



Half Past Dead: The Undying Heart / Simon Says

Zoe Archer , Bianca D'Arc

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There are good guys, there are bad boys, and then there are men with a danger all their own—these are the ones who take you places you never imagined...and will never forget.

“The Undying Heart” by Zoe Archer

Samuel Reed had no idea magic existed, until it almost destroyed him. Thirsting for vengeance against the enemy who made him something less than human, Sam returns to England and crosses paths with Cassandra Fielding. His best friend’s little sister has become a fearless woman on a dangerous mission of her own. And against all odds, she sees past what he’s become, and stirs a desire he thought he’d lost forever...

“Simon Says” by Bianca D’Arc

Special Forces soldier Simon Blackwell ended his affair with Mariana Daniels three years ago, but he hasn’t stopped protecting her. Mariana has no knowledge of the dark, deadly creatures that lurk in the forest surrounding her clinic, or of the mysterious powers that make Simon the only one who can defeat them. But soon he’ll have no choice but to reveal the truth, and urge her to trust in an explosive passion that never faded...

Half Past Dead: The Undying Heart / Simon Says Details

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From Reader Review Half Past Dead: The Undying Heart / Simon Says for online ebook

Diana says

The Undying Heart is my first and last zombie romance. Admitting that I'm ignorant on zombie physiology, I still don't understand how a man, er creature, could be cold, have no pulse or respiration on one page and a hot, fully equipped lover on the next. It will remain a mystery since the author offered no explanation. I'm actually glad there was no rotting flesh involved, but I'm done with my short foray into zombie romance.

Tara says

I didn't read the whole book. I just read the second story, Simon Says by Bianca D'arc. I was reading another book and came across an excerpt from a book that starts out on Long Island. Since I don't know if I've ever read a book that took place where I live, I checked her her. It said the excerpt was from a book that was going to be released in March of 2010¹ and that this story was the prequel, but somehow I doubt it and I can't figure out now where I read that.

In any case, Mariana Daniels is a military doctor and Simon Blackwell is a soldier turned civilian independent contractor. Three years before they had had a relationship but then he was injured in the line of duty and when he recovered he decided that for her safety he should stay away from her. When he is injured he goes to her for help and they fall back into things. Oh yeah and he fights zombies.

Here's the thing, as a sexy love story this was great. The Zombie story line lacked a little substance. Like the zombie storyline was wrapped up 20 pages before the end and the rest of the story was spent having sex and trying to figure out relationship stuff, and I kept waiting for the zombie to unexpectedly attack. Or for one of them to turn zombie and start eating each other in a non-sexy way. Or for someone to betrayed the trust that they continually spoke about. Or for the spark of interest some other guy had in the heroine to become a thing. In the last 2 weeks I've read a lot of short stories and I realize it's very difficult to do well. Most of them fell like either an excerpt from a longer novel or a set up for series to come, but nothing that really stands on its own.

The positive things are when faced with a crisis this heroine is no crying ninny. She grabs a gun, creates a barricade, moves a couch and a refrigerator, whatever she gets tough and that's something you don't see enough in romance!

FredTownWard says

Not Your Usual Zombie Romance Anthology

Of course, since I know of the existence of exactly one other zombie romance anthology Hungry for Your Love: An Anthology of Zombie Romance that isn't saying much, but at least Hungry for Your Love contains the large number of zombie romance short stories you'd likely be expecting. In contrast Half Past Dead contains only a pair of novella prequels to a pair of later zombie romance novel series.

The first and by far the most intriguing is Zoe Archer's "The Undying Heart", a prequel by some 16 years to the events described in her The Blades of the Rose historical fantasy romance novel series: Warrior, Scoundrel, Rebel, and Stranger. The Blades of the Rose is a secret organization dedicated to keeping the world's Sources (basically, extremely powerful magic containing artifacts) out of the hands of those who would misuse them, in particular the members of another secret organization called the Heirs of Albion, which claims to intend to use them to bring the whole world under British rule.

I say "claims" because like so many allegedly patriotic or otherwise nobly intentioned secret organizations throughout history: the Chinese Tongs, the Ku Klux Klan, the IRA, the Mafia, the Fascists, the Nazis, the Communists, the PLO, al Qaeda, etc., the evidence suggests that any once existing so-called good or patriotic intentions the Heirs of Albion ever had have long ago degenerated into cruel and abject selfishness.

