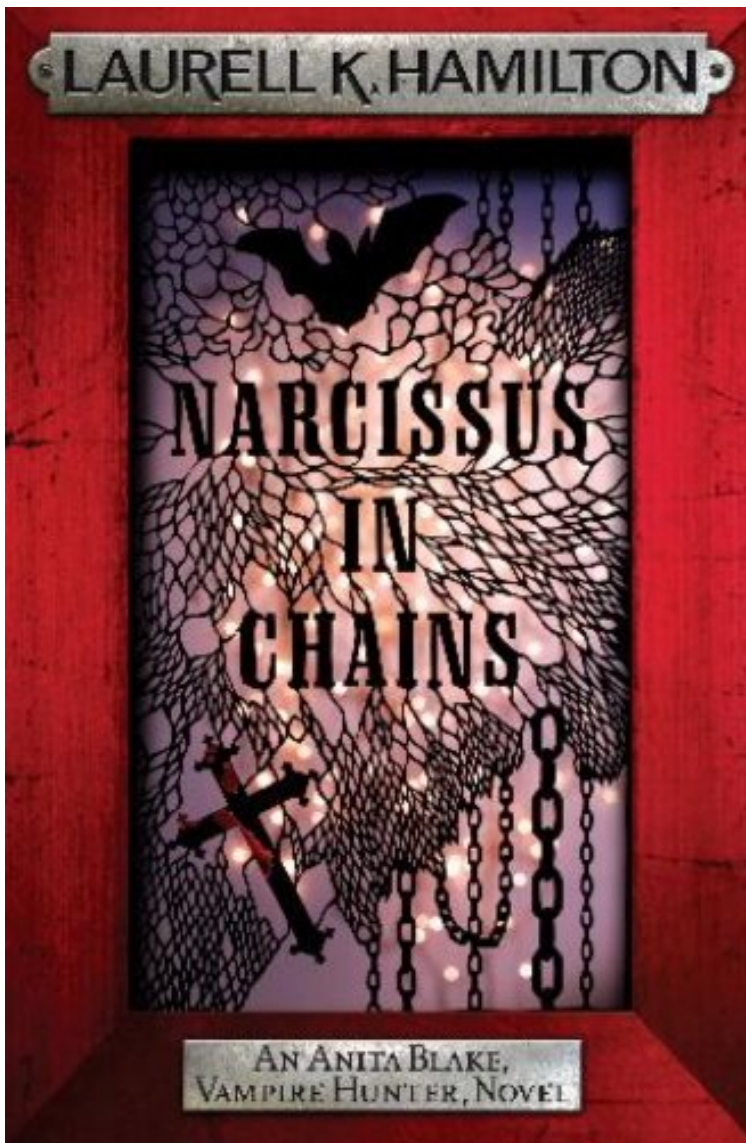


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# Narcissus in Chains



*Par Laurell K. Hamilton*  
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**Description :** Description du produit "I've never read a writer with a more fertile imagination - and fewer inhibitions about using it." (Diana Gabaldon) Six months of celibacy have made Anita crave the two men in her life like never before. But merging their powers together will give this mortal woman a taste of immortal hunger that she'll never be able to forget...

Prsentation de l'diteurAn Anita Blake, Vampire Hunter, novel'Something in the look on my face must have frightened him, because his eyes widened, and I saw something like human fear cross his reptilian face.' I'm Anita Blake and I kill monsters. The last thing I want to think about though when I get home after a night out is work. But someone has abducted a wereleopard from the Narcissus in Chains club. It's a dark world out there with shapeshifter crime and were-creature struggles. I may not have seen Jean-Claude, the Vampire Master of the City, for six months, but I need his help now, whatever the consequences. Someone is

