

A Thorny Ride:

"A Thorny Ride" is a full-fledged fiction novel which has in all 15 chapters and 55000 words. I have reassembled few chapters of this book. I am enclosing the extracts of this story which may be able to narrate about the incident and happenings.

"A Thorny Ride" is a story of a sexual attack on a women and the trauma faced by them.

It is a story of a girl Rachel, who comes to India from Bangkok, Thailand with her parents. Her father gets a job in Mumbai, India. She is admitted to one of the pinnacle schools of Mumbai. She gets acquainted with one of the student named **Raj**, who is a son of an actor. Their friendship turns in to a love affair. During one of the parties, she was sexually assaulted and traumatized.

This story narrates about her trauma, sufferings and about how she lost her glooming love. This attack changed her entire life. She bravely brought those criminals to the book and got them punished with a help of her friend and a guide.

A Thorny Ride

1

On Friday evening Raj planned his party at one of the resorts. I did not know many of his college friends and it was an opportunity to know them. I told about the party to Venkat, my tutor and a best friend. I told him about the venue of the party.

I wore decent clothes, a full sleeved top, a scarf and a jean, with a little make up. Mom was happy to see me in simple and decent attire. I looked perfect with dilated look. It was a small resort not far from my place and was surrounded by green lush garden with swimming pool. It was a poolside party. Many of Raj's college friends were present. Tanya, who was Raj's childhood friend and a classmate, was the star attraction of the party. She really looked gorgeous and pretty. She studied in the same college and she knew all the guys in that party. We were all dancing to the music. Many boys and girls were boozing. Even Raj had drinks. I made sure, not touch beer or wine.

I was dancing with Raj and was engrossed so much that I did not realize when Tanya came between us and when Raj had started dancing with her. I watched them dancing together and

moving away and wondered where they had gone?

I kept asking about Raj and Tanya to everyone. Nobody was aware of their whereabouts. I decided to look for them. I left the dance floor and started looking for them. I searched them in the eating arena and in washrooms, but could not find them. I thought possibly they had gone out to the lobby. When I reached the lobby, I felt somebody following me. I looked at him and asked whether he had seen Raj and Tanya. He gestured and told me that he saw them going towards the parking lot. I did not know who that guy was; I thought he was one of Raj's college friends.

I followed him to the parking lot. Raj and Tanya were not there. I was confused and decided to walk back to the restaurant. But that guy told me, they were inside the car.

The moment I peeped in to see through glass window of the car suddenly he opened the door and I was pushed in. It was unexpected. I saw one more guy coming towards the car. I was stunned. I was suddenly attacked by both of them. I tried to free myself and come out of the car, but they were stronger. I tried to hit them and protested. I did not know what was happening. I opened my mouth to shout, but one of them slapped me and the blood started oozing from my lips. They tied my hands with my own scarf and gagged me. It was becoming gloomy. They were ripping my clothes, but I protested. They slapped me again and I felt lifeless. They raped me over and over again like animals. I do not know what had happened and when they finished. They threw me in the parking lot and fled. It was a cold night. I was left with bare minimum clothes.

Raj and Tanya were inside the kitchen, planning for the foods. When they found me missing Tanya called on my mobile. There was no reply. One of the girls noticed my purse and the mobile buzzing in it. It was sure that I was around somewhere. When I did not return for a while, they started looking for me. They swiftly searched the washrooms and other areas. They looked in the cafeteria and all other places. When they did not found me anywhere, they panicked and called Venkat.

The moment Venkat arrived, he searched in the garden and parking. At last they found me lying in the cold with ragged clothes in the parking lot. Venkat at once knew what had happened. Quickly he covered me with his windcheater and sprinkled some water on my face. The moment, I came to my senses, I thought, those guys were around and were going to assault me again. Without even looking up I attacked with my full might. I scratched his face. When I realized it was Venkat; I hugged him and started crying. After a while when I cooled down Tanya tried to help me to the washroom. Venkat wanted to call the police but I was petrified so he decided to drop me home.

Mom opened the door for us. She was shocked to see me. Only when mom gave me a shower, I felt fresh and better. After I was comfortable he told them about the unpleasant incident and advised dad to take me to the hospital and report this to the police. I was scared to go to the hospital and to the police.

