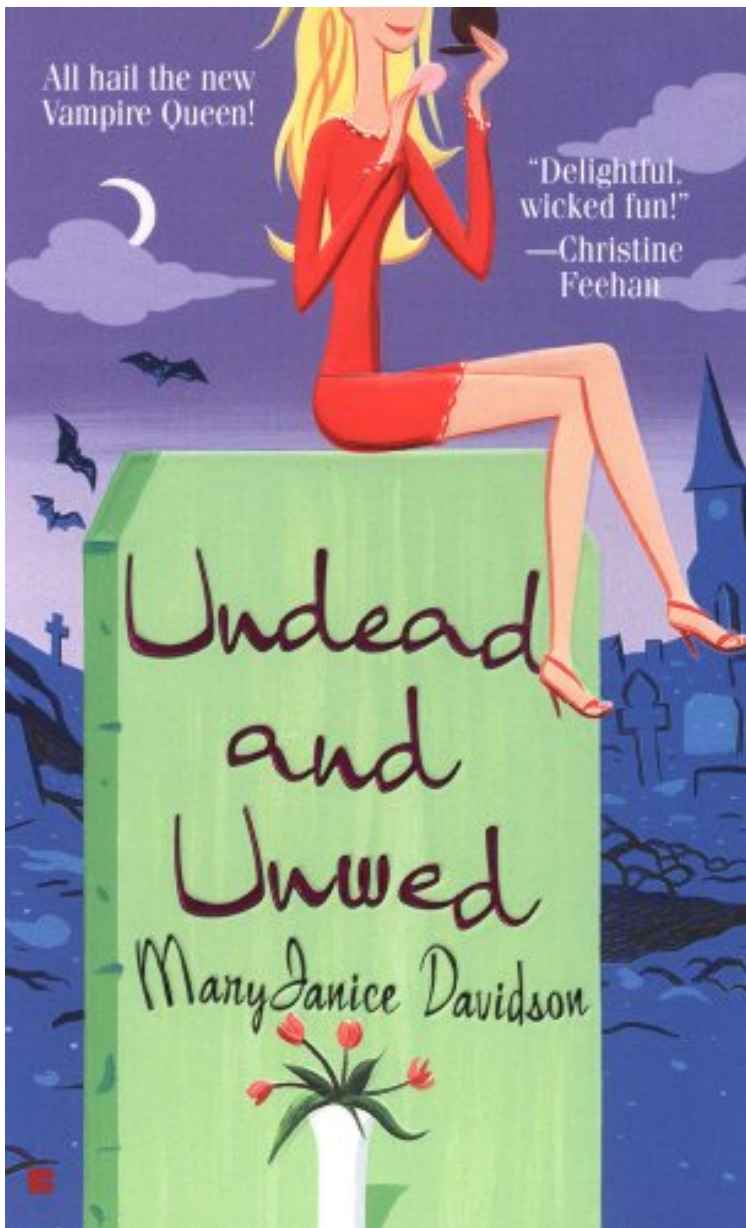


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# Undead and Unwed: A Queen Betsy Novel



*Par MaryJanice Davidson*  
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Prsentation de l'diteurFirst Betsy Taylor loses her job, then she's killed in a car accident. But what really bites is that she can't seem to stay dead. And now her new friends have the ridiculous idea that Betsy is the prophesied vampire queen, and they want her help in overthrowing the most obnoxious power-hungry

vampire in five centuries. Extrait Chapter 1 The day I died started out bad and got worse in a hurry. I hit my snooze alarm a few too many times and was late for work. Who wouldn't hit the snooze to get another nine minutes of sleep? No one, that's who. Subsequently, I almost always oversleep. Stupid snooze button. I didn't have time for breakfast. Instead, I gobbled a pair of chocolate Pop Tarts while waiting for the bus. Mmm chocolate. My mom would have approved (who do you think got me hooked on the darned things?), but a nutritionist would have smacked me upside the head with her calorie counter. The bus was, of course, late. You gotta love the Minnesota Transit system. Six buses for a population area of a quarter million. When they weren't late, they were early. I'd lost count of the number of times I'd stepped outside only to see my bus disappearing down the street. Schedule? What schedule? When the bus, late again, finally did lumber into sight, I climbed on and sat down in gum. At a nine A.M. meeting (to which I arrived at 9:20), I found out the recession (the one the economists have been denying for years) had hit me right between the eyes: I had been laid off. Not unexpected the last time good old Hamilton Sons had been profitable I'd been in high school but it hurt, just the same. Losing a job is the worst. You know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that somebody doesn't want you. Doesn't matter if the reasons are personal, financial, or practical. They just don't want you. Hamilton Son, realizing about a year too late that they had to slash costs, decided administrative layoffs were the way to go as opposed to, say, cutting the six figure salaries of senior management. The clerks and secretaries had been deemed expendable. But vengeance would be ours. Without us, those twits couldn't even send a fax, much less run the company. With this cheerful thought, I cleaned out my desk, ignored the way my coworkers were avoiding looking at me, and scuttled home. I consoled myself by stopping at the Dairy Queen for a blueberry milkshake. Signs of spring: robins, new grass, and Dairy Queen opening for the season. As I walked through my front door, still slurping, I saw my answering machine light winking at me like a small black dragon. The message was from my stepmonster, and from the racket in the background, she was calling from her salon: Your father and I won't be able to make it to your party tonight. I'm on new medication and I just can't. Sorry. Sure you are, jerk. Have fun without us. No problem. Maybe you'll meet someone tonight. Translation: Maybe some poor slob will marry you. My stepmonster had, from day one, related to me in only one way: as a rival for her new husband's affections. Worse, she never hesitated to play the depression card to get out of something that was important to me. This ceased bothering me about a week after I met her, so I suppose it was just as well. I went into the kitchen to feed my cat, and that's