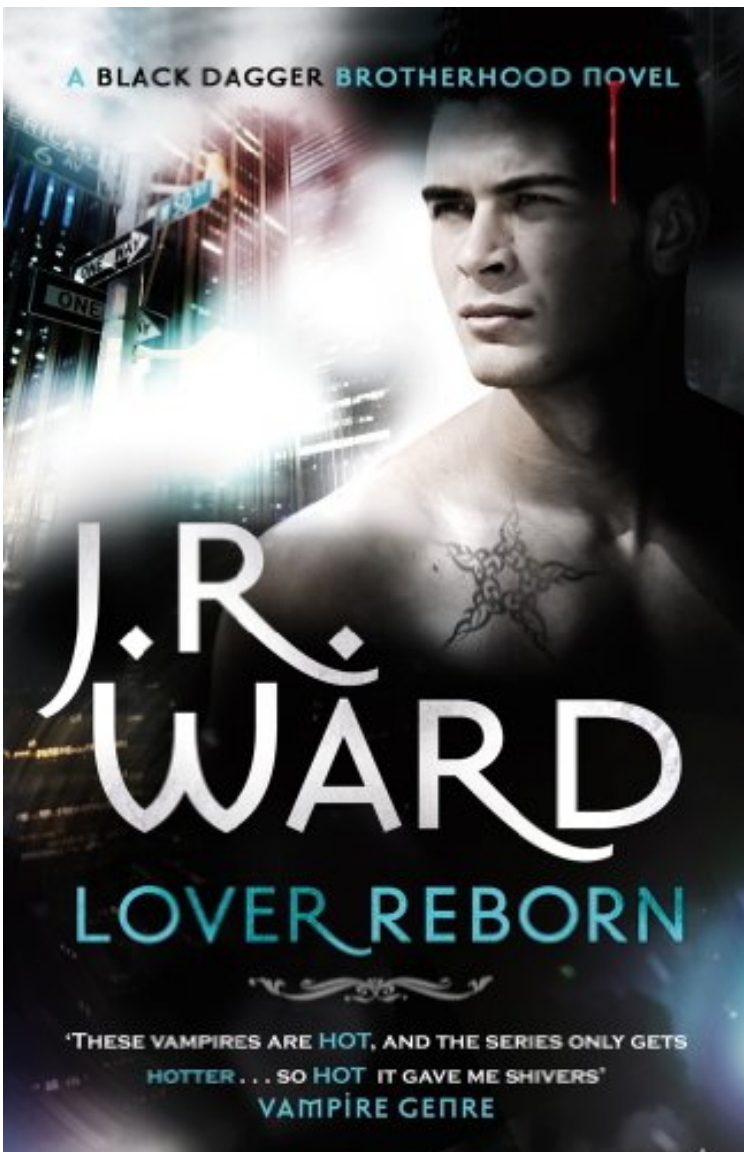


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Lover Reborn: Number 10 in series



Par J. R. Ward
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurIn the darkest corners of the night in Caldwell, New York, a conflict like no other rages. The city is home to a band of brothers born to defendtheir race: the warrior vampires of the Black Dagger Brotherhood.Now back in the Brotherhood - and unrecognisable as the vampire leader he once was - Tohrment is physically emaciated and heartbroken beyond despair. When he begins to see his beloved in his dreams - trapped in a cold, isolating netherworld - Tohr turns to a self-serving fallen angel in hopes of saving the one he has lost. When he's told he must learn to love another to free his former mate, Tohr knows they are all doomed . . .Except then a female with a shadowed history begins to get through to him. Against the backdrop of the raging war with the lessers, and with a new clan of vampires vying for the Blind King's

throne, Tohr struggles between the buried past, and a very hot, passion-filled future . . . but can his heart let go and set all of them free? Extrait ONE The bastards taking the bridge! Hes mine! Tohr ment waited for an answering whistle, and when it came, he tore off after the lesser, his shitkickers slamming into puddles, his legs going piston, his hands fisting hard. He passed Dumpsters and parked POSs, scattered rats and homeless people, jumped over a barricade, vaulted over a motorcycle. Three a.m. in downtown Caldwell, New York, gave you just enough obstacles to keep shit amusing. Unfortunately, the little gnat of a slayer up ahead was taking him in a direction he didnt want to go in. As they hit the entrance ramp to the westbound bridge, Tohr wanted to kill the foolnatch. Unlike the blocks of privacy you could find in the maze of alleys around the clubs, you were guaranteed traffic over the Hudson, even this late. Okay, sure, the Herbert G. Falcheck suspension special wasnt going to be choked with cars, but there were going to be a few and God knew every human behind the wheel had a goddamn iPhone these days. There was one rule in the war between the vampires and the Lessening Society: Stay the fuck away from humans. That race of nosy, upright orangutans was a complication waiting to happen, and the last thing anyone needed was widespread confirmation that Dracula wasnt a product of fiction, and the walking dead werent just a TV show that didnt suck. Nobody wanted to frontline on the network news, the papers, the magazines. Internet was fine. No credibility there. This down-low tenet was the single thing that the enemy and the Black Dagger Brotherhood agreed upon, the one deference that was given by both sides. So, yeah, the slayers could, say target your pregnant shellan, shoot her in the face, and leave her for dead, taking away not just her life, but your own. But God forbid they rile up the humans. Cuz that would just be wrong. Unfortunately, this directionally challenged, hydraulic-legged motherfucker up here hadnt gotten the memo. Nothing a black dagger in the chest couldnt fix. As a growl rose up his throat and his fangs elongated in his mouth, Tohr dug deep and tapped a reserve of high-octane hatred, his gas tank refilling, his flagging energy instantly renewed. It had been a long road back from the nightmare of his king and his brothers coming to tell him that his life was over. As a bonded male, his female was the beating heart in his chest, and in the absence of his Wellsie, he was a ghost of who he had once been, form without substance. The only thing that animated him was the chase, the capture, and the kill. And the knowledge that he could wake up the next night and find more to take down. Other than ahvenging his dead, he might as well be in the blessed Fade with his family. Frankly, the latter would be preferable and who knew, maybe hed get lucky tonight. Maybe in the heat of a fight hed suffer a catastrophic mortal injury and be relieved of his burdens. A male could only hope. The blare of a car horn followed by a chorus of screeching rubber was the first sign that Captain Complication had found what he was looking for. Tohr got to the top of the ramps rise just in time to catch a quick visual of the slayer bouncing off the hood of a Toyota nothing-special. The impact stopped the sedan dead; didnt slow down the slayer in the slightest. Like all lessers, the bastard was stronger and more resilient than hed been as a mere human, the black, oily blood of the Omega giving him a bigger engine, tighter suspension and better handling as well as racing tires in this case. Its GPS sucked, for real, though. The slayer sprang up out of his roll across the pavement like a professional stuntman and, naturally, kept going. He was injured, though, that noxious baby-powder smell of his more pronounced. Tohr came up to the car just as a pair of humans popped their doors, scrambled out, and started flapping their arms like something was on fire. CPD, Tohr yelled as he ripped past them. In pursuit! This calmed them down, and lined up damage control. It was virtually guaranteed that theyd now become a peanut gallery with all kinds of Kodak inclinations, and that was perfect when this was all over, hed know where to find them so he could scrub their memories, and take their cell phones. Meanwhile, the lesser appeared to be gunning for the pedestrian walkway not his best move. If Tohr had been in the dumb-ass position, hed have taken over that Toyota and tried to drive off. Oh come on Tohr gritted out. Apparently, the bastards goal wasnt the walkway, but the lip of the bridge itself: The slayer jumped up and over the fencing that contained the pedi-way, and landed on the thin ledge on the far side. Next stop: the Hudson River. The slayer looked behind himself, and in the peachy glow of the sodium lights, his arrogant expression was that of a sixteen-year-old boy after hed sucked down a six-pack of beer in front of his friends. All ego. No brains. He was going to jump. The fucker was going to jump. Fidiot. Even though the Omegas joy juice gave the slayers all that power, it didnt mean the laws of physics went out the window for them. Einsteins little ditty about energy equaling mass times acceleration was still going to apply so when the dipshit hit the water, he was going to get blown apart, sustaining substantial structural damage. Which wouldnt kill him but would incapacitate the hell out of him. Fuckers couldnt die unless they got stabbed. And they could spend eternity in a purgatory of decomposition. Boo-frickin-hoo. And before his Wellsies murder, Tohr probably would have let it go. On the sliding scale of the war, it was more important to wrap those

humans up in an amnesiac bullshit blanket and head over to help John Matthew and Qhuinn, who were still handling business back in that alley. Now? There was no pulling out: One way or the other, he and this slayer were going to do a meet-and-greet. Tohr leaped over the guardrail, hit the walkway, and bounced up onto the fence. Locking a clawhold into the links, he swung his lower body over the top, and landed his shitkickers on the parapet. The lesser's beery bravado fizzled a little as he started backing away. What, you think I'm afraid of heights? Tohr said in a low voice. Or that five feet of chainlink is going to keep me from you? The wind howled against them, plastering their clothes to their bodies and whistling through the steel girders. Far, far, far down below, the inky waters of the river were nothing but a vague, dark stretch, like a parking lot. Gonna feel like asphalt, too. I got a gun, the lesser yelled. So take it out. My friends are coming for me! You don't have any friends. The lesser was a new recruit, his hair and eyes and skin having yet to pale out. Lanky and twitchy, he was likely a drug user who suffered from brain-fry which was no doubt why he'd fallen for the pitch to join the Society. Ill jump! Ill fucking jump! Tohr palmed the handle of one of his two daggers and withdrew the black blade from his chest holster. So quit yakking and start flying. The slayer looked over the edge. Ill do it! I swear Ill do it! A gust gave them a blast from a different direction, sweeping Tohr's long leather coat out over the free fall. Don't matter to me. Ill kill you up here or down there. The lesser peered over the edge again, hesitated, and then let'er rip, leaping to the side and hitting all that nothing-but-air, his arms pinwheeling as if he were trying to keep his balance so he landed feetfirst. Which at this height would probably just drive his thighbones up into his abdominal cavity. Better than swallowing his own head, however. Tohr resheathed his dagger and prepared for his own descent, taking a deep breath. And then it was. As he went over the edge and took that first gasp of antigravity, the irony of the bridge jump wasn't lost. He'd spent so much time wishing for his death to come, praying for the Scribe Virgin to take his body and send him up to be with his loved ones. Suicide had never been an option; you took your own life, you couldn't get into the Fade and that was the only reason he hadn't cut his wrists, sucked on the business end of a shotgun, or jumped off a bridge. In his descent, he let himself enjoy the idea that this was it, that the impact coming in a second and a half was going to be the end of his suffering. All he had to do was reposition his trajectory so he was in a dive, then not protect his head and let the inevitable happen: blackout, likely paralysis, death by drowning. Except that kind of goner-for-good couldn't be his end result. Whoever made the call on these things would have to know that, unlike the lesser, he had an out. Calming his mind, he dematerialized himself from the free fall one moment gravity had a death grip on him; the next he was nothing but an invisible cloud of molecules that he could will in any direction he wanted. Next door, the slayer hit the water not with the splash! of someone going off the side of a pool, or the ker-chunk of somebody working a diving board. The fucker was like a missile hitting a target, and the explosion registered in the form of a sonic cracking as gallons of displaced Hudson River shot up into the brisk air. Tohr, on the other hand, chose to re-form himself on top of the massive concrete support to the right of the impact site. Three two one Bingo. A head popped up downstream of the still-bubbling entrance point. No arms moving in an attempt to regain access to oxygen. No legs kicking. No gasping. But it wasn't dead: You could run them over with your car, beat them until your own fist broke, rip their arms and/or legs off, do whatever the hell you wanted and they would still be alive. Fuckers were the ticks of the underworld. And there was no way he wasn't getting wet. Tohr shrugged off his trench coat, folded it carefully, and left it nestled in the juncture where the upper part of the support met its broad, aquatic base. Getting in the drink with that on his back was a drowning recipe; plus he had to protect his forties and his cell phone. With a couple of bounding leaps, so he could get enough momentum to put him over open water, he threw himself into dive formation, his arms pointed above his head, his palms together, his body straight as an arrow. Unlike the lesser, his penetration was elegant and smooth, even though he came at the surface of the Hudson from a good twelve- to fifteen-foot drop. Cold. Really frickin' cold. After all, it was late April in upstate New York which was still a good month away from anything remotely balmy. Exhaling through his mouth as he stroked up from the depths, he fell into a powerful freestyle. When he got to the slayer, he locked a grip onto the jacket and began pulling the undead weight to shore. Where he would finish this. So he could go look for the next one. As Tohr went off the side of the bridge, John Matthew's own life flashed before his eyes as if he were the one whose shitkickers had left solid ground in favor of nothing-but-net. He was on the shore, under the exit ramp, when it happened, in the process of finishing off the slayer he'd been chasing: From out of the corner of his eye, he saw something go into a fall from the great height above the river. It hadn't made sense at first. Any lesser with half a brain would know that wasn't a good escape route. Except then everything had become too clear. A figure was standing on the lip of the bridge, leather coat billowing

around like a shroud. Tohrment. Noooooooo, John had shouted while making no sound at all. Motherfucker, hes going to jump, Quinn spat from behind him. John lunged forward, for all the good that would do, and then screamed mutely as the closest thing he had to a father jumped. Later, John would reflect that moments

like this had to be what people said of death itself as you one-plus-one the series of events that were unfolding, and the math added up to certain destruction, your mind flipped into slide-show mode, showing you clips of life as you had always known it: John sitting at Tohr and Wellsies table that first night after hed been adopted into the vampire world. The expression on Tohrs face as the blood results had announced that

John was Dariusss son. That nightmarish moment when the Brotherhood had arrived to tell them both that Wellsie was gone. Then came images from the second act: Lassiter bringing a shriveled shell of Tohr back from wherever he had been. Tohr and John finally losing it together over the murder. Tohr gradually working

his strength up. Johns own shell appearing in the red gown that Wellsie had mated Tohr in. Man, destiny sucked ass. It just had to barge in and piss all over everyones rose garden. And now it was taking a shit in the other flower beds. Except then Tohr abruptly disappeared into thin air. One moment he was all fly-be-free; the next, he was gone. Thank God, John thought. Thank you, baby Jesus, Quinn breathed. A moment later,

on the far side of a pylon, a dark arrow sliced into the river. Without a glance or a word between them, he and Quinn tore off in that direction, getting to the rocky shore just as Tohr surfaced, grabbed the slayer, and started to swim in. As John got into position to help drag the lesser onto dry land, his eyes locked on Tohrs grim, pale face. The male looked dead, even though he was technically alive. I got him, John signed as he leaned in, nabbed the closest arm, and heaved the soaking-wet slayer out of the river. The thing landed in a heap and did an excellent impression of a fish, eyes bulging, mouth gaping, little clicking sounds coming from its wide-open gullet. But whatever, Tohr was the issue, and John looked the Brother over as he emerged

from the water: Leather pants were sticking like glue to thighs that were thin, muscle shirt was second-skinned to a flat chest, cropped black hair with that white stripe was standing straight up even though it was wet. Dark blue eyes were locked on the lesser. Or studiously ignoring Johns stare. Probably both. Tohr reached down and grabbed the lesser by the throat. Baring fangs that were viciously long, he growled, Told you. Then he outted his black dagger and started stabbing. John and Quinn had to step back. It was either that or get a paint job. He could just hit the damn chest, Quinn muttered, and get this over with. Except killing the slayer wasnt the point. Desecration was. That sharp black blade penetrated every square inch of flesh except for the sternum, which was the lights-out switch. With each slashing blow, Tohr exhaled hard; with every jerk free, the Brother inhaled deep, the rhythm of respiration driving the gruesome scene. Now I know how they make shredded lettuce. John rubbed his face, and hoped that was the end of the commentary. Tohr didnt slow down.

He just stopped. And in the aftermath, he listed to the side, propping himself up by throwing a hand out to the oil-soaked dirt. The slayer was well, shredded, yeah, but he wasnt finished. There'd be no helping out, though. In spite of Tohrs obvious exhaustion, John and Quinn knew better than to mess with the end game. They'd seen this before. The final strike had to be Tohrs. After a couple of moments of recovery, the Brother lurched back into position, double-handing the dagger and lifting the blade over his head. A hoarse cry tore out of his throat as he buried the point in the chest of what was left of his prey. As bright light flashed, the tragic expression on Tohrs face was illuminated, a comic book rendering of his twisted, horrific features,

caught for a moment and an eternity. He always stared down into the illumination, even though the impermanent sun was too bright to look into. After it was done, the Brother slumped sure as if his spinal column had turned to putty, his energy disappearing. Clearly, he needed to feed, but that subject, like so many others, was a no-go. What time is it, he got out between breaths. Quinn snagged a peek at his Suunto. Two a.m. Tohr looked up from the stained ground hed been staring at, focusing his red-rimmed eyes on the part of downtown theyd just come from. How about we go back to the compound. Quinn took out his cell phone. Butch isnt far away. No. Tohr shoved himself back and sat on his ass. Dont call anyone. Im fine just need to catch my breath. Bull. Shit. The guy was not any closer to fine than John was at the moment.

Although, granted, only one of them was dripping wet in a fifty-degree gust. John shoved his hands into the Brothers field of vision. Were going home now. Wafting over on the breeze, like an alarm breaking through a silent house, the scent of baby powder tickled into each of their noses. The stench did what all that breathing on the ground couldnt: It got Tohr onto his feet. Gone was the logy disorientation hell, if youd pointed out to him that he was still wet as a fish, he probably would have been surprised. There're more, he snarled. As he took off, John cursed at the maniac. Come on, Quinn said. Lets get our run on. This is going to be a long night. *Revue de presse*. J.R. Ward's unique band of brothers is to die for. I love this series! New York Times bestselling author Suzanne Brockmann Utterly absorbing and deliciously erotic. The Brotherhood is the

hottest collection of studs in romance. I cant wait for the next one! New York Times bestselling authorAngela Knight