I had no strength at all. My face had many scratches and lips were bleeding. Venkat called one

of his doctor friends, Dr Ramesh, and asked him to come quickly. The moment he came and saw me, I felt better. Venkat was by my side throughout that night.

It was the worst night that changed the course of my life. I wondered why there was such a twist in my life. I had no desire to live. I lost everything in life. Why should I live anymore?

2.

In the morning we went to police station to file a complaint. Dad called Raj and requested him to come to the police station. Raj assured that he would be there before us. When we entered the police station Raj had not arrived.

Slowly but steadily I narrated about the party and the incident to the officer. I told them the name of the resort and narrated the incident in as much detail as possible. It was not an easy task. Many times I broke down and cried. The police inspector kept asking me some embarrassing questions.

The woman who had been sexually assaulted had to prove the assault on her. The police, which are supposed to be the outpost of justice, was not at all bothered about the criminals and was harassing us only. It was a mental persecution than the actual rape that took place. It was a torture to recall that horrendous episode.

Quickly the police officer called up Raj and Tanya, to enquire about the previous day's party. Raj said, there was no party at all and there is some gaffe. They could not get Tanya's number as it was switched off. We were all shocked when the police officer informed us about the Raj's reply. Swiftly the police officer called the resort manager and asked him to come to the police station.

When the resort manager arrived he quickly recognized Venkat and me. I felt better and thought; now he would tell the truth about the previous evening's party. Instead, he looked bewildered, when the police officer asked about the party the previous night. Like Raj he too said there was no party at all.

He told the police that Venkat and I were at their hotel for a cup of coffee the previous evening and were sitting close to each other in the restaurant. We had even kissed a few times and were quite intimate. With his answers Venkat panicked and dad became restless. I was trembling with rant and rave.

Now the officer watched Venkat carefully and asked him about the scratches on his face. Venkat told that I had scratched his face when he tried to bring me to my senses when he found me unconscious in the parking arena of the hotel. Now police had a new presumption. The officer was sure that it was Venkat who had raped me with a couple of his friends and now we were making up a story.

He challenged Venkat that if he did not tell the truth, they would be compelled to bring it out by force and it would not be good for him. They demanded the names of his associates who raped

me. Now it was becoming impossible to tolerate such a nuisance. This was a terrible shock to dad and me. I knew very well that Raj had put us in trouble and Venkat may be a scapegoat. I loved Raj but I liked Venkat too and was sure he would never do such a ghastly act.

The officer ordered the constables to put Venkat into the cell. They were manhandling him and were beating him with their shoes on. The police officer was shouting at him and telling him to confess whatever he had done, or else they will have to use the third-degree to get the truth.

It was a glaring example of how things were turned by the police and the criminals. Unfortunately, the person who tried to help the victim was being beleaguered. The contempt, with which the cops at the police station treat and order, shows how irresponsible situations can be created.

By this time one news reporter had got the smell and quickly came to the police station and was asking questions. He then started recording us. Dad decided to back off, and told Venkat to forget about the police complaint and walk away. It was difficult to persuade the police officer that we had nothing to complain. We gave in writing to the police that nothing was wrong and we had no complaint.

The mental agony I went through that morning was worse than the one earlier night. The previous night I was attacked physically and sexually, but in the police station it was both physical and mental torture. Somehow we walked out of the police station. The moment I entered the car I felt relieved. I had lost all my vigour. Venkat had scratches on his face which I had gifted him. Bleeding lip and limping leg was gifted by the police. I looked at his red face. He looked like a child who just fought with his opponent and was beaten up.

Mom gave me something to eat; I did not even bother what I was eating. I was under the effects of medicines and dosed off...

3.

I was worried about what news would be framed. At evening one of the new channels was showing us in the news. The news reporter was showing Venkat's' bruised face.

"Do you know who this person is? He is not an ordinary guy; he is the one who moulds the future of our children. The one who educates our children to makes them cultured. He is the teacher of a foreigner student, who gives her private tuitions. The girl is only eighteen, whereas this guy is almost double her age. He is a demon who believed to have raped this student..." I could not hear more and switched off TV. Again that night I could not sleep properly and had had many hallucinations.

