're their whores.

Most cheerleaders either fuck or date the football players, or they look at them as if they're Jesus

in plural form.

Like me, all my female teammates are dressed in tiny black skirts that barely cover their asses and

white tops streaked with black lines. The males are wearing black pants and white T-shirts. Now, if I

were a man, I wouldn't have to put my body on display, but that would mean carrying the weight of all

those girls during our routines, so, on second thought, no thank you. I'd rather show my belly button

and kill my breasts with tight sports bras.

Can You Feel My Heart by Bring Me The Horizon is blasting in my ears one second, and the next,

it disappears when my headphones are plucked away. I'm about to stab someone when my attention

falls on none other than the captain of our squad.

Reina Ellis is tall, blonde, fit, and has deep blue eyes that she's currently judging me with. Oh,

and she comes from money—not new like Mom's, but very old and influential.

So she's basically the whole package, as indicated by her nickname, Queen Bee, and has the

personality to go with it.

She taps her foot on the ground while still holding my noise-canceling headphones—aka my

saving grace—out of reach. “You're late, Naomi.”

“No I'm not.”

She grabs my wrist that has a smart watch on it and shoves it in my face. “What time is that?”

“Fine. I'm ten minutes late. So what?”

“This is your final warning, Naomi. Be late again and I’m suspending you. Countless people wish

to be in your position, and if you don’t want it, there’s no need to keep it.”

As if I care. I want to say that but bottle it inside because of—drum rolls—my mother.

Making me part of this plastic bunch was such a low blow, Mom.

Maybe she’s taking revenge because of how much I pestered her with questions about my dad

while growing up.

Maybe I’ll have an emotional scar from the cheer squad and won’t be able to live my adult life

sketching mangas in a dark basement.

Or maybe I’ll find my father and live happily ever after. Though, it’s a long shot for that one.

“Are you waiting for an invitation?” Reina cocks her head to where the others are watching the

exchange with clear disdain—toward me, not their beloved captain.

I extend my palm. “My headphones.”

“After practice.”