targeting the lycanthropes and we have to save them..co.uk Like the other Anita Blake books, Narcissus in Chains is about power and responsibility, and the way that any increase in personal power ratchets up a sense of responsibility--or ought to. For much of the book, Anita, necromancer and executioner of the undead, is faced with the possibility that living dangerously has caught up with her--that one of the werelions whose protector she has become has accidentally infected her and that she has finally crossed the line into non-humanity. Or are the new strengths and powers she is feeling the consequence of extending the bond between her and her two lovers, the vampire Jean-Claude and the werewolf Richard? There are new and dangerous players in town and Anita is no longer sure that she can cope... Laurell K Hamilton's inventiveness with supernatural menace has still not failed her, though more of this book than usual is taken up with Anita's complicated erotic arrangements--she has come a long way in the course of this popular series from the rather prim Catholic girl with a collection of stuffed penguins. This is not one of Hamilton's best books, but enough complicatedly happens in it that those already keen will want to know more. --Roz Kaveney

Chapter 18 Somewhere during the dressing process I came to my senses. I stayed up against the headboard, Asher's robe belted securely over the red pajamas, my face averted, forehead pressed to the wood. Control was the heart of who I thought I was. I could do this, or rather not do this. I had to try and let this pass me by, because to do anything else I could not do this. The bed moved, and just the sensation of the men moving around on the bed was enough to tighten my body, speed my pulse. Dear God, help me. This couldn't be happening. I'd feared ending up as a vampire. I'd come close many times, but I'd never thought it would happen like this. I was still alive, still human, but the hunger rose inside me like some great beast trying to dig its way out of me, and all that kept it from surfacing was my fingers digging into the wood, my forehead pressed against the carvings. I wasn't sure which hunger I was fighting. But the ardeur colored all of it, whether I was craving flesh, or blood, the sex was there in all of it. I couldn't separate them, and that was scary all on its own. I felt someone crawling towards me, and I knew without looking that it was Jean-Claude. I could just feel him. "Ma petite, all is prepared, we need only you." I spoke with my face still pressed into the wood, my fingers clinging to it. "Well, then you'll just have to do without." I felt his hand hovering over my shoulder, and I said, "Don't touch me!" "Ma petite, ma petite, I would change this if I could, but I cannot. We must make the best of what is given us." That made me look at him. His face was too close, eyes that intense midnight blue, hair a dark glory around his pale face. I flashed on another face just as pale, just as perfect, with a wealth of black hair, but with eyes a rich brown like dark amber. They grew in my vision until the world drowned in the dark honey of her eyes, as if it were poured over my eyes, over my skin, my body, until it filled me, and when I raised my eyes to Jean-Claude's worried face, his hand on my arm, I saw something close to terror in his eyes. He scrambled back from me, and when I turned and stared at Asher, he spilled off the bed, to stand shaking. Jason and Nathaniel stayed on the bed because they didn't know any better. "What's wrong?" Jason asked. Nathaniel whispered, "Her eyes." I turned and caught sight of myself in the standing mirror in the corner. My eyes had filled with pale brown fire, not the darkness of my own eyes, but hers. "No," I said, softly. I felt her thousands of miles away. Her pleasure at my terror rolled through my body, raised my beast and sent me falling onto the bed. My hands strained for something to hold on to, some help, but there was nothing to fight; it was power and it was inside me. She explored me, raising my beast until it rolled just under the surface of my skin. She touched that part of Richard that was still inside me and raised his beast, until the two energies entwined and my body started to convulse. I heard yelling. "She's going to change!" Hands holding me down to the bed. But Belle had learned what she wanted and let them slide back into my body. She separated out the powers inside me like you'd sort a deck of cards. She touched Jean-Claude's link to me and it puzzled her, I could feel it. Until that moment she'd assumed I was a vampire, and now she knew I wasn't. She let what puzzled her slide back deep inside me, then she called the ardeur, the incubus, and the moment I thought it, I realized it was the wrong word. Succubus, she whispered in my head, succubus. The hands that had been holding me down, poured over my body, responding to the ardeur. It was like being covered in pure lust, rolled in it, like flour on a piece of meat before you cook it. Hands slid along my skin, a mouth closed on my mouth, and I couldn't see who was right above me, kissing me. I could feel the weight of their body, another set of hands, but I could see nothing but a shining amber light. Belle kept the ardeur on the surface, because it amused her. I couldn't see whose hands were where, or who was doing what, all I could do was feel them; the brush of silk, the press of flesh, a curtain of hair, the scent of vanilla, but I could not see. Belle Morte was using my eyes for other things. She touched that part of me that allowed me to raise the dead. She caressed my necromancy, tried to bring it to the surface as she had the two; beasts and the ardeur, but everything else she had explored was hers to call, it

was all in some way part of her lineage, her blood. But the necromancy was all mine. My magic welled up through me, pushing her back, but I couldn't cast her out, not with just the raw power. It was as if she floated near the surface of some dark pool and I sat at the bottom trying to push her out. I couldn't cast her out, but I could see again, think again. I was nude from the waist up. Nathaniel's mouth closed on my nipple drawing it in. I cried out, and Jason lowered his mouth to my other breast. There was a moment when I stared down at the two of them pressed to my body, the blond head, the auburn, their mouths working at my breasts, the line of their bodies pressed along mine, the marks of my teeth still visible in Nathaniel's flesh, when the ardeur, when Belle Morte spilled over me again. Jason's hand slid down the front of the red silk bottoms, his fingers finding me as if he'd always known just where to touch me. I writhed under his touch, their touch. I grabbed

Jason's wrist, tried to pull his hand away, but he fought me and it was a tender place to fight over. I screamed, "Jean-Claude! Asher!" "Ma petite?" Jean-Claude made the name a question as if he wasn't sure it was really me. I found the vampires standing beside the bed, not helping, not hindering, just watching. But I understood; the ardeur called to them too. They were afraid to touch us. "Feed," I said. "Non, ma petite." "I can't fight her and the hunger. Feed, and let me feed." "You cannot break free of her, ma petite." "Help me!" He looked across the bed at Asher, and I watched something pass between them, something built of sorrow and old regrets. "She is right, mon ami, she cannot fight Belle and the ardeur." "She doesn't understand what she's asking," Jean-Claude said. "No, but she asks, and if we do not do it, we will always wonder. I would rather try and fail, than regret having never tried at all." They stared at each other for a second or two, then Asher crawled onto the bed and Jean-Claude followed him. Asher stretched out beside Nathaniel, and Jean-Claude mirrored him with Jason. Belle Morte's joy flared through me, filled my eyes with honey-colored flames, and I lost my grip on Jason's wrist. His hand slid back over me, but when I turned to look, I could see Jean-Claude through the dark glass of her eyes and Asher on the other side. I knew that once they touched either pomme de sang they would be caught in the desire, and they would not break free. It was a trap. I opened my mouth to say, don't, but three things happened all at once. They each struck into the neck of the man on their side, as if they'd known exactly what the other would do, and Jason forced me over that shining edge of orgasm. I screamed, body bucking against the bed, and only their weight kept me from sitting up, from clawing the air, because it wasn't just my own pleasure I was feeling. I felt Asher's fangs in Nathaniel's neck, felt Nathaniel's body build, build, and finally release in a rush of pleasure that made him bite down on my breast, made me score not his back, but Asher's with my nails. Jason drew his mouth back from me and screamed. The vampires rode their bodies, and I knew with Belle Morte's awareness that the only reason they didn't orgasm with us was the blood pressure wasn't there yet. But the pleasure was. The five of us were locked into wave after wave of pleasure. Like the heat the ardeur was named for, it passed over and through us again and again. It was like floating, skinless, formless, just above the bed, and I could feel their heartbeats inside my body. Finally I could feel Jean-Claude and Asher, feel their hearts give a massive beat and feel the life flood through their bodies and spill in a long, hot, line of pleasure that seemed to be pulled from the soles of their feet to the tops of their heads, as if every piece of their bodies, every atom, exploded in pleasure at once. Nathaniel, Jason, and I screamed for them, because their mouths were still locked on the blood, still drinking, still feeding. Then it was over, and the five of us lay motionless, except for the frantic rise and fall of our chests, trying to breath, trying to remember what it was like to be inside our own skins, with just one heart inside us, instead of five. We melted back into our own skins, only the faint dew of sweat and the panicked thunder of our pulses beating against each other's bodies. Jean-Claude and Asher pulled back from Nathaniel and Jason just as they'd bitten them--together, in a synchronization as perfect now as it had been two centuries ago. Belle Morte filled my mind with images--images of the two of them making love to her before Asher was scored, when they were her perfectly matched pair. I had a confused image of them making love to her at the same time. The feel of them pushing inside her, as perfectly aware then as now of where each other's bodies were, and of exactly what they would do. She missed them, and it was partially my love of Asher, my seeing him as beautiful, that made her regret. The sharing wasn't only one way; she was getting my feelings, too. But I was myself again. The desire had been well fed, sated, so now I could do what I did best. I called my magic, pulled it around me like a breath of cool wind against my sweat-soaked skin. Nathaniel and Jason pulled back from me, eyes still unfocused. Jean-Claude and Asher raised up above each of the smaller men, their eyes as out of focus as the lycanthropes', but Jean-Claude said, "Ma petite, what?" I reached for him. "Take my hand." "Ma petite" "Now!" Belle's power cut through me like a whip in a practiced hand. She'd been using it to tickle my skin; now she meant it to hurt. I writhed on the bed, only Jason's and Nathaniel's weight keeping me from

flailing. My vision was being consumed by brown flames. A hand in mine, cool flesh, and the moment Jean-Claude touched me I could see again. I was his human servant, he was my master, we were part of a triumvirate of power. If Richard had been here we could have chased her back to the hell she crawled out of.

I sent the call in my head, screaming psychically for Richard, but the answer came against my skin. Jason stared at me, confused. He said, "Anita" I felt Richard's power in Jason, the link of their pack. The power of the triumvirate leaped between Jean-Claude's hand, my hand, and Jason's body. It would work, it had to work, because I could feel Belle Morte rising inside me again, and I wasn't sure I had it in me to chase her back. I drew my necromancy like a great dark cloud, a storm ready to break, filling the room with the tingling brush of magic. Nathaniel drew back, whispered, "Nimir-Ra." The power pressed like lightning in a bottle, but the bottle was my body, and there was no release without one more thing: blood. The last time we'd done overt triumvirate magic I'd asked the boys to give me blood, watched as Jean-Claude had sunk fangs into Richard for the first time, but not today. Today I needed the blood, I wanted the blood. I would not share. I used my free hand to lower Jason's face towards me, but I didn't kiss him. My mouth moved down the side of his cheek, and I whispered, "I need blood, Jason. Say yes." He'd been holding himself off of me with his arms, but he whispered, "Yes," and collapsed his upper body across my breasts, his hand sliding along my stomach as if he meant to do other things. I could smell the blood just below the surface of his neck, could taste his pulse like candy on my tongue, and I bit him. I wasn't a vampire. There were no mind tricks to make it pleasant. We weren't having sex anymore, there was no distraction, only my teeth tearing his flesh, his blood pouring into my mouth, and the moment the blood poured over me the necromancy flared and I pushed it into that honeyed touch. She laughed at me, at us, then the laughter stopped, because she felt the push of my power. I was a necromancer, and she was just another kind of vampire. My magic didn't differentiate between her and any other corpse. I shoved her out, cast her back, locked her outside us. I'd been training in witchcraft this year, so I bound her from us, bound her from harming us in any way, bound her from contacting us through her power. My last thought to her was, If you want to find out what the fuck is going on, pick up a phone. Then she was gone.

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