Next day morning when he came he looked tired and horrible.

"Do you know I was on the verge of a nervous breakdown? At one point I thought of

committing suicide. I still shiver when I recall that night” I confided.

“I know, but life must go on. There will be many opportunities, many awards and life is full of fun. Just start it afresh and enjoy” Venkat replied coolly.

He handed over last week’s news paper cutting. It carried news about a nurse who was raped almost forty years ago and had slipped into coma instantly. For the past forty years all that she did was breathed. She was only twenty seven when she was sexually assaulted. Today she is almost sixty seven and still in coma. The rapist was caught and imprisoned. He finished his ordeal in a few years and was now enjoying his life. I felt sorry and daunted.

I was getting nervous by just thinking about such an attack.

“Rachel, come to your senses, I am not scaring you but trying to tell you, how brave you are. God has given you the strength to face the challenge, anyway I am sure those animals will never have a peaceful life; in fact no criminal can. All criminals spend their lives in fear, not knowing what would happen to them the next moment. Whether, they will be a target of the police bullet or by their own men. They never sleep in peace”

Unexpectedly, his mobile phone rang. It was the first call in nearly two hours. It was Girish his college student. Girish had seen the news and he was sure that we were being fabricated. He asked whether he could be of any help to prove our innocence.

“Can you really help us, Girish?”

“Yes sir, sure, we will, just tell us, what to do?”

He asked Girish to meet us. I changed myself and I asked Venkat to freshen up. I was unable to walk; Venkat helped me to the lift. I stood very close to him. Suddenly I kissed him, and told him this was my way of thanking him. I thought he would smile, but he was too upset. Our fingers were interlocked. He looked into my eyes. Instantly, I became bold and kissed him again, this time on his lips. A kiss is a lovely trick – what words can’t express, a kiss can.

I clutched him tight sitting on the bike. I felt I was with the most wonderful and valiant man in the world. Venkat was not as handsome and as young as Raj, but he was good looking and for me he was a hero. We reached the mall where Venkat planned to meet Girish. Girish had come with his few friends. We walked to the cafeteria and sat down.

Venkat narrated the incidents at the resort and at the police station to Girish. He wanted some information or camera footage of the party as fast as possible. It was not about punishing the guilty but proving our innocence. Girish promised to party at the same resort with a group of his friends and try to dig whatever he could. He assured he would certainly get some clue or information.

That night too, I had many horrifying dreams; I woke up sweating many times. We were going through very bad times.

Next day early in the morning Venkat called up and informed me that Girish had found some clues. He asked me to get ready as soon as possible. We were to meet Girish near the police station. He confirmed that a couple of guys who worked at the same resort had agreed to help us. I was energized with this information.

Girish had a party at the same resort the previous evening. They had planned that one of the girls would go out just like I had gone out that fateful night. They expected the same episode to be repeated with her. This time the episode did not repeat. That meant those guys were alerted because of the police action.

Before leaving they offered a good tip to the waiters. Girish asked one of them secretly if there was a party at the resort two days ago. The waiter was hesitant and was not in a state to answer. Girish then asked him to go to washroom, which had no surveillance or cameras.

The moment he saw the waiter entering the washroom, he quickly followed him. He told the waiter about how the police had beaten up Venkat and the torture faced by us. The waiter was not willing to confess anything as he was too scared. Girish even offered him some money. At the end Girish threatened him saying since he knew many things about what happened two days ago, now it will be the cops who would make him sing a song. The poor waiter got scared and promised to help us.

Police officers at the police station were surprised to see us again. We were ushered to meet the same officer who was present the other day. Venkat told him everything in detail. Girish produced the waiters who came to help us. They narrated everything and told the police about the Raj's party and about the prevalence of the sexual assault. They even confirmed that this was not the first time such an incident had taken place. In the past, on three occasions similar incidents had taken place. This was the first time it was reported to the police. The police recorded our statements and the report was filed. I was hopeful that those devils would be brought to book and would be punished.