Secrecy and noble intentions tend not to go together well, which makes me wonder about the Blades of the Rose as well over the long hall. I shall be interested in seeing whether Ms. Archer ever addresses the problem.

In any case our current story has our two heroes in hot pursuit of Colonel Kenneth Broadwell but for differing reasons. Blade of the Rose Cassandra Fielding is tracking a magical Source Broadwell is believed to be horribly misusing; Samuel Reed is seeking vengeance against the man who made him something less than human. They have another connection: Reed was the boyhood friend of Cassandra's older brother (and the unknowing object of Cassandra's girlhood affections). Charlie Fielding and Sam Reed had gone off to the Crimean War together and had been reported dead together,...

correctly, as it turns out.

The best part of this story is interaction between Sam and Cass. Sam does his worst to scare her away from him, from what he has become, but Cass simply will not scare. She's always loved him, she's got him back (after a fashion), and she simply refuses to be bothered about the details. Readers will share Sam's utter bewilderment at but growing acceptance of this as they work together to track down and deal with their mutual prey.

The worst part of this story turned out to be the love scenes. Writing non-cringeworthy love scenes is always a challenge, writing non-cringeworthy Victorian era love scenes is even more so, given the differences in terminology. On the whole I'd say Ms. Archer does a pretty good job with only the occasional clank, but I had a considerable problem with the inappropriate...

timing.

There's a time to make sweet, sweet love, and there's a time to run like Hell, and when in hot pursuit of demonic forces (or worse, when demonic forces are in hot pursuit of YOU) strikes me as the latter. Of course love scenes can quite properly ease the inevitable downtime any realistic adventure must have, but there were two separate occasions I found myself almost shouting, "Here? NOW? Are you bleeping INSANE?" Ms. Archer naturally kept her heroes safe from harm when otherwise occupied, but IMHO marginally competent villains should have caught them with their pants down,...

literally.

In contrast Bianca D'Arc's "Simon Says" is a much more conventional prequel to the much more conventional paranormal romance novel Dead series, in which the zombies are what are being hunted down

by the heroes rather than the objects of their affection: Once Bitten Twice Dead, A Darker Shade of Dead, and Dead Alert. It also pales considerably in comparison to Ms. Archer's work. Despite a couple of likable protagonists and the modern era setting I found the love scenes far more cringeworthy; it took me three days to finally finish reading the anticlimax climax of the last chapter. I was surprised to find upon counting that it only lasted 10 pages; I could have sworn it was much, much longer.

In any event this is going to be a must read for fans of either series.

Shelley says

I good little story, would have liked more details and less weird human-zombie detailed sex but what can I say the remaining story kept me reading!

Rane says

Review of The Undying Heart by Zoe Archer

Taking a step back, I finally got my hands on the prequel to the amazing The Blades of the Rose series. First, reading the prequel is not needed in order to read the BOTR books, this was really just a taste of the BOTR series and ZA's style of writing.

Sam Reed is out for revenge, after being turned to the undead by a fellow officer, it's taken three years for Sam to get his chance, and when he meets his old childhood friend Cassandra Fielding his plans starts to go awry- for the better.

I felt the blurb was a little misleading, I thought of Zombie Hunter! Then I thought of the Night of the Living Dead, and then I became a little leery of just "what" I was reading. Thankfully, ZA didn't gross me out when she wrote the hero being undead and the heroine being alive. ZA takes everything we know about Zombie from Hollywood and recent and throws it out the window. Think: Vampire, undead without the bloodlust, quick healing, fast reflexes, no need of sleep or food, just without a pulse and you have Sam. He can do everything he could when he had a pulse (and I do mean everything) just better, but after being the puppet for Broadwell an Heir out for just power, Sam is going to stop him one way or another. His mission though, runs into another who has the same idea, a new Blade of the Rose, Cassandra Fielding, whose on her second mission for the Blades and is asked to watch Broadwell and report his actions, all is going well until she sees the man she's loved all her life and lost, Sam standing right in front of her- and undead. Cassandra takes this all in stride of course; being a Blade leads them into some strange situations.

This leads the two to become a team in order to stop Broadwell from raising more Zombie, as Sam and Cassandra rediscover one another. With Sam being the torture hero, out to stop the man whom made him what he is, Sam was strong and pretty sweet as he found his heart with Cassandra. Cassandra maybe a newbie, but she's pretty kick-butt, as she and Sam fight like a team against the Heirs. The romance between Cassandra and Sam is pretty straightforward; with everything pretty much happening and running pretty smoothly..sorta (I mean you gotta have some drama to make it truly great!)

This story is pretty fast paced as Cassandra and Sam track down Broadwell, giving us a chance to read about

some familiar faces like the corner stones of the Blades the Graves family.. ZA wraps everything up nicely in a tight little bow, which I felt kinda lacked the punch, she has in her BOTR series, but being a short novel, I was still happy how everything turned out, and enjoyed this short little prequel.

Fire Raven says

I only read the Bianca D'Arc half of the book, because that was the story I bought the book for. Not bad for a short story. I have to say I had read book 2 or the first full story of the Guardians of the dark before I went looking for Half Past Dead. With that said, this wasn't too short for a prequel or too sparsely filled out.

April says

Free Kindle download. This book is actually two books in one — *The Undying Heart* by Zoe Archer, and *Simon Says* by Bianca D'Arc.

I'm not sure zombie heroes work for me in romance — as antagonists, yes; as protagonists, maybe only if sex with a human heroine isn't involved. Granted, it worked better than I thought it would, mainly because the authors made sure to stress that the undead heroes' bodies could heal until they were whole again, so that the heroines weren't making love to decomposing animated corpses with maggots falling out of their ears. But still...

This is not why I've rated this book only two stars. It was mostly the logic and the writing itself that prevented me from loving these two stories. If I rated them on an individual basis, I'd give the first story three stars, the second story only one star, which averages out to two stars for the entire book.

In the first story, *The Undying Heart*, the author has introduced a few contradictions that bothered me as I read. She has the hero moving wraithlike among the shadows in the beginning, perceptible only because the heroine has learned to sense the otherworldly through her work as a Blade. A little later, the author emphasizes that the hero can be perceived only because he allows himself to be perceived. However, the sun rises, and he hangs out with the heroine as she waits for the telegraph operator to do his thing, and try as the hero might, he can't blend into the background any more, and the telegraph operator feels anxious in his presence. Same thing happens in a café — the hero makes the locals very uncomfortable because they sense something very wrong about him, while the heroine in the meantime doesn't see why he upsets them so.

This contradiction bothers me because the townsfolk get so antagonized by his presence that they become mob-like, gather torches and pitchforks, and go after him. Suddenly he's not so scary, powerful, and wraithlike any more; he's a fleeing zombie. Is this why the villain Colonel Broadwell himself wanted to be a zombie? Is this why he loves making zombies out of his armies of men? Because the zombies make humans mad enough to attack them in the light of day. It just didn't make sense to me, these contradictions. It ruined the first half of the story for me because they were all I could think about.

Add to that the desire between the couple. Strangely enough, though the hero worried so much about the heroine possibly seeing him as a monster, I could understand her desire for him — she's a red-blooded human woman, and he's a good-looking man — but it was harder for me to understand how he could feel

desire for her, since he's dead and bloodless. Desire is something I see as very blood-bound. When a person feels desire, their heart races, their blood runs hot, engorging body parts in arousal and causing hypersensitivity and the dilation of pupils, as well as changes in breathing rates. I found myself constantly questioning how a bloodless zombie could be overcome by desire and be aroused enough to make love to the human heroine. At one point, they both inhale as they look at each other, but the author has pointed out elsewhere in the story that the hero doesn't even breathe.

So it was very hard for me to suspend my disbelief on these points, and it kept me from enjoying the first half of the story. By the second half of the story, though, I decided to let go of the logic and go with the ride, and it was a little bit better for me. I did like the chemistry between the hero and the heroine, and though it was a little predictable, I did like how the story ended. I also liked the writing style in this first story.

The second story, *Simon Says*, was harder for me to like. The logic was better — I liked the idea of the zombies in this story being the result of a scientific experiment gone horribly wrong, and Simon, the hero, is himself not really a zombie but someone who is immune to the zombie's bite and can heal extraordinarily quickly; plus, he has blood and seems altogether human, though with brand new superpowers, so the sex between him and the heroine seemed much more plausible. The only fault in logic that I could find in the story was in how the hero could hide his immunity from the military, but given that the one person who knew he was bitten was lost to the undead himself, I can easily let that one go.