when I noticed she'd run away again. Always looking for adventure, my Giselle (although it's more like I'm her Betsy). I looked at the clock. My, my. Not even noon. Time to do the laundry and gouge out my eyes, and the day would be complete. Happy birthday to me. As it turned out, we had a freak April snowstorm, and my party was postponed. Just as well. I didn't feel like going out, putting on a happy face, and drinking too many daiquiris. The Mall of America is a terrific place, but I've got to be in the mood for overpriced retail, rowdy weekend crowds, and six-dollar drinks. Nick called around eight P.M., and that was my day's sole bright spot. Nick Berry was a superfine detective who worked out of St. Paul. I'd been attacked a couple of months before, and okay, well, attacked is putting it mildly. Like using the word unfortunate to describe World War II. I don't like to talk about it to think about it but what happened was, a bunch of creeps jumped me as I was leaving Khans Mongolian Barbecue (all you can eat for \$11.95, including salad, dessert, and free refills quite the bargain if you don't mind your clothes reeking of garlic for hours). I have no idea what my attackers wanted they didn't take my purse or try to rape me or even babble about government conspiracies. They came out of nowhere literally. One minute I was yawning and fumbling for my keys, the next I was surrounded. They clawed and bit at me like a bunch of rabid squirrels while I fended them off with the toes of my Manolo Blahniks and screamed for help as loud as I could so loud I couldn't speak above a whisper for three days. They stank worse than my kitchen that time I went to the Cape for two weeks and forgot to empty my garbage before I left. They all had long hair and funny-colored eyes and they never talked to me. Help didn't come, but the bad guys ran away. Maybe they were rattled by my voice when I scream, dogs howl. Or maybe they didn't like the way I stank of garlic. Whatever the reason, they ran away skittered away, actually. While I leaned against my car, concentrating on not passing out, I glanced back and it looked like a few of them were on all fours. I struggled mightily not to yark up my buffet, ginger tea, and sesame bread no way was I pissing away that \$11.95 and then called 911 on my cell phone. Detective Nick was assigned to the case, and he interviewed me in the hospital while they were disinfecting the bite marks. All fifteen of them. The intern who took care of me smelled like cilantro and kept humming the theme from Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets. Off-key. This was actually more annoying than the sting of antiseptic. Anyway, Detective Nick called and we chatted and, long story short, I promised to come in

to look through the Big Book o Bad Guys one more time. And I would. For myself, to feel empowered, but mostly to see Nick, who was exactly my height (six feet), with dark blond hair cut regulation-short, light blue eyes, a swimmers build, and dimples! He looked like an escapee from a Mr. Hardbody calendar. Ive broken the law, Officer, take me in. Making Nick my eye candy would be the closest Id gotten to getting laid in what year was it? Not that Im a prude. Im just picky. I treat myself to the nicest, most expensive shoes I can get my hands on, which isnt easy on a secretarys budget, and never mind all the money my dad keeps trying to throw at me. If I used his money, they wouldnt be my shoes. Theyd be his. Anyway, I save up for months to buy the dumb things, and