The police officer personally apologized to us. He said it was a part of his duty. He sensed something was fishy, but could not do anything as there was no evidence. He promised us that a strict action would be taken against all, not only with the real criminals but also with those who protected them. Next day noon we got a call from the police station, asking us to come for identification. With lot of effort, they were finally successful in arresting those two criminals. The police caught them at airport when they were fleeing the country.

The moment I saw those two spoliators without a second thought, I attacked them. I wanted to kill those bastards. Venkat and the lady police officer pulled me away from them and offered me a glass of water. The moment I drank some water, I looked at them, and again pounced on them. I wanted to do something which would make them suffer throughout their lives. The resort manager and Raj too were summoned and questioned. When I saw Raj I was enraged and attacked him and spitted on his face. I hated myself for loving such a gutless guy.

It took little a while for a trial to begin in the court. After seeing the news about rapists, one more victim too came forward and filed an FIR.

4.

On the day of the trial, we reached the court premises little late, as advised by the police to avoid any complications and congregation. There were crowds everywhere. The police officer, who recorded my statement received us and told me not to get petrified. He informed me that lawyers would ask few questions and I should keep myself composed and answer them properly and truthfully. They may even ask horrifying questions and try to irritate me so that rapist could get free.

Once again everything had to be proved in the court and only then the court would decide the punishment. The trial was in progress when we entered the courtroom. Those two accused were standing in one of the witness boxes. They were well shaved and were in decent clothes. I suddenly noticed Raj with his dad. He looked at me but his face was a deadpan. I knew he was tensed and scared. In another corner the nervous hotel manager was standing with the cops. When it was my turn the lawyer at the beginning asked some simple questions like, country of my origin, why I was in India, what was my present age, why I was at the resort that evening and so on? I did not realize when the questions become grave and revolting.

The lawyer started asking investigative questions. He demanded why I went out of the party, why I did not shout and how I was raped? He asked horrifying questions like did the rapists kiss me, why did I not remonstrate or shout and how I recognize the rapists when it was dark and gloomy. I explained to the court about how I was taken to the parking lot. Once again, I had to narrate that atrocious incident in the court.

Lawyers were asking many questions to confuse me. The prosecutor came to my rescue and requested the court to stop such nonsense questions. There was one more girl who could prove the guilt of these guys. But the questions were not yet over and the lawyer wanted to ask some more questions to me.

It made me realize why rape is one of the least reported crimes. In such cases, the rape victim becomes the accused wherein she has to prove her innocence, reputation, mental stability and many more things. It not only tarnishes the victim but also makes her senile.

I was relieved when lawyer was done with me. Venkat was the next witness, who told the court how he reached the spot and what he saw. The lawyer again asked him about his relationship with me. He asked many questions to him but Venkat was well-composed and cool. He sordidly answered all the questions.

Then both the waiters were called. Their testimony was very important. They informed the court that there were four similar attempts and they could not come forward earlier as they were scared of the hotel management and it was about losing their jobs and life.

Raj was called to the witness box and asked why he refused about the party that night. He was unable to answer.

When the resort manager was called in to the witness box, he confirmed that there indeed was a party that night. He had refused it at the beginning as it was the question of the reputation of the resort as well as of many employees.

Ruchi, the other victim was sitting beside me. I took a closer look at her. She was fair, beautiful, tall and slim, with black eyes. She was around twenty five years of age. There were dark circles around her eyes. They were narrating her sufferings and the destitutions she had gone through.

She was nervous and was trembling. They asked similar questions to her. She was so panicky that she fainted while narrating the incident and the trauma she went through and how it had changed her life. I pitied her when I learned about the demise of her father due to shock.

She was going through hard times and was unable to cope- up with the situation. She had lost all hopes after that horrifying incident which shook her life. She was scared to a large extent and could not narrate the incident to anybody. When she narrated it to her boyfriend, he walked away breaking all ties with her. It was a party organized by one of her colleagues to celebrate his promotion.

At last she had to give away her job to avoid more humiliation. When she came to know about an FIR filed by me, she became bold and came forward to punish the guilty. She wanted to end her life but she was not courageous enough to do so and her spirits and confidence was shattered. Instead of sympathy from her colleagues and the society, she was treated like a criminal. It was becoming difficult for her to face the world, as they looked at her like a whore who could be hired at a cheap rate. When she narrated this she was crying aloud and there was pin-drop silence in the court. I felt sorry for her and went to the witness box to console her.