What did bother me about this second story, however, was the writing. The author did way too much telling and not enough showing. The first half of the story was better — as though after the editor told the author she needed to show more and tell less, the author worked night and day to do exactly that ... that is, until she got lazy around the middle of the story, because the telling over showing is so much more conspicuous in the second half of the story.

To compound the crime of telling rather than showing, there was a lot of repetition. So, not only are we told how the hero and the heroine feel for each other, we're told over and over again how they feel for each other, how they each felt when he left her, how capable he is, how brilliant she is, how well they always got along, et cetera, et cetera; and the few times any showing over telling got done, the scenes were flat and didn't live up to all the hype of the telling. For instance, their chemistry is always described as hot, teasing, or engaging, but the dialogue in their actual conversations always seem so flat and dull. I just couldn't feel the chemistry between them. After a while, it simply got to be tedious reading for me, especially the sex scenes. Because I didn't feel the chemistry between them, I didn't care for their lovemaking at all. In fact, after the final zombie was taken care of, I literally skimmed over the sex scenes at the hotel, trying to see if any more zombies would pop up at the end. None did, which made those sex scenes at the end seem even more gratuitous, a handy spot for the conversation where the title phrase, "Simon Says," can be laid out — which is kind of a shame, as the zombie scenes were actually the most engaging and exciting in the story.

The one thing the author was really good at showing, though, was the couple's practical sense of caution — the hero and the heroine always checked the back seat of whatever vehicle they were getting into, and the hero always checked the area before letting the heroine emerge from her place of safety. It felt a little overdone, though, repeated far more times than it needed to be, such that I kept expecting some creature to pop out and get them when they least expected it. In other words, it needlessly heightened the sense of jeopardy because of how repetitively their caution was mentioned, as though the one time it isn't mentioned, something bad will happen.

All in all, I think the story could have used some major editing.

These two stories are the first I've seen, though, where the hero is a zombie of some sort, and except where the logic or the writing failed, the concept worked a whole lot better than I would have expected.

Downloaded October 29, 2010. Finished reading November 23, 2010.

Debrac2014 says

Two stories about the walking dead!

Lizabeth Tucker says

A small collection of two zombie romances, not something that would normally appeal to me, but Zoe Archer's names was enough to have me buy it. A good decision as both stories were very good, although there is a caveat with D'Arc's story. I would give the collection a 3.75 out of 4.

"The Undying Heart" by Zoe Archer. Cassandra Fielding, relatively new member of the Blades of the Rose, has been keeping Colonel Kenneth Broadwell under observation. A member of the arrogant Heirs of Albion, Broadwell was suspected of possessing a Source of magic. No one realized he was bringing the dead back to semi-life as controlled zombies. Including Sam Reed, the man Cassie had always loved. Somehow Sam broke free of Broadwell's control and is out for revenge, running into Cassie in the pursuit.

This prequel to Archer's Blades of the Rose series is quite possibly the only sexy zombie story I will ever read. As long as you don't think about what causes erections in the physical sense, or exactly what was in those emissions. Cassie is a headstrong, capable heroine who loves an angry, grieving hero despite his lack of life. We're shown strong characters with an iron moral code, even at the cost of their own happiness. You can't help but love and root for both of them. 4 out of 5.

"Simon Says" by Bianca D'Arc. The undead are a contagion, spreading throughout the neighborhood of the local military base. Simon Blackwell was one of the only victims who didn't turn completely, but there were definite changes to his system. After he was attacked, Simon cut off all contact with the woman he loved, Dr. Mariana Daniels. He chose instead to lurk outside her cabin in an effort to protect her from the completely turned zombies he was trying to kill.

Here we have an all too possible result of indiscriminate experimentation and research without proper safeguards against what might happen, even if it hasn't been thought of yet. Whether it is Ebola at the CDC or a zombie infestation at a military base, commonsense appears to be missing. You do come to understand Simon's fears about what he might become, and how he resists engaging in a relationship with Mari, despite their deep love for each other.