they only have to go on my feet. Yep, thats me in a nutshell: Elizabeth Taylor (dont start! Ive heard em all), single, dead-end job (well, not anymore), lives with her cat. And Im so dull, the fucking cat runs away about three times a month just to get a little excitement. And speaking of the cat was that her telltale Riaaaaaoowwww! from the street? Well, super. Gisele hated the snow. She had probably been looking for a little spring lovin and got caught in the storm. Now she was outside waiting for rescue. And when I did rescue her, shed be horribly affronted and wouldnt make eye contact for the rest of the week. I slipped into my boots and headed into the yard. It was still snowing, but I could see Gisele crouched in the middle of the street like a small blob of shadow, one with amber-colored eyes. I wasted ten seconds calling her why do I call cats? then clomped through my yard into the street. Normally this wouldnt be a problem, as I live at the end of the block and its a quite street. However, in the snow on the icy roads, the driver didnt see me in time. When he did, he did the absolute worst thing: slammed on his brakes. That pretty much sealed my doom. Dying doesnt hurt. I know that sounds like a crock, some touchy-feely nonsense meant to make people feel better about biting the big one. But the fact is, your body is so traumatized by whats happening, it shuts down your nerve endings. Not only did dying not hurt, I didnt feel the cold. And it was only ten degrees that night. I handled it badly, I admit. When I saw he was going to plow into me, I froze like a deer in headlights. A big, dumb, blond deer who had just paid for touch-up highlights. I couldnt move, not even to save my life. Gisele certainly could; the ungrateful little wretch scampered right the hell out of there. Me, I went flying. The car hit me at forty miles an hour, which was survivable, and knocked me into a tree, which was not. It didnt hurt, as I said, but there was tremendous pressure, all over my body. I heard things break. I heard my own skull shatter it sounded like someone was chewing ice in my ear. I felt myself bleed, felt liquid pouring from everywhere. I felt my bladder let go involuntarily for the first time in twenty-six years. In the dark, my blood on the snow looked black. The last thing I saw was Gisele sitting on my porch, waiting for me to let her in. The last thing I heard was the driver, screaming for help. Well, not the last. But you know what I mean. Booklist Betsy Taylor--former model, newly unemployed secretary, 30, and still single--wakes up after being flattened by a small SUV in a tacky coffin wearing cheap knock-off shoes. Her mother is glad she is back, albeit as a vampire, but her stepmother is enraged that Betsy has reclaimed her designer-shoe collection. With a wealthy best friend and a newly acquired doctor pal who is not susceptible to her formidable allure, she sets out to right wrongs but is abducted by Nostro, a tacky 500-year-old vampire who rules the undead roost. It seems that Betsy is an anomaly: a vampire who doesnt burn in sunlight, can fight the urge to feed, and is not repulsed by religious articles, all of which may make her the prophesied Queen of the Vampires. Teaming up with gorgeous vampire Eric Sinclair, who is in her opinion a major pervert, she takes on Nostro and his minions. Sexy, steamy, and laugh-out-loud funny, Davidson's chick-lit foray into the paranormal is delightful. Diana Tixier Herald Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved