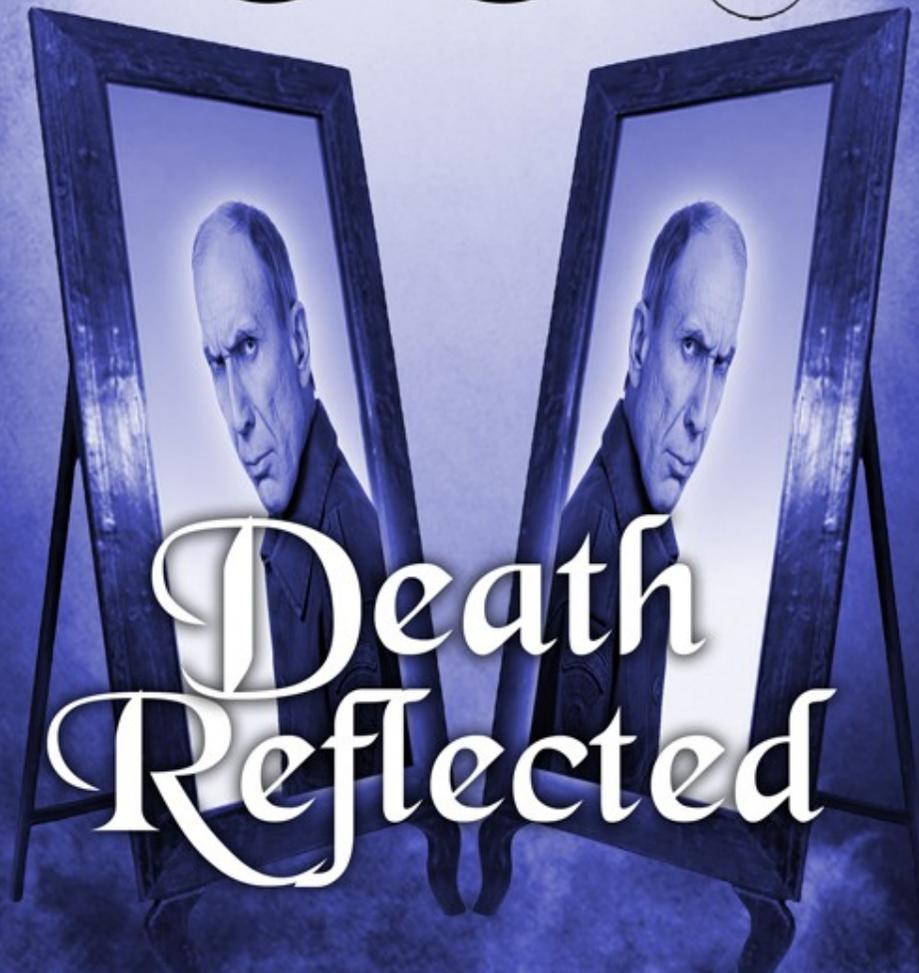
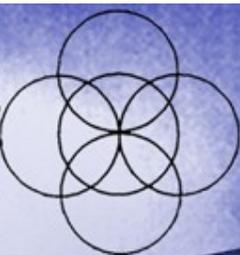


A LIZ BAKER  
SHORT STORY



Death  
Reflected

Christie Silvers

# DEATH REFLECTED

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DEATH REFLECTED

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## Note to Readers:

*Death Reflected* is a short story in the Liz Baker world. Though this story takes place in the middle of Killer Intentions (Liz Baker, book 3), it really should be read after completing that book.

This was a fun little project that I wanted to add to the Liz Baker world, but didn't feel that MaryAnne's story fit in with any of the actual books.

I hope that you enjoy this extra glimpse into Liz's world and come back in late 2012 for the next book installment.

Christie Silvers

## CHAPTER 1

MaryAnne Patterson has lived beside me since the first day I moved into my house. There are a couple of empty lots between her house and mine, making her my closest neighbor in the little cul-de-sac. She has always been there.

The day I moved in—in between unpacking dishes and throwing out dozens of back issue Cosmo magazines I couldn't understand the reasoning behind packing to begin with—there was a knock at the door. On the other side stood a woman in her early sixties, holding a baking dish that smelled like a cinnamon-coated taste of heaven.

“Good morning, dear. My name is MaryAnne Patterson. You can call me MaryAnne. I'm not one for formality.” I would always have a problem calling her MaryAnne to her face though.

She'd handed me the dish and shooed me inside, following close behind.

Looking around, she nodding approvingly at the stacks of boxes. “Looks almost identical to my house,” she mused. “It should make you a wonderful family home, dear.”

Inhaling the aroma of the warm apple cobbler in my hands, I couldn't bear telling her I didn't plan on ever having a family.

I pulled two plates from my newly filled cabinets and MaryAnne scooped out servings for the both of us. We sat at the kitchen table

long after both our plates were licked clean—not literally, as MaryAnne is a lady and wouldn't dare lick a plate, in public.

Ever since that day, MaryAnne has been more of a surrogate aunt than an elderly neighbor lady. She brings meals, picks up my mail when I'm out of town, and even watches my sour cat Tara when I'm away for more than a day or two. Tara seems to be quite fond of MaryAnne. If only that damn cat liked me as much.

MaryAnne Patterson has always been like a guardian angel. Someone I thought of as the best kind of person the world had to offer.

That is, until I found out the truth about her.

## CHAPTER 2

The day had been filled with getting my house back in order after the trip to Savannah—and then Atlanta—but when I was all cleaned up, with freshly painted fingernails, I figured why not go pick up Tara from MaryAnne's house. She had already called to tell me that she'd bring Tara and my mail over later, but I was anxious about the “surprise” MaryAnne said Tara had for me.

Damned if I knew why though. I guess I'd actually started to miss the sour cat I shared my home with.

Slipping out of the house, walking across my freshly mowed lawn, and dodging the overgrown weeds in the two lots separating our houses. I knocked loudly on MaryAnne's front door.

No answer.

Glancing over my shoulder, I confirmed that I did, in fact, see her old, green Oldsmobile parked in the driveway.

“Hmmm. . .”

I knocked again, harder this time. “Mrs. Patterson! It's me, Liz Baker! I've come to pick up the mail and that darn Tara.” Still nothing.

Gently, ever so slightly, my fingers skimmed the round, brass knob on the dark-stained solid oak door. Stretching up tall, I tried to peek through the fan-shaped glass window at the top of the door, but all I could see was the white ceiling.

I knocked again, and then took a lesson out of Chad's cop handbook by announcing, "I'm coming in, Mrs. Patterson!" The knob creaked slightly as I slowly turned it to the right; pushing the door lightly with my left hand. "MaryAnne? Are you home?"

Stepping over the threshold I heard a moan. That was enough to justify my dash inside.

"MaryAnne!" I shouted. "Where are you?"

Her living room looked to be in order with its flower-patterned sofa, beige side chair, antique-looking coffee table, and not a television in sight.

She once told me that television only causes laziness. I'd asked about the church services aired Sunday mornings and she told me that people should be in a real church, not watching it on television.

That was good old Southern lady MaryAnne for you. She'd do anything under the sun for anyone, but she never held back her opinions. And boy did she have a lot of opinions.

The sound of MaryAnne's voice drifted to my ears. It sounded like she was in the front bedroom, to the right of the living room. She must be in there talking to herself. It's not like this was the first time I'd heard her doing that. Smiling, I took a few long strides in that direction.

And then I heard a man's voice.

My steps slowed, becoming more gentle, almost a tiptoe, until I laid a finger to the door and leaned in close.

"No, Gerald, you can't come out. I've told you this for thirty years. You're stuck in there and always will be." MaryAnne's normally kind voice had a hardened, menacing tenor as she spoke.

Quite unlike the lady I've gotten to know over the years.

The man growled. It was a low, deep, monstrous growl.

“You'll let me out now, woman!” he demanded. There was a pause, and then he roared so loud it rattled the door my ear was pressed against. With a gasp, I jumped back. “I'll kill you when I get out of here, you damn whore!”

That was all I was going to listen to. MaryAnne was in danger and I wasn't about to let this bastard hurt her. I didn't know who he was, but I did know that if he's in MaryAnne's house he had to at least be human. And human I could handle.

Slamming open the door, I burst in, fists raised, taking a deep breath in preparation for yet another battle. Only this time fully expecting to be easily victorious.

There, in the middle of the room, stood MaryAnne. Pale, she stared at me in shock. Over her shoulder stood a mirror on an antique wooden stand. A mirror displaying the reflection of an older man. A man who wasn't in the room.

### CHAPTER 3

Though I'd only seen old portraits of Gerald Patterson, I knew exactly who he was. Gerald stared at me from the other side of the mirror. Wearing a brown three-piece suit from years long forgotten, he sported a balding head, with hair in a dark ring from one ear, around the back, and to the other. His wide forehead crinkled in multiple rows of wrinkled frustration. The snarl on his lips showed crooked, yellowed teeth. He wasn't a handsome man, far from it, and I doubted he ever had been.

Looking from MaryAnne to her supposedly dead husband made me doubt I was awake. Surely this was a dream. It wasn't normal to see a person in a mirror, and hear them talk back to you. Was it? I had to be dreaming. That was the only explanation even remotely plausible. Yep, that was it. Dreaming.

I shook my head, squeezed my eyes shut tight enough it squished up my nose. Unfortunately, the scene didn't change when I opened my eyes, again. I sighed. I really shouldn't have been so surprised, especially since my own dead mother had visited me many times over the last few months. I think I was more surprised to find him trapped in a mirror than to find him speaking to his wife.

“Um, what's going on here?” I asked. Uncertain I even wanted to know the answer. Maybe I should just turn around, walk right out, and forget what I just saw. Or didn't see, in case it really was a dream.

“Lizbeth, dear,” MaryAnne stammered. She was wringing her hands, and then they fluttered to her neck, before settling across her heart. She looked back over her shoulder at Gerald, and then back at me. “I’m sure you recognize my husband Gerald. Gerald, this is my neighbor Lizbeth Baker.”

She made the introductions as if it was an everyday thing for her to introduce her dead husband, trapped in a mirror, to the next door neighbor. Very matter-of-fact and polite.

I raised my eyebrows at her. She blushed ever so lightly.

“Uh, yeah, well... Nice to meet you, maybe?”

Gerald growled.

And just at that moment MaryAnne regained her natural composure and insisted, “Go on to the kitchen, Lizbeth. I’ll be right there and we’ll have some of the blueberry coffee cake I made earlier.”

“I don’t think—”

“Please, Lizbeth. I’ll be right behind you.”

Anxiously, I backed out of the room. I didn’t close the door, though I’m sure MaryAnne would have preferred I did. I wasn’t about to let her out of my sight. Hell, I didn’t know what the man in the mirror was capable of, and I still couldn’t count on my own powers being very reliable on a normal basis.

I really needed to start on some sort of training, or practice routine. This was just getting ridiculous.

A minute later, after a few words spoken in hushed tones, MaryAnne walked gracefully, head held high, out the door and closed it gently behind her. “Now, come with me, Lizbeth. I’m sure you have many questions.”

I watched in amazement as she walked past me and straight into the kitchen.

What just happened here? Did I really see my neighbor talking to her dead husband, who was actually trapped inside an antique mirror. And he threatened to kill her if she doesn't let him out? What? Huh?

“Come on, dear,” she shouted from the kitchen. “I'll not wait all day.”

## CHAPTER 4

“But how could this happen? It's the weirdest thing I've ever seen!”

Raising her eyebrows, MaryAnne gently sat her porcelain tea cup on the kitchen table. “Tsk. Tsk. Surely you jest, Lizbeth. With all you've seen and done in the last few months and *this* is the weirdest thing you've seen? I think not.”

Coughing, I nearly choked on the bite of coffee cake I'd just shoveled into my mouth. “What do you mean?” Coyness was never one of my strong suits. “I haven't...” Shaking my head, “I don't know what you mean. I haven't seen anything.” I waved my head toward the bedroom door. “Anything other than this insanity.”

Without a word, MaryAnne stood, taking the dishes from our impromptu snack break and placing them into the kitchen sink. She stood there, head bowed, with her back to me for a moment.

“I know.” She turned to face me. “I know about everything.”

My heart skipped a beat. How was this possible? She had to be talking about something else. Maybe she was about to condemn me to hell for the men I'd had in my bed. Or maybe she knew I could drink any man under the table. Or... Or anything other than what I knew she was about to say next.

“I know about the vampires, the werewolves, your mother being a ghost, and even Adele's estate. Or should I say, your estate?”

“But, how?” I was on my feet now. Not knowing what to do or say. Words failed me. My breath caught in my throat. The throb of a brand new tension headache made its appearance known. For a second I thought of dashing out the door.

“I was there that night. The night Adele and Annalise visited the gypsy. If that's what she really was.” MaryAnne shook her head. “She had to be more than that, what with everything that's happened since then.”

I fell back down into the chair. MaryAnne Patterson, my neighbor, the little old lady who picked up my mail and took care of my cat, had known my mother? She'd been there when all this came about? She'd known about my parentage?

She'd known about everything?

“How can this be?” The words came out in a whisper, but she must have heard them, nonetheless.

She took her seat across from me and started her story.

“I'm sure by now you already know the tell of Annalise, Adele, and the gypsy.” I nodded slowly. It was a story I'd gotten straight from my dead mother's mouth and from the hand of her murdered best friend, Adele. “Well, the three of us decided that when the time came to tell you, they'd leave me out of the story.” I opened my mouth to ask why, but she didn't give me time to voice the question. “My reason for being there didn't pertain to the future you had to deal with.”

MaryAnne shook her head and sighed loudly.

“I shouldn't have come back here. Not really. But I wanted to spend my last days here, in Tremmel Crossing. It's my home. I was born here. So I quit running and decided to come back and help you. I can't do much, not like Annalise and Adele could, but at least I could help you with small things.”

I didn't speak. I didn't know what to say. She took my silence as an invitation to continue.

“I was a few years older than your mother and Adele. We'd gone to school together, but didn't really connect until years later. We'd all worked at the same department store. Before your mother married your step-father, and all that. That's when we became the best of friends. 'The Three Musketeers,' people around town called us.”

Taking her seat at the table across from me, she smiled brightly. “They were my best friends. But even they didn't know what was going on at home.” She frowned toward the closed bedroom door. Her eyes narrowed and forehead creased.

“By this time, Gerald and I had been married for only two years. He didn't like that I was spending so much time with Annalise and Adele. He roared and pounded the tables every time I came home from an outing with them. It wasn't as if we were doing anything scandalous. We would go out for coffee, or do some shopping after work. I was married, so I didn't go with them when they did the single lady things. I wasn't there flirting with other men, but Gerald acted as if I was a disgraceful wife, no matter what I told him.

“I thought I was handling his outbursts quite well, until I came home late from work one evening to find him waiting on me with a fierce and dangerous look on his face.”

Wringing her hands, MaryAnne looked down at the table when she spoke next. “That's the night Gerald beat me.” She looked up, staring straight into my eyes. An evil glint sparkled in her eyes when she added, “And that was the last time he ever laid a hand on me.”

## CHAPTER 5

“It took a few weeks for me to recover from that night. The girls kept calling to see how I was. I'd had to lie to them because Gerald would stand right there while I was on the phone with them. I assured them I was fine, but that I had taken a nasty fall, breaking three ribs, my left arm, and leaving several cuts, scrapes, and bruises in its wake. Gerald called my employer and informed them that I wasn't coming back. That we would be starting a family soon, thus I'd have to become a homemaker.”

I shook my head. Not knowing what to say, I simply laid a hand atop hers. The physical contact seemed to soothe her. She smiled tenderly, a glimmer of refusing-to-fall tears glistened in her eyes.

She sighed and continued.

“One day, about a month later, the girls showed up in the middle of the day. Gerald was at his job at the hardware store and they were *suppose* to be working at the department store. I still looked like a beaten down dog, but the bones were mending well.

“The moment your mother and Adele saw me they went into a fit of fury. Adele began throwing my clothes into a suitcase and Annalise was talking a mile a minute about what they could do to protect me.

“I managed to talk them out of anything drastic, but I did spend the entire day with them. I had missed them so.”

Gerald moaned from the other room, bringing me back into the present. We both looked toward the bedroom door. MaryAnne huffed loudly.

“That’s when they dragged me to the gypsy, and ultimately into the situation we have today.”

“So how did he end up in the mirror?” I questioned. “You’ve always said your husband was dead.”

She chuckled. “Well, what was I suppose to say? ‘My husband is trapped in a mirror in my spare bedroom.’ I don’t think that would have played out quite as well.”

No, I didn’t think it would have either.

“Anyway, your mother was insistent that the gypsy had helped her and would take great care of me. Little did we know at that time what the gypsy’s help would consist of.

“It took one hundred dollars, half an hour of spellwork and instruction, and then me sprinkling a white powder on Gerald’s dinner that night.

“The next morning, after Gerald was suppose to already be gone for work, I went to work on cleaning all the windows and mirrors in the house. Just waiting to see what would happen by the end of the day. The gypsy never told me how long it would take for the spell to work, and I had no idea what to expect. I really did think he’d end up dead from some work-related accident.

“It wasn’t until I finally made it around to the bathroom that I noticed a shimmer coming from the old mirror.” She smiled to herself, lost in a long ago memory. “You can’t imagine the satisfaction I felt when I saw him trapped in there. The terror on his face, his fists beating against the glass walls of his prison. I couldn’t have been happier if the police had come to the house and told me someone had

murdered him at work.” She thought for a moment. “Elation. Pure elation.”

“So, how did you pull it off? Didn't people start asking after him?”

“Of course they did, but after seeing what he'd done to me, no one really cared what had happened to him. And after Annalise and Adele went to the police saying they'd seen Gerald heading out of town with a blonde everyone but me knew was his mistress... well, no one else bothered to look for him.”

Gerald yelled some profanities about whores and murder from the bedroom. MaryAnne just smiled.

“But why do you keep him? Here in the house? Anyone could come over and hear or see him in there.” Hell, I'd just seen and heard him in there.

Seriously, how would some normal person react to finding a man in a mirror in the spare bedroom of little MaryAnne Patterson's house? I was far from normal and it had thrown me for a loop.

“Oh, don't get me wrong. I thought about busting the mirror, but that's bad luck, and it would kill him for good. And I wanted to torment for as long as I could. Then I thought about burying it, but I was afraid someone would find it. As for hearing him, the gypsy fixed the spell so that Gerald can only speak once a year, on the day of his imprisonment. It gives him a chance to plead his case. I have the reverse spell memorized that will release him.” She shook her head. “If only he had shown any hint of remorse in all these years.

“In all these years he's never apologized. He only threatens to kill me. You'd think he'd use his days to consider a good case for release instead of wasting that one day a year with vengeance.” She rose to pour herself a fresh cup of tea. “Oh well, that's his choice.”

It was at this point I heard the familiar mewing of my stubborn cat. “Ah, there's Tara now,” MaryAnne rejoiced.

After introducing me to Tara's newborn kittens—one black and white spotted and the other brown and white striped—MaryAnne handed me a stack of my mail from when I was out of town, assured me she was fine and always would be, and decided she'd keep Tara a bit longer, until I had time to watch over the kittens.

“Now you go on home, Lizbeth.”

“But...”

“No, young lady. You go on now. I have a church function to attend this evening, and I won't have you worrying one little bit about me. You have enough to deal with as it is. Besides,” she smiled, “I have plenty to do and don't need you taking up all my time.”

She shooed me out the door without a second's notice and I was left standing alone. Stunned.

“Damn,” I declared.

On the walk back to my house, one thing about the events that had just unfolded bothered me most of all.

How the hell had Tara gotten pregnant? She'd been fixed when I adopted her. Now I had two more cats to tend with.

Yeah, the fact that my cat's fertility was what bothered me most proved just how crazy my life had become in the last few months. That's when I went home and waited to see what else the day would bring.

ALSO BY CHRISTIE SILVERS

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