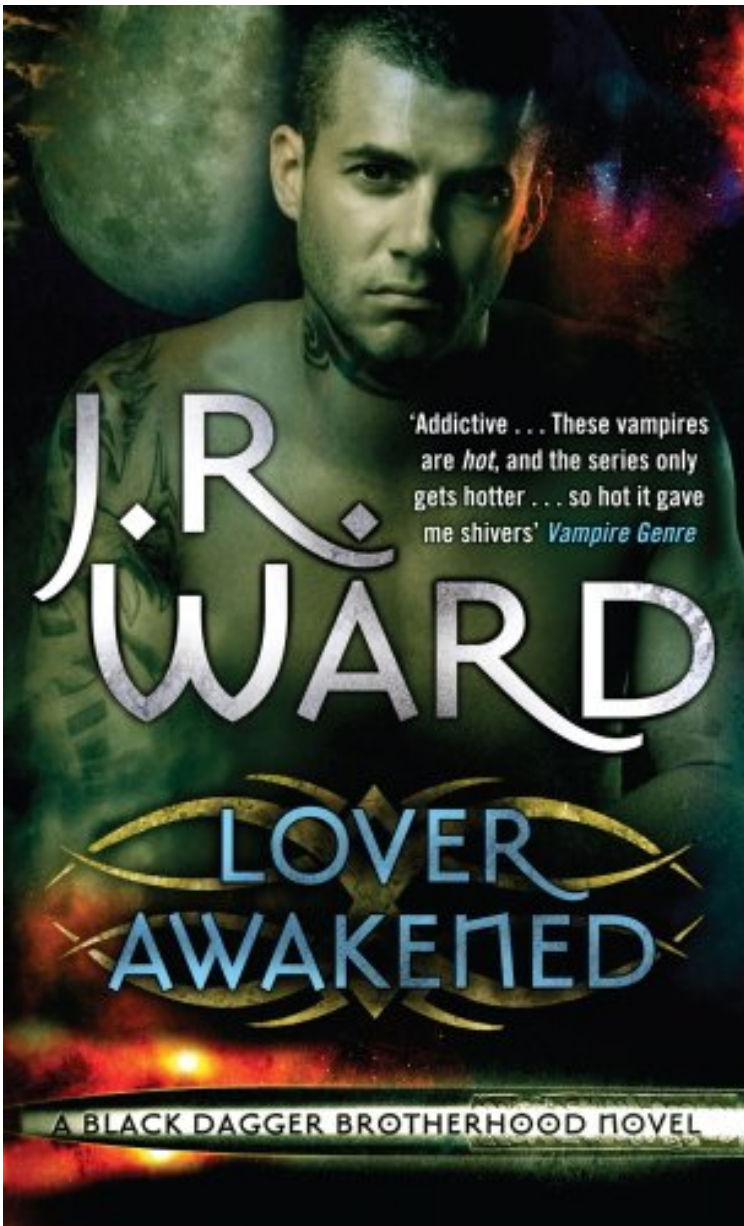


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## Lover Awakened: Number 3 in series



Par J. R. Ward

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**Description :** Description du produitEven within the vampire brotherhood, Zsadist is feared. Still bearing the scars from a tortured past, he is renowned for his unquenchable fury. Anger is his only companion, and terror is his only passion-until he rescues a beautiful female from the evil Lessening Society.

Prsentation de l'diteurIn the shadows of the night in Caldwell, New York, there's a deadly war raging between vampires and their slayers. And there exists a secret band of brothers like no other - six vampire warriors, defenders of their race. Of these, Zsadist is the most terrifying member of the Black Dagger Brotherhood. A former blood slave, the vampire Zsadist still bears the scars from a past filled with suffering

and humiliation. Renowned for his unquenchable fury and sinister deeds, he is a savage feared by humans and vampires alike. Anger is his only companion, and terror is his only passion - until he rescues a beautiful aristocrat from the evil Lessening Society. Bella is instantly entranced by the seething power Zsadi possesses. But even as their desire for one another begins to overtake them both, Zsadi's thirst for vengeance against Bella's tormentors drives him to the brink of madness. Now, Bella must help her lover overcome the wounds of his tortured past, and find a future with her.

Chapter One

What if I told you I had a fantasy? Butch O'Neal put his Scotch down and eyed the blonde who'd spoken to him. Against the backdrop of Zero-Sums VIP area, she was something else, dressed in white patent leather strips, a cross between Barbie and Barbarella. It was hard to know if she was one of the club professionals or not. The Reverend only trafficked in the best, but maybe she was a model for FHM or Maxim. She planted her hands on the marble tabletop and leaned in toward him. Her breasts were perfect, the very best money could buy. And her smile was radiant, a promise of acts done with knee pads. Paid or not, this was a woman who got plenty of vitamin D and liked it. Well, daddy? she said over the trippy techno music. Want to make my dream come true? He shot her a hard smile. Sure as hell, she was going to make someone very happy tonight. Probably a busload of someones. But he wasn't going to be riding that double-decker. Sorry, you need to go taste the rainbow somewhere else. Her total lack of reaction sealed the deal on her professional status. With a vacant smile, she floated over to the next table and pulled the same lean and gleam. Butch tilted his head back and swallowed the inch of La-gavulin left in his glass. His next move was to flag down a waitress. She didn't come over, just nodded and beat feet for the bar to get him another. It was almost three A.M., so the rest of the troika were going to show up in a half hour. Vishous and Rhage were out hunting lessers, those soulless bastards that killed their kind, but the two vampires were probably going to come in for a landing disappointed. The secret war between their species and the Lessening Society had been quiet all January and February, with few slayers out and around. This was good news for the races civilian population. Cause for concern for the Black Dagger Brotherhood. Hello, cop. The low male voice came from right behind Butch's head. Butch smiled. That sound always made him think of night fog, the kind that hides what's going to kill you. Good thing he liked the dark side. Evening, Reverend, he said without turning around. I knew you were going to turn her down. You a mind reader? Sometimes. Butch glanced over his shoulder. The Reverend was poised in the shadows, amethyst eyes glowing, mohawk trimmed tight to his skull. His black suit was sweet: Valentino. Butch had one just like it. Although in the Reverend's case the worsted wool had been bought with the guys own money. The Reverend, a.k.a. Reh-venge, a.k.a. brother of Zsadi's shellan, Bella, owned ZeroSum and took a cut of everything that went down. Hell, with all the depravity for sale in the club, he had a forest worth of green fun-neling into his piggy bank at the end of every night. Nah, she just wasn't for you. The Reverend slid into the booth, smoothing his perfectly knotted Versace necktie. And I know why you said no. Oh, yeah? You don't like blondes. Not anymore he didn't. Maybe I just wasn't into her. I know what you want. As Butch's newest Scotch arrived, he gave it a quick vertical workout. Do you now? It's my job. Trust me. No offense, but I'd rather not talk about this. Tell you what, cop. The Reverend leaned in close and he smelled fantastic. Then again, Cool Water by Davidoff was an oldie but goodie. I'll help you anyway. Butch clapped a hand on the male's heavy shoulder. Only interested in bartenders, buddy. Good Samaritans give me the scratch. Sometimes only the opposite will do. Then there were SOL. Butch nodded out at the half-naked crowd writhing on hits of X and coke. Everyone looks the same around here. Funny, during his years in the Caldwell Police Department, ZeroSum had been an enigma to him. Everyone knew the place was a drug hole and a sex pool. But no one at the CPD had been able to pin down enough probable cause to get a search warrant even though you could walk in any night of the week and see dozens of legal infractions, most of them happening in tandem. But now that Butch was hanging with the Brotherhood, he knew why. The Reverend had lots of little tricks in his bag when it came to changing people's perceptions of events and circumstances. As a vampire, he could scrub clean the memories of any human, manipulate security cameras, dematerialize at will. The guy and his biz were a moving target that never moved. Tell me something, Butch said, how have you managed to keep your aristocratic family from knowing about this little night job you got going on? The Reverend smiled so that only the tips of his fangs showed. Tell me something, how did a human get so tight with the Brotherhood? Butch tipped his glass in deference. Sometimes fate takes you in fucked-up directions. So true, human. So very true. As Butch's cell phone went off, the Reverend got up. I'll send you over something. Unless it's Scotch I don't want it, my man. You're going to take that back. Doubt it. Butch took out his Motorola Razr and flipped it open. What up, V? Where are you? Vishous was breathing like a racehorse with the dull roar of wind distortion

backing him up: a symphony of ass hauling. Shit, cop. We got problems. Butchs adrenaline kicked in, lighting him up like a Christmas tree. Where are you? Out in the burbs with a situation. The damn slayers have started hunting civilians in their homes. Butch leaped to his feet. Im coming The hell you are. You stay put. I only called so you wouldnt think we were dead when we didnt show. Later. The connection cut off.

Butch sank back down in the booth. From the table next to him, a group of people let out a loud, happy burst, some shared joke teeing their laughter off like birds flushed into the open air. Butch looked into his glass. Six months ago hed had noth-ing in his life. No woman. No family he was close to. No home to speak of. And his job as a homicide detective had been eat-ing him alive. Then hed gotten canned for police brutality. Fallen in with the Brotherhood through a bizarre series of events. Met the one and only woman whod ever awed him stu-pid. Also had a total wardrobe makeover. At least that last one was in the good category and had stayed there. For a while the change had been a great mask of reality, but lately hed noticed that for all the differences, he was right where hed always been: no more alive than when hed been rotting in his old life. Still on the outside looking in. Booklist Deeply scarred without and within, vampire warrior Zsadist believes that he is unworthy of either compassion or true love. One night a glimmer of hope crosses his path, embodied in the young civilian Bella; yet, true to form, he pushes her away. But when the enemy of their race kidnaps Bella, Zsadist can't rest until he finds her, and once he does, he faces his biggest threat to date as fate grants him one last chance at peace. Ward spins her take on Beauty and the Beast into a raw, gritty tour de force, creating an array of ugliness and beauty, pain and pleasure in a tale that sparks enough plot stunners to keep readers fascinated for years to come. Not for the faint of heart--strong sexuality and stronger language rule here--this genre-bending third novel in the Black Dagger Brotherhood series, following Lover Eternal (2006), is a perfect fit for those who like fast-paced urban fantasy rich in both fury and poignancy. Nina Davis Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved