



The Harlequin

Laurell K. Hamilton

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Anita Blake is about to face the challenge of her life. Into her world-a world already overflowing with power-have come creatures so feared that powerful, centuries-old vampires refuse to mention their names. It is forbidden to speak of The Harlequin unless you've been contacted. And to be contacted by The Harlequin is to be under sentence of death.

Long-time rivals for Anita's affections, Jean-Claude, Master Vampire of the City, and Richard, alpha-werewolf, will need to become allies. Shapeshifters Nathaniel and Micah will have to step up their support. And then there's Edward. In this situation, Anita knows that she needs to call the one man who has always been there for her...

The Harlequin Details

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Author : Laurell K. Hamilton

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Genre : Fantasy, Urban Fantasy, Paranormal, Vampires, Romance, Paranormal Romance, Fiction, Horror, Supernatural, Adult Fiction, Erotica

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From Reader Review The Harlequin for online ebook

MissM says

I stopped buying the Anita books awhile back when they turned into lame bodice rippers. I kept reading them though because I was interested and invested in the Anitaverse. Oddly enough, this book had significantly less sex than previous titles, but sadly, it didn't improve the quality of the story. After years of wishing we could have some plot withOUT sex, we get it and it's dull. The horrible, terribly irony.

Ashley Ann says

Didn't really like it. These books normally only take me a day or two to read, but this one took me almost two weeks. I just couldn't get into it.

I used to be a die-hard fan of the series, but my interest is fading. I personally think LKH should have either stopped with Obsidian Butterfly which was the last Anita Blake book that I actually enjoyed, or should could have kept going but made the ardour a temporary thing. Pretty sure that was what killed my interest.

These books have become porn without pictures in my opinion. All LKH does now is write like six or seven sex scenes and try to squeeze in a plot around them. I loved how the early books in the series the most there was for romance was like one kiss. The books had all this wonderful tension between Anita and the men she loved but it wasn't all about sex. And then one Anita started sleeping with her men, each book had one more sex scene then the last. I get tired of reading solely about Anita's sex life until like the second to last chapter of an 800 page book when LKH finally remembers that there has to be a plot and tries to work it in in less than 50 pages. It's ridiculous.

Hard to say if I'll stay with the series. Definitely no longer books I feel compelled to buy. Maybe I'll borrow the books from the library if I run out of other things to read. Otherwise I'm pretty sure I'm done with Anita Blake in my life.

Argona says

2.5 stars.

This book is actually very similar to the previous ones when it comes to writing style, pacing and everything else, so if you liked those, you will probably like this one too.

But I am starting to get tired of Anita. Too tired!

The truth is, I have very fond memories from this series, discussing it with my friends, complaining about Anita and simply talking about our favorite boys. Therefore I have always been too generous when rating these books. But I think, I am losing the ability to fool myself. I can no longer overlook these big holes and flaws that stare at me every time I start to read a new Anita Blake story. I always did have conflicted feelings when rating these novels. Some of the characters like Jean claude and Asher are very precious to me. But I can no longer even enjoy reading about my favorite boys.

Jean claude is supposed to be the Master of the city and yet everyone has started to see Anita as the main power, not him and not even the entire paranormal community together. It's all about Anita. Asher used to be a wounded flawed character but a strong one. Now all he gets do when he is actually present is bitch and whine. These vampires are supposed to be ancient. I expect them to act matured and have patience. I can't bare how their characters are ruined to be weaker than Anita and under her domain.

So many new characters are added in each book that old ones don't really get to shine anymore. They are just there or mentioned in passing. It was hard for me to accept 6 men in Anita's life but I became used to it. I invested in this paranormal universe! I became fond of every single one of them, from Jean clause and Richard to Asher, Jason, Micah and Nathaniel. But what's the point if I don't really get to see them do anything useful or important to the story? They are just pawns to Anita's power and lust. I hate characters that do everything by themselves and pretend to need everyone else while controlling and manipulating them and that's exactly what Anita is.

The idea of this book looked pretty amazing at the beginning. An attack by Harlequins sounded very cool, intense and full of potential but there is hardly any direct interaction between the old gang and Harlequins. Any real vampire-related action happens at the last 50 pages of the book. The rest is all about Anita and her sex life and her whining about it. Not to mention, most of the time, characters are talking to each other and simply inform the reader what has happened or what is going on. Seriously...they are just TALKING!

Hey Anita, Jean claude is talking to vampire council, trying to save all our lives and convince them of our innocence. Hey Anita, Asher has taken over the things, he is doing something big to get help. Hey Anita, Micah did something too. Did I mention Nathaniel held you hand? That's a lot. Jason? Oh, he arrived once to say hello and cry on you. God, I am annoyed! I am just told about what's going on and then I am supposed to endure pages about Anita's clothing and what she decides to wear!

Yeah, I am losing patience with her. Anita is the same old sexist, judgmental, hypocritical self-centered character that I remember her to be. The supposedly strong heroine who actually wants to be a boy and looks down on other girls and anything remotely feminine. She needs a wife because she is too cool to do housework and that what wives are for! And she can't spend time on her hair because that's what girls do! Give me a break! Then I have to tolerate being inside her head while she decides on what to wear for her next sexual congress.

Once again, everybody loves HER from 16 years old boys to ancient creatures. The world revolves around her and her sex life and she alone has all the power in the world to defeat all the bad guys and everyone else are just her tools or her sex partners.

Harlequin sounds like a very interesting plot because YOU have a good imaginative mind and YOU are IMAGINING different SCENARIOS with GREAT potential that CAN happen but NEVER WILL!

There are tiny developments in some of the relationships. These tiny developments are the only reason I continue reading this series. I became fond of these boys when this series was categorized as Urban fantasy, Paranormal romance and freaking Horror! I say boys because every single female character except Anita is either evil or useless.

I am sorry to say that what these books are turning into is pure erotica in a paranormal setting. Your favorite paranormal creatures don't get to do anything paranormal, they just get to have sex with Anita.

I loved this series. I freaking loved it and now I am forced to take my favorite characters and make up my

own scenarios and plots for them since these books no longer contain any. Read the summary, get the idea and make up your own story.

This book deserves 1. The biased part of my brain insisted on 2(even had the audacity to suggest 3 but I changed it back) and hey, this is the 15th book in the series. By now I know what I am getting into and it's my own problem if I keep reading.

Samantha says

Hmm, I debated and debated and debated whether to even write a review for this book because of all the controversy surrounding Laurell K. Hamilton changing her characters. I liked this book. Was it the best Anita Blake book? No. Was it better than the last couple? Yes. It's not a stand alone book so if you haven't read the others you probably should. I always enjoy the politics of the vampires and the wereanimals. I think that it is interesting just like I find our American political system fascinating. So I'm ok with Ms. Hamilton taking her time and explaining things. I don't need action all the time. I can get that from other authors. I also enjoy the interplay between the characters. I like that we are getting to know them better and better. I liked that someone finally died and think more probably should. I think Laurell has been watching a lot of 24. Her plots are getting slower and more explanatory in nature. She's taking her time to explain every little detail just like they do in the TV show 24 so I'm ok with that too. I hate that Anita can't have sex with the same guys but feels the need to add others. I think that's a little crazy but oh well. I loved what happened to Richard at the end. I felt this book brought back the mystery and action while keeping the sex and the politics so I did enjoy it. I'm definitely looking forward to her new Jason novel next year and the Merry Gentry's Frost book in the fall.

Holly Full Moon Bites Book Reviews says

~Has slight spoilers.~

Anita Blake is calling in the big gun's-- Edward as The Harlequin, very old vampires who kill for the council and wear masks-- come to St. Louis. But Edward isn't the only one she is going to need--Jean-Claude and Richard must come together with Anita and her other trivium if they are to defend themselves against The Harlequin.

I really enjoyed this fifteenth Anita Blake book. I think we get some of the good-action-suspense-plot back we had from the earlier Anita Blake books but we also still get the great sexual side that the series has come to include in the last few books.

One thing that bothered me and I think I have mentioned before in another review is that I miss Dolph not this new Dolph, I miss the old Dolph! How he and Anita used to be, I know he is upset but the old Dolph I just don't think he would be acting this way--it seems out of character to me. The Dolph I knew wouldn't let his feelings or hate get in the way of police business.

Haven is also back which I think deserves mentioning and I hope staying for good. Thug or not I liked him from the very beginning and hoped she would keep him.

Altogether, I think this book is a step in the right direction of balancing the old Anita and the new Anita, so to speak.

I would recommend this book to, again, people who liked the last couple of Anita Blake novels.

Daniela says

The vulturi, ahem, harlequin are in town.

Anita is back to being a self righteous b**** and I really really disliked her in this book.

Apparently, things keep working in her favor, to the point of ridiculousness.

Sometimes I wonder if the books would be shorter if she stops bringing up stuff that doesn't matter like her inner monologue and her pruderies.

For example: chapter 28 was a total waste of time. She starts nagging about Olaf and Peter coming along yet she approves at the end.

It is official. I still like Richard regardless of his actions. His intentions are always good. And I have said before she made him the monster he became.

And I was scared at the beginning when Raphael turned into this complete stranger acting exactly like Dolph earlier in the series. But he came to his senses thanks to a mind blowing PDA session with Anita. Yeah, Anita who was supposed to be very very sore after a previous encounter with Richard. But seemed to have forgotten about it first with Raphael then with the Swan person.

Although the swan scene was hot and cool.

Now, we had established Belle Morte was the enemy and wanted to kill Anita, but she actually helps in this book. My question is why?

And where was Jean Claude when she woke up at the hospital? He didn't even have the decency to go check on her after she saved everyone's life. I guess I wouldn't be so upset if we had some insight into what him and Asher were up to while Anita was recovering. I really would like to read more about Asher and Jean Claude. Then the harlequin end up being really gay, not the powerful creatures I imagined.

And Haven did not impress me. She already has so many dudes. I kind of hate her, she keeps on getting "beasts" inside of her and therefore more lovers. Omg I wish that would just stop.

And the Olaf tidbit was disturbing and gross. I don't know who would find that appealing or sexy.

I guess I'll take a break from Anita Blake for a while.

Samantha (Book Lover's Cozy Cafe) says

This was probably the best Anita book I've since the...well since the ardeur (sp) started and Anita became a whore. Sorry to say that because I love Anita, but she did turn into quite the whore... it was getting to the point where I thought Ms. Hamilton had crossed wires, between the Anita Blake series and the Meredith Gentry series. Because in Anita's first 8 or 9 book maybe less she was this complete barney bad-ass that kicked anyone's ass the f****ed with her. Then she started turning into this whiny wimpering, sex fiend. Then in the Meredith books, she's supposed to sleep around with as many guys as possible, and that was the whole basis of the books, to stay alive, and screw as many fairies as possible to conceive a child to gain the throne. But somehow they both totally flip-flopped, Anita went into whore mode, and Merry turned into the barney bad ass. Now don't get me wrong I love both series, and I am still hoping the the Meredith Gentry

series will continue for a little longer. It just seems odd how the main female character flip flops into what another lead female character in another story is supposed to be.

Anywho, this book I enjoy immensely. One the lack of sex was great, it was a nice change of pace from how the series is going. Two you get to see Edward again, I just love him. Three Anita is having doubts about Nathaniel, well in my opinion... ABOUT DAMNED TIME. I like Nathaniel, but I don't see him as Anita's type, he's too submissive for my taste. Four the best best BEST part of the book, is when Anita went off on Richard, that she had finally had enough of his bullsh*t. Jean-Claude too it was so great, I was whooping for them both while reading that. Richard is a self righteous bastard, who doesn't know his a\$\$ from his head. I totally loved it though, never liked the guy... there was a book or two where I had thought that maybe he was deemable then he went and screwed things up again. Wish him the best but BUBYE BUCKAROO!

Marian says

The sex scenes no longer occupy more pages than anything else, but the character list only continues to grow wildly out of control. Which I can live with, actually. What might be the final nail in the coffin, however, is the fact that some of Anita's actions this go round can, and probably should be, seen as those you'd typically associate with any given villain.

Rex of the lions won't bed her so she can feed on all the lions [which the book likens to rape since it's not like everyone being used as metaphysical lunch agreed to it prior] because he's married? Poof, the lions are on their own. The metaphysical rape of various entire groups of were-animals? Yeah, she goes there at least twice and the only person who seems to think this is a bad thing is also kicked aside.

Truly old school Anita, or Anita thinking clearly, would execute anyone else who dared to do such a thing. If the series ever manages to view that as crossing the line, then maybe there's hope. If not, well, I'll be rooting for Richard to continue to mock for the disenchanted fans out there.

Fangs for the Fantasy says

The Harlequin, the deadly and secret Wild Hunt of the Council, the ultimate police force and nightmare of the vampire world, has arrived in St. Louis. Ostensibly there to examine Malcolm after his refusal to Blood Oath his followers, they are casting their eyes on Jean-Claude

And they are not playing by the rules

The biggest, scariest enforces of vampire kind! Created to strike fear in even the most powerful Masters of the City! Scary! Powerful! A force that should make even Anita quake in her boots.

Except... not.

Because they're not there. The book is called The Harlequin, everyone refers to them as the scariest things ever ever ever but... they don't actually do a whole lot. The main thing they do do is mess with people's emotions causing minor overreactions which are dealt with the minute everyone realises they're having an

overreaction

Do you know how tense and dramatic a scene is if where people talk for several pages about various angst issues and then spend some more pages deciding whether or not their issues were legitimate or not is? If you guessed “not even slightly” then you’d be right. Epic shows downs involving everyone sitting in a circle and wringing their hands rate somewhere between “watching paint dry” and “going through Aunt Mildred’s holiday photos” in terms of excitement.

Of course, this is also an Anita Blake book. So when the enemy attacks by making the characters extra dramatic, extra whiney, extra angst or extra moody – HOW ARE YOU SUPPOSED TO TELL?! This is their ground state of being! If it weren’t for Anita occasionally saying “I’m way too afraid” or “he’s acting too angry” I’d completely miss it. And did, repeatedly. It’s impossible to portray these characters as more emotionally uncontrolled than they already are.

Requiem is being pouty and moody... and this is news? Byron being catty and poking at people – yeah, that’s kind of his only defining character trait (because it’s a stereotype). Richard being surly, uncooperative and angry? Oh, must be Tuesday.

In fact, Richard losing his ever loving mind because of the Harlequin messing with him is the major “attack” of the Harlequin. But Richard perpetually loses his ever loving mind! He attacked Jean-Claude? Yeah, not the first time. He wants Anita all to himself? This is hardly news. He hates being a werewolf? Yup, we knew that as well. Exactly what did the Harlequin do to Richard that was discernibly different from how he has behaved from the last several books?

Or even in this book. Anita, using her woo-woo, slams the messing Harlequin across the room and they stop meddling with their emotions. And later they head to a huge show down – I’m talking a massive dramatic show-down with Jean-Claude, Anita & co on a stage opposite the big bad Harlequin also on the stage, watched by a huge audience. Faced by this Richard decides to... lose his ever loving mind.

I kid you not, for pages he sits there and wails about the Ardeur and how he can’t be part of it and waaaah his issues. The big bad vampires are RIGHT THERE watching him. Anita, Richard and Jean-Claude have a big argument while the bad guys, I don’t know, check their watches and tap their feet and wait to be noticed again, I guess. And this isn’t the first time Richard has lost his ever loving mind while the bad guys are in mid-attack – it happened when Musette visited in Cerulean Sins as well.

Richard attacking Jean-Claude isn’t proof of the evil-bad-nasty Harlequin. It’s par the course with his characters.

So, this means we end up with a book in a series that is horrendously bogged down by characters having random emotional shitfits and then having to sit down and talk about it for 8 gazillion pages afterwards – and then add an enemy that causes random emotional shitfits that are pretty much indistinguishable from their standard shitfits.

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Jim says

Better than "Micah", but still too much sex & not enough adventure for me. I really like Anita Blake. She's tough & good hearted, facing some trials that would take most people under. She hangs in there & tries to do the next right thing. When she can't figure out what the next right thing is, she at least tries not to do the wrong thing. It doesn't always work out. Twisted, complicated world she lives in.

I'm a little surprised I've hung with the series this long. I almost gave it up, especially after "Micah", but I'm glad I got this one. Hamilton is still expanding her world & this book was no exception. It was logically done, too.

Roger Royer says

Anita Blake just became one of my favorite heroes. I am interested in her and all of her supporting characters. The book is wonderfully well written and full of surprises.

It is however violent and sexual so if that is not for you then don't read the series.

Well, I believe that the whole series is like this, not just the one book. You don't have to read the other books in the series for this one to be good, thankfully. I really appreciate that as I have only read book four I think and this is book 15.

Meredith says

Series: #14 Anita Blake

Pages: 422

Number: 37

First Sentence:

"Malcolm the head of the Church of Eternal Life, the vampire church, sat across from me"

Synopsis:

From the Publisher

Readers haven't seen anything yet-new in the "fabulously imagined series" (Publishers Weekly) from the #1 New York Times bestselling author.

Anita Blake is about to face the challenge of her life. Into her world-a world already overflowing with power-have come creatures so feared that powerful, centuries-old vampires refuse to mention their names. It is forbidden to speak of The Harlequin unless you've been contacted. And to be contacted by The Harlequin

is to be under sentence of death.

Long-time rivals for Anita's affections, Jean-Claude, Master Vampire of the City, and Richard, alpha-werewolf, will need to become allies. Shapeshifters Nathaniel and Micah will have to step up their support. And then there's Edward. In this situation, Anita knows that she needs to call the one man who has always been there for her...

My Thoughts:

This series has always been one of my favorites. It is such a hotbed of animosity and discussion. This is a series you either love, hate, or love to hate. There really is no inbetween. I am in love with this series period. I never thought that I would be a fan of anything vampire, after all they are the things horror movies are made of. But LKH was the author who made me fall in love with these types of stories.

So far, we are seeing a totally different Anita. One who is in more control, one who is capable of staying in control even at moments when she used to snap.

This journey into the Anitaverse brings a bit of the old Anita into the new Anita world and it was an extra spicy blend to an already hot world. Fans of the old Anita will see a glimpse of her in THE HARLEQUIN while fans of the new twist will not be let down either. It appears that LKH is starting to find her stride. And I believe it is clear in her dedication.

Characterization:

I truly feel like this is one of the best character driven series in this genre. LKH has created some of the most emotionally moving characters on paper. I fell in love with Nathaniel when he first appeared on paper, but I have to admit that as LKH has been allowing him to grow he really is one of my favorite literary heroes. I don't have many in fact my list is quite short.

Keep/Swap/Library: Keep

Rating: A

Tilly Slaton says

The Harlequin is a very interesting book.

Have you ever tried to make spaghetti sauce from scratch? In the beginning, you add all the spices and you think you have a good thing going. Then after you let it simmer for a few hours, everything explodes and you have this monstrosity of a pot of sauce that has drowned itself in too many flavors?

Well ...that's this book.

Some people say that you could never have too much of a good thing. I disagree. I enjoy reading about all of Blake's sweeties, all the bad guys, Edward and sexy psycho Olaf, but throwing them all into a book together isn't as easy as it sounds.

Anita Blake. My hero. The sexy goddess of lust and wrath .. dundundun ..

I sat behind my desk, sipping coffee from my newest Christmas-themed mug: a little girl sat on Santa's lap saying, "Define good."

Anita is an awesome character. My friend asked me to describe her and it just isn't an easy thing to do. And then I read this book. There is a two-word sentence that just flat-out does it for me.

Romantically handicapped.

And that's just the tip of the iceberg baby!

Wereanimals fighting for political pull. Betrayal from Anita's closet bodyguards. In the end, will they protect her or their leader?

The Harlequin, the boogeyman, the police of the vampire society stalks and hunts Anita and her loved ones. No one follows their own rules. Laws are broken. Just when you think you've made sense on "what is and what is not allowed" the shit hits the fan.

Ultimatums from one of her main sweeties leaves her heart-wrenching. Anita isn't sure if she can give him what he needs and is afraid if she cannot, if he will leave her for someone who will.

Bottom line of this book .. It's a great book! Lots of sex, blood and gore. Stubborn hearts refusing to be ripped out of chest cavities. Sexy psycho Olaf courting Anita in only his delusional way.

Two deaths! Man .. It's about time. Kill some of them off and get on with it

"In this world I would rather live two days like a tiger than a hundred years like a sheep."

I recommend this book to all adults, especially to those of you that are reading this series. This book is a MUST read. There are a LOT of key factors that are formed in this book that carry on to the next three. I strongly advise keeping this book away from ALL children AND teenagers. Only mature adults should read this book.

Politically correct and STRONG twisted SEXUAL content. Extreme violence, blood and smiling gore. Yeehaw for blood dripping sex! Or is that sexy dripping blood? Damn.. is there a difference?

I'm off to read Blood Noir now!

Happy reading!

Amy says

The Harlequin relies very heavily on dialogue between the characters, which is typical of Hamilton's work but in this case it comes off as clunky and tiresome. Harlequin is riddled with pages of conversation between Anita and a minor character that not only does nothing to advance the plot but does not advance the character

development.

Speaking of characters, Harlequin has too many of them. The core cast of characters, long thought by myself and others to be one of the strengths of the series, is bogged down with a ridiculous amount of minor characters who are given way too much stage time. There are several characters whose appearance does absolutely nothing to advance any plot or subplot(s). It almost seems like they were thrown in so you wouldn't forget that they existed within the world (and sometimes they are minor enough where you really have forgotten who they are), but with all of them making an appearance it is difficult to follow the storyline. Subsequently the characters of Anita, Jean-Claude, Richard, Edward, Nathaniel, and even the long obsessed about Micah suffer from neglect. There needs to be a very large battle or war or something to trim the character list (and Anita's six or seven long-list of lovers) back down again.

The one who suffers the most is Anita, who has lost whatever sense of realism that she once had. Yes, she lived in a world of vampires and zombies and had a quirky day job, but she was still realistic. You could relate to her and feel like if you lived in a world of vampires and zombies you could kick butt too. What happened to her zombie job? Not a mention of it, even though the opening scene takes place at work. I think that was the only time she went to work. What about her hobbies? They have seemingly fallen away to be replaced by managing her sex life - and with six/seven lovers, it really is a full time job (and an unrealistic one at that. Few can manage to date one person, some can manage two, no one could handle six). Her conflict with her faith and her mortal friends? It has been reduced to a bit scene with Dolph - portrayed as a one dimensional racist - raging on about her love life. When was the last time she went on a crime scene? Raised a zombie? Had coffee with a friend? Dealt directly with her necromancy for some reason other than because it created problems for the ardeur?

I did like how Edward was reintroduced. Even though there were only a handful of strong scenes with him, they were the stronger ones in the book. I also like the development of Nathaniel as a character but I didn't like his new prominent role in the book. I'd like his role better if it seemed like Hamilton could make up her mind regarding him - it seems like she doesn't know if he's important or not. The same goes for Micah. Now that you've written a whole novella about him, you're going to regulate him to the backseat? Decide who is going to be the main cast and who isn't and stick to it.

In short, this work is inconsistent with sloppy writing and an unwieldy cast. You are not missing much if you wait until the library's copy frees up to read the book - or better yet, don't read it at all. You're looking for Anita and the Anita that we all know and love died sometime between Obsidian Butterfly and Narcissus in Chains - the one in the current series is supremely shallow and undeveloped.

What is desperately needed - aside from an end to the series - is an editor with a spine. She needs an editor that will tell her "We can't print that, it's a cumbersome, incoherent mess. Cut out X, Y, Z and go back and tighten up your characters, your dialogue, and the flow of your storyline."

Anita says

The thing I love and hate most about Anita Blake novels is one in the same: I find them utterly and completely addictive. Really, they are nearly impossible for me to put down. LK Hamilton (the author) does a tremendous job of getting inside the heads of her characters. None of the characters are fictional perfect - in fact, it's the flaws they have to overcome that make them interesting. There's never a cut and dry happily ever after, but there is joy, sorrow, fear, love - a whole range of emotions. Reading a PNR novel with realistic

emotional evocation makes that fantasy world come alive in my mind, creating extremely strong mental pictures of all the characters. I ride an emotional roller coaster while reading her books, and even after I put finish one, it takes several days before I stop thinking about it. I know a lot of people criticize this series for excessive violence and too many sex scenes, but I've always found the story lines compelling enough to carry me through.

This particular book is about an attack by the "vampire police/assassins" called the Harlequin. Some of their members go rogue and cause all kinds of life threatening trouble. Edward, Olaf, Peter, Haven aka Cookie Monster, Malcolm, Donovan the swan, and Gabriel the rat king all have significant parts in this book. Richard seems to have finally let go of his relationship with Anita - we'll see if his resolve holds up. The mother of all darkness (first vampire) makes 2 appearances, and Belle Morte (Jean-Claude's sire) is on the scene once.

Chibineko says

Ever since the action in the Anita Blake shifted from action in the streets to action between the sheets, the series has taken a turn for the boring. This book seems to show the signs of this more than the others do. What would have been an otherwise interesting premise for a novel has been killed- not by Hamilton's penchant for mind numbingly repetitive sex. No, that I think I could have dealt with. What killed this book is that everyone seems to want to talk each other to death.

This entry in the Anita Blake series has Anita enjoying a rare night out with one of her boyfriends when she receives a mysterious white mask. Jean Claude, her vampire master & lover informs her that it is the calling card of the Harlequin- a band of vampires that monitors anyone who is suspected of being too powerful or too abusive of their power. He tells her that the white mask means that they are only watching & that they cannot make any moves until they have given a color appropriate mask. Unfortunately the Harlequin agents appear to have their own agenda in mind, as Anita & her group find themselves being attacked both spiritually & physically.

Seriously, what part of the above doesn't sound awesome? I mean, an elite squad of vampires that answer to no one except the vampire high council & even then, have the power to exterminate one of the council if they were to step too far out of bounds. In other words, the Harlequin is the freaking vamp police. And they're trying to mess with Anita's head & the heads of her loved ones. The premise for the book had a lot of promise.

But in the end, this awesome idea is trampled flat by repetitive sex scenes & long dragged out episodes where Anita & her men talk everything to death. I'm not saying that I wanted it to be all full of Michael Bay-esque explosions, but come on... You have scenes that take 30 pages to say something that could have and SHOULD have been said in three. It got incredibly old after a while & I found my eyes glazing over as I kept reading the same idea spouted over & over again, but through the mouths of different characters. After a while I just wanted to scream at the book "OK- I FREAKING GET IT. Now can we move on?" (I'm not even going to go over some of the more squicky parts of the book, such as the scene where Anita says a girl had "buyer's remorse".)

This book could have easily been shortened by a hundred pages & been the better for it. The Anita Blake series is in DESPERATE need of an editor to take care of not only the grammatical & spelling errors, but to also improve the pacing of the novels. The series has been spiraling into a slow decline & this book shows

this. I gave the book 1 star because while the idea of it was interesting, the talkity talk of the book just killed it.

Kathy Davie says

First read January 28, 2010: Thank god for the "police", I think. Who'da thunk vampires would have an enforcement group... Although, it's not surprising that there's rebellion within the ranks. The tension continues and the advancements tear on.

Read again September 14, 2011

Fifteenth in the Anita Blake, Vampire Hunter erotic urban fantasy series set in an alternate St. Louis, Missouri. The story revolves around Anita Blake's increasingly vampiric powers and the issues it creates for her and the people with whom she's involved.

The Story

The Harlequin have come to St. Louis. A secret police force of vampire assassins who should abide by the rules when they come to town. Should being the operative word. But then the Vampire Council does fear Jean-Claude and his triumvirate. So it's not that much of a surprise when all hell breaks loose and death comes shooting.

The Characters

Richard is such an ass blowing hot one minute and cold all the rest. Nathaniel is certainly feeling powerful these days while we learn a great deal about how Jean-Claude's guards feel about Anita and the *ardeur*. Malcolm certainly receives and returns the surprise of Anita's power. The lion pride in St. Louis gets a nasty shock and they certainly deserve it! Poor Raphael also gets a shock. It'll be interesting to see how he deals with the consequences of Anita's power in *Blood Noir*!

Edward comes to help bringing a very unwanted pair of backups. And both Anita and Edward realize that their concept of fun has changed.

My Take

Oh, wow! The action just never stops and the emotional tangles are just as intense BUT Anita is forced to see just how difficult she makes life for the men in her bed. She's an odd duck, our Anita. She hates being in love. Has no clue about relationships. Demands honesty and hates it when she gets it as she continually gets in her own way.

I had doubted myself in the last story. Now it's confirmed. Jean-Claude and Anita have reinforced their "natural practicality" and she still doesn't know what J-C got from Richard. Hmm, for as much in love with Anita as J-C is, I wonder if J-C got that desire for love from "our wolf"...

Shockingly, Anita is learning not to poke. At least, not all the time.

The Cover

The cover is a bit scary with its scantily-clad Columbine casually leaning back against the warm brown and gold stone wall dangling an elaborate black-gold face mask from her fingertips, black ribbon crisscrossing her left forearm...a very feminine gauntlet.

The title is much too apt as it is *The Harlequin* and their founder who are threatening everyone that Anita holds dear.

Crystal Starr Light says

For once, I actually can relate something resembling a PLOT that occurs in this book! YIPPEE!

Anita Blake is at her workplace (don't faint!) and meets up with Malcolm, the leader of the Church of Eternal Life. Two of his vampire followers have Execution Hits out for them - executions that Anita is set to enact - but Malcolm hints that his followers have been falsely accused, that there is another threat. And then, while on a date with Nathaniel (and between his pressuring her to do BDSM, something she is not comfortable with, but feels she must do to keep him around), she receives a white mask - the calling card of the Harlequin.

Of course, that is much too boring for LKH at this point, so we degenerate into the usual Ring around the Rosie with:

Richard Angst!

Nathaniel Whining!

Sexism!

And our favorite:

Tacky clothing descriptions!

These books have gotten so cliched at this point, with all the same LKHisms, that I needed to do something to spice it up. So I invented Anita Blake BINGO!!

I would have done the Anita Blake Drinking Game, but I listen to these at work, and they don't let me work while intoxicated.

By the end of the book, my board looked like this:

Yes, I was a little disappointed too that LKH never called a man's schlong "velvet muscle" either.

"The Harlequin" is a much better novel than "Incubus Dreams" and "Danse Macabre". That said, I'm not really giving this book that much of a compliment. Reading the drug facts on a laxative bottle is better than either ID or DM - and at least the laxative doesn't pretend not to be about sh!t.

"The Harlequin" actually has a story; a beginning, middle, and end; an actual PLOT. You know, the thing I've been whining about since "Narcissus in Chains"? Well, that plot, that story isn't half bad. I rather liked it. The existence of the Harlequin was interesting - the vampires have always seemed rather free-roaming and governless. What keeps them in their places? Why don't they try to expand their reaches more or cause more

trouble? Well, the Harlequin does that. They are above the Vampire Council and operate on their own terms. Even Marme Noir, the Mother of All Darkness, fears them in a way.

But I knew that an interesting plot like this was just too good to be true, and I was right. Just when LKH starts making me nostalgic for the earlier books (and in case you don't know, when I first read those books, I really didn't care for them - now, I'm like "WOW, I wish I was reading THOSE books!"), she has to resort to her sloppy writing and author appeal - and spending pages upon pages upon pages talking about, whining about, or arguing about sex/relationships.

Despite an improvement in the quality of the book (i.e. the inclusion of an actual PLOT), Anita Blake is still a horrible person. She continues to be a sexist pig and morally bereft; this time, she basically sentences a man and his family to death because he wouldn't sleep with her (he was married and wanted to honor his vows). She and LKH try to justify the action as more than just about sex, but it falls flat:

"...we couldn't afford to have any ally that wasn't with us completely. It wasn't just the sex. There'd been no lion in his pride good enough to be a bodyguard. Not a single one. You couldn't be that weak and survive."

Anita Blake is our HERO. She is not supposed to send people to their deaths; she is supposed to PROTECT them. And why does she need to sleep with someone ANYWAY? She has a Triumvirate of her own, not to mention being a million other things. Why couldn't she call on those powers to fix the situation, instead of calling Magic HooHoo Power to save the day? Oh, but we wouldn't have had a sex scene involving bestiality otherwise. Silly me.

The sad fact is: if one of Anita's men asked to sleep with someone else, more likely than not, Anita would refuse. She is mad at Richard because he is not "faithful" to her. When Nathaniel wants BDSM and Anita does not, Anita does not even entertain that maybe Nathaniel should see another partner to partake in BDSM - even though she is sleeping with 6+ men on a regular basis.

For someone who is a necromancer, a Numir Raj of her own Leopard pack, the Bulvark and Lupa of Richard's wolf pack, Jean-Claude's human servant, and basically a succubus, all while holding a whopping FOUR strands of lycanthropy (wolf, leopard, lion, and tiger) while never once having to shift Anita Sue is dumber than mud. No, wait, that's an insult to mud. Seriously, half of Anita's conversation is:

"Am I missing something?"

"What do you mean?"

"So?"

"What are you saying?"

This is not the Anita of earlier books. No, the woman is no Sherlock Holmes, but the things she is CONSTANTLY ASKING THESE QUESTIONS ABOUT aren't rocket science. They are things that even I, the densest person in the world, can figure out. If *I* can figure out how to get from A to B, then Anita

Blake, who is supposed to have worked on multiple crime scenes as a paranormal investigator/consultant (besides the laundry list of fancy modifiers behind her name), should be dancing circles around me.

This will seem odd, but I will stand in defense of Anita for one thing. A subplot of the book is Nathaniel wanting Anita to do BDSM with him. Anita doesn't want to - it scares her. But Nathaniel and EVERY MALE she encounters pushes her to try it. This is NOT ACCPETABLE. This is NOT HOW YOU DO BDSM. You do NOT force one partner to accept it to help you get off. A BDSM lifestyle should be about mutuality - BOTH partners need to be equally interested in it. So, if Nathaniel really can't live without it and Anita really doesn't want to do it, then they need to BREAK UP. It's not a BIG DEAL, like Anita makes it (of course, she's a greedy child that grabbed too many cookies from the cookie jar and refuses to let any go). It's just two different personalities with different sexual desires, and it's OK if Anita doesn't want to or can't do BDSM; both should grow the f@#\$ up and move on.

There are WAY TOO MANY characters, particularly male characters. I counted how many characters there were. Let me share my findings:

Named Male Characters with at Least One Line of Dialogue: 37

Named Female Characters with at Least One Line of Dialogue: 9

Male Characters Brought Up in Conversation (Do Not Appear in Novel): 5

Female Characters Brought Up in Conversation (Do Not Appear in Novel): 11 (view spoiler)

This is f-ing ridiculous. There are easily FOUR TIMES as many men than women with dialogue. FOUR TIMES. Some of these characters only get a few lines of dialogue - dialogue that could have been given to another character and you wouldn't have known the difference. To me, this says that something is TERRIBLY WRONG with the characters if you can give one the dialogue, and it is not jarring. Not to mention, it is impossible to keep up with who is in the room, why they are there, and what is so notable about them anyway (and why the frak there needs to be 60 people in a room at any point in time - it used to be that the only bodyguard Anita has was herself and her Browning!). It's worse in the final action scene when there had to be over a dozen characters. I honestly couldn't keep track of them - I'd be like, "Oh, such-and-such is here too?"

As if this isn't bad enough, take a look at the "bad guys":

Evil or Ambiguous Males: Malcolm (according to Anita), Edward, Olaf, Giovanni, Pantalone, Joseph (according to Anita) -> 5

Evil or Ambiguous Females: Soledad, Marmee Noir, Belle Morte, Columbine, Thea, possibly Perdita (who is a spy of Thea), Julia (Regina of Lion Pride), Mercia, Nivia -> 9

NINE females to FIVE males, when there are FOUR TIMES as many males as females? How can ANYONE call this book a feminist work? (And by and large, LKH DOES call Anita Blake and these books feminist works.)

But that's not the worst of it. This book is one of the most sexist, misogynistic works I've ever read. Lines like:

"...like a version of the guy greeting that friends use sometimes when a handshake won't do but they're too manly to hug." -> Because hugging is exclusively for women.

"I was a lot of things to Edward, but I was not a girl." -> Because being a woman is like YUCK!

"A man's ego is a fragile thing, sometimes." -> And a woman's can be stomped on with no damage?!

"Truth's quiet voice came, 'A lady always makes a man want to be better than he is.'" -> And a man can't make another man want to be better? Or what about women criminals? Do THEY make men want to be better?

Do not call Anita a "feminist" when she slut-shames other women. Do not call Anita a "feminist" if she considers a woman who wants a man to stop having sex to be experiencing "buyer's remorse". Do not call Anita a "feminist" if she has no compassion for another woman. Do not call Anita a "feminist" if she despises anything that is traditionally feminine (cooking, cleaning, dresses, makeup, etc.) and considers it less than "man's work". Do not call Anita a "feminist" if she demeans hugging, being polite, and outbursts of emotions and considers them less than a "man's stoicism". Do not call Anita a "feminist" when she sexualizes nearly every man she comes across as if he is merely a hunk of flesh for her to have sex with.

Call Anita what she is. Hypocritical and two-faced. Heartless. Judgmental and bigoted. Rude. Narcissistic. A self-centered, leering, perverted jerk who is the female counterpart to Michael Bay (and his weird obsession with Megan Fox and any other hot girl).

And then there's LKH award-winning writing! I don't have as many quotes (I'm sorry about not having an overwrought clothing description for you!), because I was playing bingo, but here are a couple for your reading pleasure:

"Jean-Claude and I fed off him. We both fed the ardeur off him. We fed on him, and through him, we fed on every person he had brought to our lands. We did this massive feed on them all."

""Maybe God isn't the sex police, Richard. Sometimes I think Christians get all hung up on the sex thing because it's easier to worry about sex than to ask yourself, 'Am I a good person?'"

"The Harlequin" is yet another book in the Anita Blake series that has miles of potential and goes nowhere with it. There are too many characters with too many intricate connections to remember anymore. Anita Blake continues to be an unlikeable, sexist beast, who dominates any conversation with whining about her stupid relationships and justifying all the sleeping around she does (LKH: I DON'T CARE who she sleeps with or how much, I want a f-ing story!!). And all the interesting developments - Marmee Noir, Belle Morte, and The Harlequin - are left in the dirt, like a toy flung out the window on a cross-country journey.

If you've liked the more recent books, I'm sure this will be up your alley. If you want Anita to return to her glory days, this is better than the previous couple of books. But I would approach with much caution.

Now, if you're like me and like to understand a phenomenon and read "So Bad It's Good" books, then pick this one up - but please don't feed the cash cow!

Kipi says

SO CALLED SPOILER WARNING! TW: RAPE

UPDATE

Im on the third chapter, and already these things have occurred:

- "metaphysical" x 3
- "Who, me?" x 2 (well, the other is a bit of a strech... :-))
- "hard" and "tight" x who knows? (not in the sense you're thinking of though, thank goodness)
- overly describing boytoy's looks x 1
- "it was as if" x 2
- someone could do something "like a sonofabitch" x 1
- Anita being bitchy and needy and gets praise from someone she hasn't earned it from x 2
- a gun is mentioned/described x 2 (and she lef the office to go to a movie...)

Extra points for calling your male lover, who also happens to be (or should be) a badass vampire a "sweetie".

Okay, so here's the **PROPER PREVIEW**, brace yourselves.

The first thing that comes to mind when thinking about Shitblake and her gathering of new powers and animals to call is the South Park's episode in which Cartman's trapper keeper gets out of hand. You know the one? Well, I'll add a picture, this, to me, is Shitblake with her powers.

Here are my thoughts about the book.

1. The characters. As everyone who has read their fair share of Shitblake knows, the characters are there to boost up Anita's self-esteem and praise her for eternity. They are all made of cardboard and they are only described by what color is their hair and eyes, how surprisingly masculine they all are, the size of their peens and how much leather and frills they wear. They all have more or less tragic histories, and Anita is the only way to heal mentally... This is how I see them as I listen to these "books". (this is also the last picture so don't fret)

2. LKH's writing style is mind-bogglingly repetitive. As an example, I'll add some stats here. These figure are, if anything, an under-estimate due to my reading app's inability to count words this repetitive correctly. Remember, this book has only about 330 pages according to the format I managed to get. So some variations

will occur if you compare this to your book, Im sure.

"It was as if" x 29, 4 times in one page at best (term used loosely)

"metaphysic*" x 41

"spill*" x 28 (I'd say 99% of these used during sex scenes)

"tight" x 89

"my opening" x 5

"length of him" (=peen) x 2

"feel of him" (=peen) x 4, 3 times in one page

"tip of him" (=peen) x 3

"love" x 114

"power" x 200

Word power is repeated the most, it appears 10 times, 8 times, 14 (!!!) times and again 10 times in single pages. Not only are single words and phrases repeated, info-dumping is repeated as well. You hear the same things over many, MANY times. To a point you know LKH doesn't even remember what she has told already and what not. Also the famous "look a man gets" presented three times:

"He laid back and watched me with that look a man can get—the look that is part sex, part possession, part just male. It's not a look that has much to do with love, not the kind that includes hearts and flowers anyway, but it has everything to do with being together, being real."

"He looked down at me, with blood spilling down his face, but his eyes filled with that look that a man gets. That look that says, mine, sex, more, less than that."

"I glared at him, and he stared at me. Those dark, deep-set eyes stared at my face, and then his gaze slid down the front of my body in that way that men can do. That look that slides over you so that you know they're thinking about you naked, or worse."

3. The book is all about celebrating rape, rapeyness and rape culture. Some quotes (no page numbers in these either, sorry):

"Hurt her how?"

"The usual. She was a virgin and they didn't do enough foreplay." "It happens," I said.

"But the girl claimed that when she told him it hurt, he didn't stop."

"Sounds like buyer's remorse to me, Edward."

"I said that I'd do him, not that I'd kill him. After everything he'd just said, I figured rape would scare him enough to get him out of here."

"You don't like guys," I said.

"You don't know what I like. You've worked hard not to know. My pride's hurt, but I'll get over it. But Joseph would believe anything of Jean-Claude's people, even male-on-male rape."

"You're bleeding, Anita. I fucked you so hard you're bleeding."

///

"I'm not hurt, Richard, or at least no more than I wanted to be." Truthfully, maybe I was more hurt than I wanted to be. A pleasant ache between the legs was fine, but I was starting to hurt somewhere close to my belly button. That usually meant you'd overdone it. But I couldn't say that to Richard.

///

He frowned at me. "You sound like you've done this before."

"I've had cramping before—not this bad, truthfully—but it faded."

"Micah." He said the name like it was a curse.

"Yes." I was tired of protecting Richard's ego. Frankly, in that moment, I was tired of Richard.

"He always gets there before I do."

"There isn't a single thing that Micah got to do that you didn't have the chance to do first."

"My fault again," he said.

"Your choices," I said. I couldn't keep the strain out of my voice. Fine, let him know how much I was hurting.

4. This book is, as usual for LKH, terribly misogynistic and sexist. Some quotes:

"I wanted to let it go, God knew I did, but I couldn't. I was a girl and I couldn't let it go."

"Nathaniel needed to belong to someone; now he belongs to you. I get that. But what did he do for you?"

"I needed a wife," I said.

"What?"

"I needed a 1950s wife to make my life run smooth. I needed someone to be my wife, and he's really good at it."

"Lisandro nodded. "I've got a record, too, juvie, but some bad stuff on it. My wife straightened me out. I think you could do the same for him."

"What, a good woman is all a bad boy needs to straighten his life out?" "If the woman has something that the man wants bad enough, yeah."

"Only love of a good woman will make a man question every choice, every action. Only love makes a warrior hesitate for fear that his lady will find him cruel. Only love makes a man both the best he will ever be, and the weakest. Sometimes all in the same moment."

And some random gems:

"Truthfully, I'd thought his therapist would be on my side, but BDSM was no longer considered an illness. It was just another alternative lifestyle. Damn it."

"I settled for the truth, which crosses the lips like jagged glass, as if you should bleed when you say it."

The saddest part is, this isn't even the worst book. This, at least, had a plot of some kind. Phew, finally I got this off my chest. I apologize for the possible typos and such, but I'm too tired to check. I hope this review is at least readable.

mlady_rebecca says

Let's start with the cast list. All the main characters were on stage at some point during this book, but some were talked of more than they were actually on stage - specifically Jason and Asher. I always miss the guys when they get so little page time.

But the full list: Vampires... Jean-Claude, Asher, Requiem, Byron, Wicked and Truth, Belle (from a distance), and Marmee Noir (from a distance). Werewolves... Richard, Jason (so briefly), Graham, Clay. Wereleopards... Micah, Nathaniel, and Cherry. Werelions ... Cookie Monster is back. Joseph. Werewans: Donovan. Wererats... Rafael, Louie, Claudia. RPIT... brief visit from Dolph and Zerbrowski.

(I really want to see Anita, Nathaniel, and Micah at Zerbrowski's for dinner.)

Spoilers ...

Odd book, because a lot of the characters were acting out of character.

Borderline (in whether I like them or not) characters like Requiem and Graham got even more on my nerves in this book. Some of that was the Harlequin messing with Requiem, but it's almost too much. The window for falling for those characters has closed. I'm holding them at arm's length as much, or more, than Anita is.

Richard, poor Richard, tried so hard in this book. He slept in the same bed with Micah and Nathaniel. That's big for him. Unfortunately, he too was a target of the Harlequin, leading him to try to bring Anita's wolf, then attack Jean-Claude. By the end of the book Anita and he were on the outs again.

On the good side, it was nice to see Haven return. And I enjoyed seeing more of Wicked and Truth. The hospital conversation when Haven first returns is a favorite scene. And a little bit of foreshadowing with respect to Jason.

Oh, and the elephant in the room - Edward. I don't understand why Edward was needed for this job. The wererats were all capable of doing everything Edward and Olaf did. It's not like one of the Harlequin called rats or something. They could have shot the vamp just as easily as Edward and company. I hate how much Edward takes over a book. And, my god, will they just kill Olaf already?

On the other hand, Peter was an interesting twist. I got the feeling if he was a little older, or when he gets a little older, he may end up being more for Anita.

Yay for Nathaniel's date and the promise of Anita meeting more of Nathaniel's needs in the future. The scene with Byron was pretty hot. Speaking of Nathaniel, yay for his unshakable faith. I love that.

(Reviewed: 04/15/2009)