At this point, I was loving the story. But then the ending sex scenes turned a bit past what I usually like. First, we have the use of the word "pussy". Unless it refers to a cat, I find myself turned off by the use of it, just like I don't care for "cunt" and other squicky words. Then there seems to be a gratuitous spanking scene. Was it really needed? Nope, not really. So I dropped the rating from 4 to 3.5 out of 5.

Mandi Schreiner says

“The Undying Heart” by Zoe Archer

Zombies are SEXY!!

Now, don't go screaming and running off in all directions. Hear me out first!

The hero in this story is a zombie. That's right – the big “Z” word. I don't know what it is about zombies that freaks everyone out. Is it the fact that you can chop off body parts and they still live? They have no blood or breath? They are dead.....but not. In most books I have read, the zombies are the bad guys and in this book, zombies are definitely evil, but Sam Reed has overcome the pull of his creator and wants revenge.

The story starts in the mid 1800's in England, Sam is wounded quite badly in war and as he lay on the battlefield, too weak to move, his commander, Colonel Kenneth Broadwell approaches. Yet, instead of offering help, he shoots Sam through the heart, as he does with every other injured person lying in that field. But Sam will see the light of day again, brought back with a magical source that Broderick has in his possession. For a year, Broderick controls Sam and the other zombie soldiers, making them do unspeakable acts. Finally, after a year, Sam is able to break free of the mental hold that debilitates a zombie with his maker. He has promised himself he will track Broadwell down and kill him. But unbeknownst to him, there is another one that wants Broadwell dead too.

Cassandra Fielding has recently started to work for the Blades of Rose, a secret organization that protects the magic sources in the world. Her current mission is to track Broderick and reclaim the source that he holds. With communication lines down, she is unable to reach her fellow Blade members, so she is stuck by herself. That is until she runs into someone from the past. Sam was her brother's best friend. Her brother died for real on the battlefield that day, and she always thought Sam had died too.

Cassandra soon realizes Sam is not human, but she is not overly shocked, being a Blade she knows things like this exist. Sam is disgusted with himself and can't believe Cassandra has not gone off running and screaming for her life. Shocked even more, Cassandra is hurt and angered Sam has had to go through what he did and she actually cares for him – as a “monster.” Together they hunt Broderick and deal with Sam's past.

The Undying Heart is the kind of book I want to twirl through the house with. What? You don't dance with your books? You know how with some books by page ten you start to get that little feeling that you are really going to like it? This is my experience with My Undying Heart. Zoe Archer's voice is one that you settle into right away. I loved the heroine, Cassandra. Guess what- she is not a virgin! I know- a woman in a historical romance who actually has had relations, and she is not ashamed of what she has done. She is never repulsed by Sam, due to the fact that she is aware of supernatural things already. She has had a childhood crush on him, and now that she sees him wallowing in self pity, and disgust of himself, she can't help but reach out to him.

For as much as I enjoyed this story, I was still left with a few questions. Because Sam is a zombie, he doesn't breathe, and he can slither around at night without being noticed. When out in public with Cassandra, the townspeople become suspicious of him and all of a sudden Sam and Cassandra find themselves with a mob

after them. First, I didn't buy that Sam's appearance or actions warranted a mob gathering with weapons to hunt him down. I can understand if a person here or there got a weird feeling looking at him, but a mob?

Also, how was Sam able to break free from Broadwell's hold? All that is mentioned in the book is that his mind must be exceptionally strong. I would have liked more explanation or background into how exactly he broke free.

Finally, I didn't like the ending. It is a big 'ole spoiler so not even going there – but I think things should have ended differently. The ending does nothing to alter my enjoyment of the book and I think many will be happy with it, I just would have liked events to go a different route.

Taking all of that into consideration, I really enjoyed this book and I also need to mention the romance scenes in this book are very sexy. I was surprised at how much romance we get. For being a zombie, Sam's body, ummm, works quite well.

Zoe Archer has The Blades of The Rose series coming out next fall which I am greatly anticipating.

Rating: Four Stars

Zoe Archer's Website

Simon Says – Bianca D'Arc

The second story is set in modern day. Simon is a marine who is bitten by a zombie, but miraculously discovers he is immune to their bite. He set up on a super secret mission to ride Quantico of zombies surrounding their area. He is hurt badly one night, and drags himself into the base hospital, knowing his ex-flame Mariana is working there. He left her years ago to go on a mission, and never returned after he had an exposure with zombies. Mari knows Simon can't and has never been able to tell her much of what he does, so she treats him without questions. But the romance starts to rekindle, and these two start to realize the old passion will not remain in the past. When Mari's safety is threatened, Simon will do anything to protect her.

Simon Says is a romantic story, and although I liked it, it is hard to find a lot remarkable about it. Simon is very much a soldier and is mysterious and secretive. Mari, although crushed in the past with Simon leaving her, is independent and has made a life for herself. She doesn't sit around wallowing in self pity, even though she misses him. There really isn't a lot that happens in this story, it is more of just two souls that rediscover their love. Yes, zombies attack in he background, but their relationship takes center stage.

Rating: 3 Stars

Sandra says

Two books, two authors I've read before, and yet combined they only achieved 3 stars.

Zoe Archer's Prequel to the Blades of the Rose was a bit entertaining, having already read the first 2 books in that series, I know that each book focuses on different Blades and Sources of Magic, this one was Cass Fielding and Zombies. If I'd read this one first I probably wouldn't have bothered with the series just cause the writing didn't totally capture my interest.

In Bianca D'Arc's Simon Says, first in the Guardians of the Dark series I had the same problem with the writing, it was a bit too predictable. It is a Special Ops story and our soldier, Simon Blackwell, finds out the hard way he is immune to zombie bites while on a mission. Once he is recovered, he is tasked with exterminating a batch of zombies just outside of Qantico base.

The base where the love of his life, Dr Mariana Daniels, is stationed. The same Dr whom he'd left once he'd been bitten, without saying goodbye. Of course, our Dr lives out in an isolated spot near the woods, crawling with zombies, that no-one knows about except for Sp Ops. See where this is going?

If I read the rest of the guardian series it'll be only cause I already own them.

Jan Lewis, Author Sidekick says

The 3 stars is for the historical PNR novella "The Undying Heart" by Zoe Archer. It was a quick, compelling read. I thought Cassie and Sam's relationship was very sweet. I like the world the author created and would like to read more about it.

My only real complaint is that there were some words and phrases that I felt were too modern. They pulled me out of the story a bit, but I was able to get right back into it.

I didn't finish the Bianca d'Arc novella, because it didn't appeal to me. What I read wasn't bad. I think I had a hard time adjusting from the historical setting of the other novella. I might go back and read it later.

Heather C (Darkly Reading) says

Undying Heart by Zoe Archer:

Sam, once an officer in the British Army, has returned to England to track down the man who has destroyed his existence - Colonel Broadwell. Little does Sam know that someone else is also hunting Broadwell, Cassandra, his best friend's younger sister. But Cassandra is no longer a little girl and has been charged with tracking Broadwell for the Blades of the Rose - an organization focused on keeping powerful magic or Sources, out of the hands of evil men like Broadwell. Though Cassandra has grown into a fearless woman, Sam is no longer the man he once was, his being warped by the magic Broadwell possesses to make him into the living dead. The hunt for Broadwell pushes these two together but they find they might need each other for more than just for tracking down the evil they face.

I have a bit of a confession to make, I'm afraid of zombies. You would think that with all the dark urban fantasy I read that other paranormal creatures would prove to be a more frightening but zombies have always been a one-way ticket to nightmare-ville for me. I think it's the relentless push to destroy the living that gets me..like a telemarketer trying to sell you something you don't want and who doesn't believe in the word no (telemarketers and door-to-door sales people also freak me out). Or maybe it's the whole biting and tearing of flesh thing, I'm not a big fan of that either. Thankfully in the Undying Heart, the main zombie character (or "living dead" as he prefers to be called) Sam is sexy and has wrestled control of his mind back from his creator so he is no longer a mumbling shuffling flesh eater and his flesh re-generates so he doesn't look as horrific as most zombies are portrayed. Since becoming a living undead, Sam has only thought of vengeance on his creator, but when he meets Cassie again new thoughts begin to interrupt his plans. He is shocked when Cassie doesn't run from him in fear when she finds out what he now is and she is actually attracted to him.

Cassie slowly dismantles the walls Sam has built around his heart and makes Sam more human again. Cassie also shows Sam that he is still a worthy male that she desires. I loved Cassie's independence as well as her forwardness towards Sam. Even though this book is set in the 1800s in England, Cassie definitely doesn't act like a typical lady - she has a naughty streak and we get to read all about it. She gets turned on a bit by facing life threatening situations and so her and Sam are getting busy a lot through the book since Cassie's life and Sam's existence are constantly in danger. For a novella length story there was a lot of both kinds of action and the battle to destroy Sam's creator as well as the developing relationship between Sam and Cassie were well-crafted and satisfying for me.

4 out of 5 stars - Loved Sam the sexy zombie-kicking ass and getting busy with Cassie!

Simon Says by Bianca D'Arc:

Simon, or Si as his friends call him, is forever changed by his last mission that took him away from his lover, Mariana. Now Si is back and hunting the creatures that changed him though he refuses to go back to Mari because he is afraid of what he has become and doesn't want anything to harm her. Si watches Mari from afar as he defends the area around her house and the military base she works at from the creatures the military scientists created, zombies. Unfortunately these zombies aren't the sexy kind but the I want to eat your brains, mumble mumble, shuffle shuffle, kind. When Simon was first ordered to take them out he got bit but rather than becoming one his body is immune to the zombie contagion and now he hunts them.

Simon re-enters Mari's life after he suffers some severe injuries while out zombie hunting. Si ends up showing up at Mari's clinic for help and from there the two of their lives get more entangled although neither of them intended for that to happen. As the two spend more time together, old passions begin to re-ignite and since the zombies sleep during the day they really have to find something to do with their free time - right? The battle with the zombies really does take second stage to the relationship between Simon and Mari, but for someone like me who has severe zombie fear (almost as bad as my fear of spiders) I think it was the right amount of scary zombies for me.

3.5 out of 5 stars - Between defending his lover's life and playing a sexy game of "Simon Says", Simon is one hot ex-marine zombie hunter!

Kathryn says

Loved this.

AH says

When you think about zombies, you most likely visualize an animated brain eating corpse. This book highlights a very different kind of zombie, probably more frightening than any zombie we know, a zombie capable of intelligence and able to think and learn.

Half Past Dead is really two stories. The first, Half Past Dead is the prequel to Zoe Archer's Blades of the Rose series. The second story Simon Says is by Bianca D'Arc.

Half Past Dead 2/5 stars

Half Past Dead is a historical romance. It sets up the Blades of the Rose series, introducing the reader to some of the characters and themes of that series. It is not necessary to read this short novella in order to enjoy the Blades of the Rose series; it serves as a companion story.

In this book Cassandra is on her first solo mission for the Blades. She bumps into childhood friend Sam who appears to be shadowing the same person. Sam is very different from her childhood days. When Sam is attacked, he does not bleed and he heals very quickly. At this point, I am sure that you are thinking *vampire*, I know I was. But no, Sam is a kind of zombie, not the brain eating kind, but kind of like a vampire that does not require blood. More on that later.

There is a lot of action and excitement. A lot of running, sword fights, getting chased by angry townspeople, interspersed with generous sex breaks. Apparently Sam's kind of zombie can have sex and no body parts fall off.

The story was ho-hum for me. I did like the introduction of Blade members Honoria Graves and Achilles Voisin. Nice touch, adding vodou as an explanation for zombies. It fell flat for me because the sex breaks seemed unrealistic. I am not sure if I would have continued with the series had I started with this book.

Simon Says 2.5/5 stars

Simon Says is a different take on zombies. Our hero Simon was bitten by zombies while on a military mission. Instead of turning into the walking dead, Simon develops an immunity to the zombie contagion and becomes a covert zombie hunter.

The zombies in this book are the result of a military experiment gone bad. These zombies were well trained marines and they were intelligent and capable of planning and learning. They stay out of the sunlight, but come out on cloudy or rainy days. (No, they do not sparkle).

While hunting zombies near a military base, Simon is injured and brought to Mariana, the base doctor. Simon and Mariana once had a relationship. She cares for him and notices his incredibly fast healing. He swears her to secrecy. Their romance is rekindled. Once again, a lot of sex breaks while hiding out from zombies.

Unfortunately, this felt like more of the same to me. Perhaps if both stories were not in the same book, I would have appreciated the stories more.
