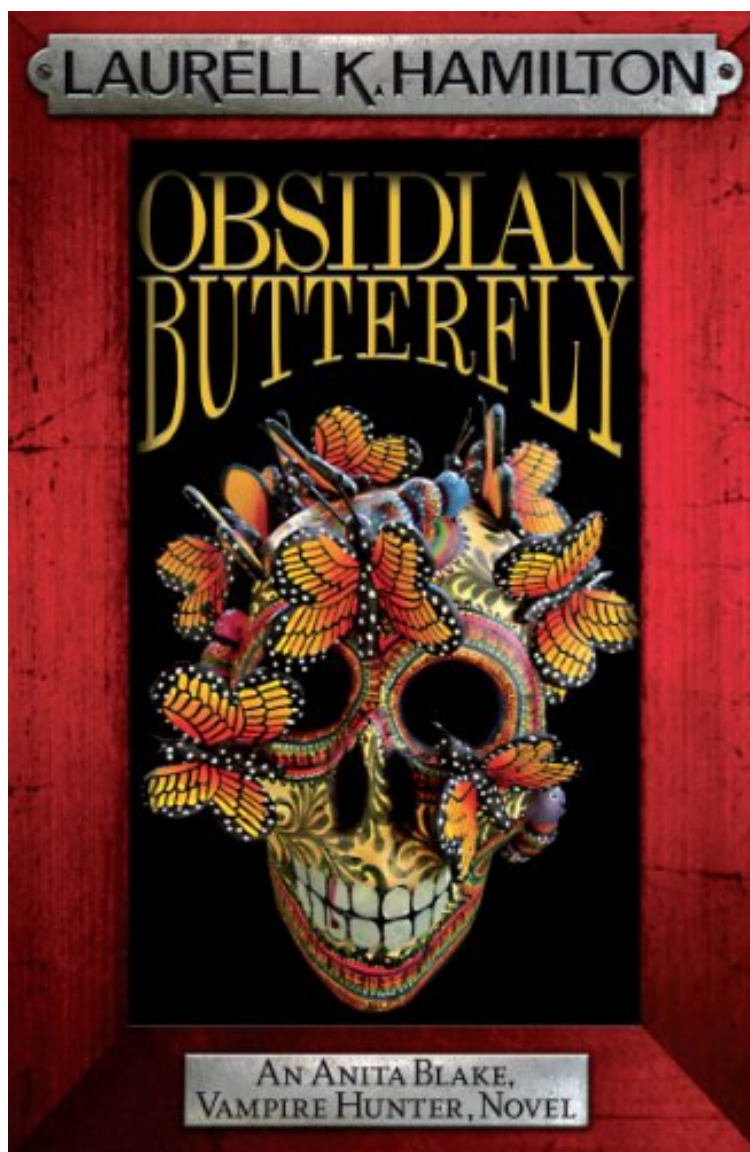


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Obsidian Butterfly



Par Laurell K. Hamilton
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Par Laurell K. Hamilton : Obsidian Butterfly before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Obsidian Butterfly:

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Description : Description du produitThere are a lot of monsters in Anita Blake's life. And some of them are human. One such individual is the man she calls Edward, a bounty hunter who specializes in the preternatural. He calls her to help him hunt down the greatest evil she has ever encountered. Something that kills and maims and vanishes into the night. Something Anita will have to face alone... Praise for the Anita Blake, Vampire Hunter novels: "In Obsidian Butterfly, Laurell K. Hamilton delivers an erotic, demonic thrill ride. Her sexy, edgy, wickedly ironic style sweeps the reader into her unique world and delivers red-hot entertainment. Hamilton's marvelous storytelling can be summed up in three words: Over the top. She blends the genres of romance, horror and adventure with stunning panache. Great fun!"-- Jayne Ann Krentz"Hamilton has endowed her heroine with a charming mix of male bravado, feminine guile, and self-deprecating humor."-- Publishers Weekly"Ms. Hamilton's intriguing blend of fantasy, mystery, and a touch

of romance is great fun indeed."-- Romantic Times"Hamilton takes her world by the teeth and runs with it, devising a whipcrack adventure that moves like the wind, grips you by the throat and doesn't let go."-- Locus"Mayhem, madness, old spells and older vampires. And Anita Blake at the center of it, struggling to stay on top...perfect!"-- The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction

Presentation de l'diteurI was covered in blood, but it wasn't mine, so it was okay.' Edward is a hit man. He specialises in monsters. Vampires, shape-shifters, anything and everything. There are people like me, Anita Blake, who do it legally, but Edward doesn't sweat the legalities or, hell, the ethics. He is an equal opportunity killer. I may be one of the few friends that Edward has, but it's like being friends with a tame leopard. It may curl on the foot of your bed and let you pet its head, but it can still eat your throat out....comAnita Blake, the tough, sexy vampire executioner, zombie animator, and police consultant for preternatural crimes in St. Louis, hunts monsters in New Mexico in the ninth book of Laurell K. Hamilton's excellent series. Edward, Anita's mentor in slaying, asks Anita to return the favor that she has owed him since she killed a backup he brought in to protect her. He needs Anita's preternatural expertise as well as her firepower. Something is skinning and mutilating a few of its chosen victims, and dismembering others. Edward has no idea what creature could be responsible for such heinous crimes. Summoning Anita has its downside for Edward, since it means letting her onto his turf. Anita is surprised to find that this normally aggressive man has a personal life, and shocked by his ability to be entirely different from the stone cold killer she's known. She also has problems with the cop in charge in Albuquerque, who believes her powers must be evil, and with the other backups Edward has brought in. Most of all, she has to deal with her own vulnerability--she's tried to shut down her ties to her vampire and werewolf lovers and go it alone, but it turns out to be harder than she thought. Anita's usual supporting cast is missing, and she's taking time out from her complex love life, but there's plenty of bloody action, vampires, werewolves, and Aztec ritual. Plus a lot more about Edward. Fans will find this installment similar to the earlier books in the series, particularly The Laughing Corpse. --Nona Vero.ExtraitChapter 1I was covered in blood, but it wasn't mine, so it was okay. Not only was it not my blood, but it was all animal blood. If the worst casualties of the night were six chickens and a goat, I could live with it, and so could everyone else. I'd raised seven corpses in one night. It was a record even for me. I pulled into my driveway at a quarter 'til dawn with the sky still dark and star-filled. I left the Jeep in the driveway, too tired to mess with the garage. It was May, but it felt like April. Spring in St. Louis was usually a two-day even between the end of winter and the beginning of summer. One day you were freezing your ass off and the next day it's be eighty plus. But this year it had been spring, a wet gentle spring. Except for the high number of zombies I'd raised, it had been a typical night. Everything from raising a civil war soldier for a local historical society to question, a will that needed a final signature, to a son's last confrontation with his abusive mother. I'd been neck deep in lawyers and therapists most of the night. If I heard, "How does that make you feel, Jonathan (or Cathy, or whoever)?" one more time tonight, I'd scream. I did not want to watch one more person "go with his or her feelings" ever. At least with most of the lawyers the bereaved didn't come to the graveside. The court-appointed lawyer would ascertain that the zombies raised had enough cognitive ability to know what they were signing, then he would sign off on the contract as a witness. If the zombie couldn't answer the questions, then no legal signature. The corpse had to be of "sound" mind to sign a legally binding signature. I'd never raised a zombie that couldn't pass the legal definition of soundness, but it happened sometimes. Jamison, a fellow animator at Animator's Inc., had a pair of lawyers come to blows on top of the grave. What fun. The air was cool enough to make me shiver as I walked down the sidewalk to my door. I could hear the phone ringing as I fumbled the key into the lock. I hit the door with my shoulder because no one ever calls just before dawn until it's important. For me that usually meant the police, which meant a murder scene. I kicked the door closed and ran for the phone in the kitchen. My answering machine had kicked on. My voice died on the machine and Edward's voice came on. "Anita, it's Edward. If you're there, pick up." Silence. I was running full out and skidded on my high heels, grabbing the receiver as I slid into the wall and nearly dropped the phone. I yelled into the receiver as I juggled the phone, "Edward, Edward, it's me! I'm here!" Edward was laughing softly when I could finally hear him. "Glad I could be amusing. What's up?" I asked. "I'm calling in my favor," he said quietly. It was my turn for silence. Once upon a time Edward had come to my aid, been my backup. He'd brought a friend, Harley, with him a smore backup. I'd ended up killing Harley. Now, Harley had tried to kill me first, and I'd just been quicker, but Edward had taken the killing personally. Picky, picky. Edward had given me a choice: either he and I could draw down on each other and find out once and for all which of us was better, or I

could owe him a favor. Some day he would call me up and ask for me to be his backup like Harley. I'd agreed to the favor. I never wanted to come up against Edward for real. Because if I did, I was pretty sure I'd end up dead. Edward was a hit man. He specialized in monsters. Vampires, shapeshifters, anything and everything. There were people like that did it legal, but Edward didn't sweat the legalities, or hell, the ethics. He even occasionally did a human, but only if they had some sort of dangerous reputation. Other assassins, criminals, bad men, or women. Edward was an equal opportunity killer. He never discriminated, not for sex, religion, race, or even species. If it was dangerous, Edward would hunt it and kill it. It's what he lived for, what he was—a predator's predator. He'd been offered a contract on my life once. He'd turned it down and had come to town as my bodyguard, bringing Harley with him. I'd asked him why he hadn't taken the contract. His answer had been simple. If he took the contract, he only got to kill me. If he protected me, he thought he'd get to kill more people. Perfect Edward reasoning. He's either a sociopath or so close it makes little difference. I may be one of the few friends that Edward has, but it's like being friends with a tame leopard. It may curl on the foot of your bed and let you pet its head, but it can still eat your throat out. It just won't do it tonight.

"Anita, you still there?" "I'm here, Edward." "You don't sound happy to hear from me." "Let's just say I'm cautious," I said. He laughed again. "Cautious. No, you're not cautious. You're suspicious." "Yeah," I said. "So what's the favor?" "I need backup," he said. "What could be so terrible that Death needs backup?" "Ted Forrester needs backup from Anita Blake, vampire executioner." Ted Forrester was Edward's alter ego, his only legal identity that I was aware of. Ted was a bounty hunter that specialized in preternatural creatures that weren't vampires. As a general rule vamps were a specialty item, which was one of the reasons that there were licensed vamp executioners but not licensed anything else executioners. Maybe vampires just have a better political lobby, but whatever, they get the most press. Bounty hunters like Ted filled in the blanks between the police and the licensed executioners. They worked mostly in rancher-run states where it was still legal to hunt down varmints and kill them for money. Varmints still including lycanthropes. You could shoot them on sight in about six states as long as later a blood test proves they were lycanthropes. Some of the killings had been taken to court and were being contested, but nothing had changed yet on a local level.

"So, what does Ted need me for?" Though truthful I was relieved that it was Ted asking and not Edward. Edward on his own probably meant illegal, maybe even murder. I wasn't quite into cold-blooded murder. Not yet. "Come to Santa Fe and find out," he said. "New Mexico? Santa Fe, New Mexico?" "Yes." "When?" I asked. "Now." "Since I'm coming as Anita Blake, vamp executioner, I can flash my executioner's license and bring my arsenal." "Bring what you want," Edward said. "I'll share my toys with you when you arrive." "I haven't been to bed yet. Do I have time to get some sleep before I get on a plane?" "Get a few hours sleep, but be here by afternoon. We've moved the bodies, but we're saving the rest of the crime scene for you." "What sort of crime scene?" "I'd say murder, but that's not quite the right word. Slaughter, butcher, torture. Yes," he said, as if trying the word over in his mind, "a torture scene." "Are you trying to scare me?" I asked. "No," he said. "Then stop the theatrics and just tell me what the hell happened." He sighed, and for the first time I heard a dragging tiredness in his voice. "We've got ten missing. Twelve confirmed dead." "Shit," I said. "Why haven't I heard anything on the news?" "The disappearances made the tabloids. I think the headline was, 'Bermuda Triangle in the Desert.' The twelve dead were three families. Neighbors just found them today." "How long had they been dead?" I asked. "Days, nearly two weeks for one family." "Jesus, why didn't someone miss them sooner?" "In the last ten years almost the entire population of Santa Fe has changed. We've got a huge influx of new people. Plus a lot of people have what amounts to vacation homes up here. The locals call the newcomers Californicores." "Cute," I said, "but is Ted Forrester a local?" "Ted lives near the city, yeah." A thrill went through me from the soles of my feet to the top of my head. Edward was the ultimate mystery man. I knew almost nothing about him, really. "Does this mean I get to see where you live?" "You'll be staying with Ted Forrester," he said. "But you're Ted Forrester, Edward. I'll be staying at your house, right?" He was quiet for a heart beat, then, "Yes." Suddenly, the whole trip seemed much more attractive. I was going to see Edward's house. I was going to be able to pry into his personal life, if he had one. What could be better? Though one thing was bothering me. "When you said families were the victims, does that include kids?" "Strangely, no," he said. "Well, thank goodness for small blessings," I said. "You always were a soft touch for the kiddies," he said. "Does it really not bother you to see dead children?" "No," he said. I just listened to him breathe for a second or two. I knew that nothing bothered Edward. Nothing moved him. But children... every cop I knew hated to go to a scene where the vic was a child. There was something personal about it. Even those of us without children took it hard. That Edward didn't, bothered me. Funny, but it did. "It bothers me," I said. "I know," he said, "one of your more

serious faults." There was an edge of humor to his voice. "The fact that you're a sociopath, and that I'm not, is one of the things I take great pride in." "You don't have to be a sociopath to back me up, just a shooter, and you are that, Anita. You kill as easily as I do, if the circumstances are right." "I didn't try and argue, because I couldn't. I decided to concentrate on the crime instead of my moral decay. "So Santa Fe has a large transient population." "Not transient," Edward said, "but mobile, very mobile. We have a lot of tourism, and a lot of people moving and out on a semi-permanent basis." "So no one knows their neighbors," I said, "or what their schedules should be." "Exactly." His voice was bland, empty, with that thread of tiredness underneath, and under that was something else. A tone-something. "You think there's more bodies that you haven't found yet," I said. I made it a statement. He was quiet for a second, then said, "You heard it in my voice, didn't you?" "Yeah," I said. "I'm not sure I like that. You being able to read me that well." "Sorry. I'll try to be less intuitive." "Don't bother. Your intuition is one of the things that's kept you alive this long." "Are you making a joke about women's intuition?" I asked. "No, I'm saying that you're someone who works from your gut, your emotions, not your head. It's a strength for you, and a weakness." "Too tenderhearted, am I?" "Sometimes, and sometimes you're just as dead inside as I am." Hearing him state it like that was almost scary. Not that he was including me in the same breath as himself, but that Edward knew something had died inside of him. "You ever miss the parts that are gone?" I asked. It was the closest thing to a personal question I'd ever asked him. "No," he said. "Do you?" "I thought about that for a moment. I started to say, yes, automatically, then stopped myself. Truth, always truth between us. "No, I guess I don't." He made a small sound, almost a laugh. "That's my girl." I was both flattered and vaguely irritated that I was "his girl." When in doubt, concentrate on the job. "What kind of monster is it, Edward?" I asked. "I've no idea." That stopped me. Edward had been hunting preternatural bad guys years longer than I had. He knew monsters almost as well as I did, and he'd traveled the world killing monsters, so he had first hand knowledge of things I'd only read about. "What do you mean, you have no idea?" "I've never seen anything kill like this, Anita." I heard an undercurrent in his voice that I'd almost never heard-fear. Edward, whose nickname among vamps and shapeshifters was Death, was afraid. It was a very bad sign. "You're shook, Edward. That's not like you." "Wait until you see the victims. I've saved you photos of the other scenes, but the last one I kept intact, just for you." "How did the local law enforcement like putting a ribbon around a crime scene and wrapping it up just for little ol' me?" "The local cops all like Ted. He's a good ol' boy. If Ted tells them you can help, they believe him." "But you're Ted Forrester," I said, "and you're not a good ol' boy." "But Ted is," he said, voice empty. "Your secret identity," I said. "Yeah," he said. "Fine, I'll fly into Santa Fe this afternoon, or early evening." "Fly into Albuquerque instead. I'll meet you at the airport. Just call me and give me the time." "I can rent a car," I said. "I'll be in Albuquerque on other business. It's not a problem." "What aren't you telling me?" I asked. "Me, keeping secrets?" There was a thread of amusement in his voice again. "You're the original mystery man, Edward. You love keeping secrets. It gives you a sense of power." "Does it?" he made it a question. "Yeah, it does." He laughed softly. "Maybe it does. Make the ticket reservations and call me with the flight times. I've got to go." His voice went low as if someone else had come into the room. I hadn't asked what the urgency was. Ten missing, twelve confirmed dead. It was urgent. I hadn't asked if he'd be waiting for my call. Edward, who never spooked, was scared. He'd be waiting for my call. Reprinted from Obsidian Butterfly by Laurell K. Hamilton by permission of Ace Books, a member of Penguin Putnam Inc. Copyright (c) 2000, Laurell K. Hamilton. All rights reserved. This excerpt, or any parts thereof, may not be reproduced in any form without permission.