She wanted a harsher punishment to rapists and some respite to her and her family.

The hearing went on for nearly three days. The court said it would study the case further in detail and the verdict would be given the next week after studying the evidences.

That day I could not do anything. I was too eager to find out what the courts verdict would be. Certainly, we cannot get back what we had lost, nor our lives would be the same again. Punishments in these kinds of rape cases were just for our satisfaction and to make sure they never repeat the offence. They were also lessons to others to stay away from such crimes. The girls who go through such an ordeal suffer throughout their lives. Fortunately, I had the support of my family and a good friend. This made my life easier and I got the strength to face my life again.

When I saw the other victim Ruchi in the court, who had suffered the same fate, I was feeling sorry for her. She was tormented physically and mentally. In fact physical pain healed easily but emotional pain never elapses, its stains remain forever and remind us of the agony. She was in such a dejected condition that she was unable to face the world.

She was the lone bread winner for her family. Her younger brother had to give away his schooling and did some odd jobs to support the family. She needed psychiatric help but she had neither money nor support. She had lost all the courage and strength. She was lost and her family was distressed because of those ravishers. Even if they were punished, what would she gain? She had lost everything. I hated her boyfriend for deserting her in the middle, when she needed him the most. I was sure nobody would easily come forward to marry her. What a disgrace! What compensation she could expect to fill her sufferings and mental anguish. In fact in these cases of rapes, society plays a major role; it should be educated to accept victims spontaneously, help them to re-establish their identity honorably.

I was surprised by the courageous attempt by Ruchi in the court. She was an example of grace and bravery. Everybody kept praising me, since I was the one who brought those devils to the court, but Ruchi was the bravest of all. She had nobody to support her and yet she fought the battle. In such an outrageous condition, she came to the court and wanted those guys punished.

When Venkat came that evening I was lying on the bed and thinking. The moment I saw him I looked at him and started sobbing. I told him everything, I was thinking. I was thankful that he was by my side me; else my condition too would not have been different than Ruchi who lost her mental stability. I stood up and kissed Venkat for saving my life.

“Venkat, can we do something to help Ruchi?” I asked Venkat.

“I am not sure Rachel; we need to ask her what she can do”.

“Yes I will find out everything about her; let’s help her. Won’t you?”

“Yes, Rachel, we will try. We will ask your dad if he can get her some job in his office. I will speak to our doctor for her treatment”.

“Oh thanks, I am sure you would”. I suddenly kissed him again on his cheeks. He turned red with the sudden treat. I always enjoyed such situations and loved teasing him more. Now he knew I was not only his student but a love.

We were now waiting for the D day, when those criminals would be punished. I wanted go to the court on the judgment day and watch the faces of those criminals when they hear their ordeals.

The court room was crowded when the judgment was announced. Both the rapists were sentenced to life imprisonment; the resort manager was sentenced to three years of rigorous imprisonment. Raj was sentenced to one year’s rigorous imprisonment. I was happy that justice was finally delivered. The punishments were as per my expectation. The resort management was asked to pay compensation to Ruchi. In case they refused to pay the compensation, judge ordered to seize their properties and make the payment to Ruchi.

Photographers kept taking my pics and reporters continued praising me for my bravery. They appreciated me for believing in the Mumbai Police and the Indian judiciary. They were trying to turn cameras towards us but I was shy and decided to walk away.

Venkat's doctor friend, Dr Ramesh, who treated me, needed an office assistant and Venkat requested him to give that job to Ruchi. I was happy that somehow I could help her. Venkat also suggested her brother to complete his graduation and he would help him in doing so. I knew if Ruchi kept herself busy with time she would recover and become normal. What she needed was not only financial support but mental tranquility.

And yes there was a good thing happened to us...now I found a real and true love...it took a life menacing experience for us to come together. We had lost everything and now did not want to lose each other. I believed in destiny, and it was my destiny which brought me to India, crossing seven seas only to find him my dear Venkat. But the path god had shown us was thorny and amazing. And now nobody would separate us.....Amen.