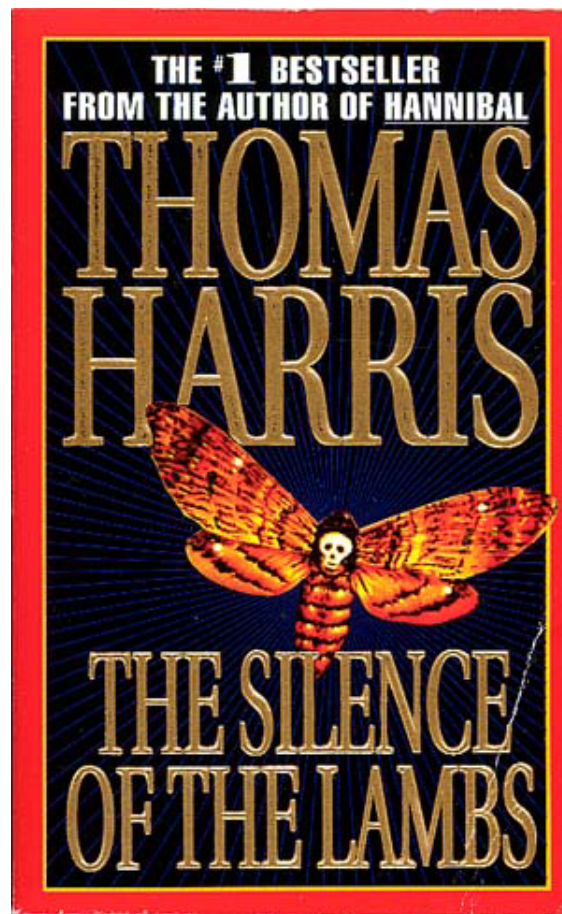


THE SILENCE OF THE LAMB

Thomas Harris



CHAPTER 1

Behavioral Science, the FBI section that deals with serial murder, is on the bottom floor of the Academy building at Quantico, half-buried in the earth. Clarice Starling reached it flushed after a fast walk from Hogan's Alley on the firing range. She had grass in her hair and grass stains on her FBI Academy windbreaker from diving to the ground under fire in an arrest problem on the range.

No one was in the outer office, so she fluffed briefly by her reflection in the glass doors. She knew she could look all right without primping. Her hands smelled of gunsmoke, but there was no time to wash--- Section Chief Crawford's summons had said now.

She found Jack Crawford alone in the cluttered suite of offices. He was standing at someone else's desk talking on the telephone and she had a chance to look him over for the first time in a year. What she saw disturbed her.

Normally, Crawford looked like a fit, middle-aged engineer who might have paid his way through college playing baseball--- a crafty catcher, tough when he blocked the plate. Now he was thin, his shirt collar was too big, and he had dark puffs under his reddened eyes. Everyone who could read the papers knew Behavioral Science section was catching hell. Starling hoped Crawford wasn't on the juice. That seemed most unlikely here.

Crawford ended his telephone conversation with a sharp "No." He took her file from under his arm and opened it.

"Starling, Clarice M., good morning," he said.

"Hello." Her smile was only polite.

"Nothing's wrong. I hope the call didn't spook you."

"No." *Not totally true*, Starling thought.

"Your instructors tell me you're doing well, top quarter of the class."

"I hope so, they haven't posted anything."

"I ask them from time to time."

That surprised Starling; she had written Crawford off as a two-faced recruiting sergeant son of a bitch.

She had met Special Agent Crawford when he was a guest lecturer at the University of Virginia. The quality of his criminology seminars was a factor in her coming to the Bureau. She wrote him a note when she qualified for the Academy, but he never replied, and for the three months she had been a trainee at Quantico, he had ignored her.

Starling came from people who do not ask for favors or press for friendship, but she was puzzled and regretful at Crawford's behavior. Now, in his presence, she liked him again, she was sorry to note.

Clearly something was wrong with him. There was a peculiar cleverness in Crawford, aside from his intelligence, and Starling had first noticed it in his color sense and the textures of his clothing, even within the FBI-clone standards of agent dress. Now he was neat but drab, as though he were molting.

"A job came up and I thought about you," he said. "It's not really a job, it's more of an interesting errand. Push Berry's stuff off that chair and sit down. You put down here that you want to come directly to Behavioral Science when you get through with the

Academy."

"I do."

"You have a lot of forensics, but no law enforcement background. We look for six years, minimum."

"My father was a marshal, I know the life."

Crawford smiled a little. "What you *do* have is a double major in psychology and criminology, and how many summers working in a mental health center--- two?"

"Two."

"Your counselor's license, is it current?"

"It's good for two more years. I got it before you had the seminar at UVA--- before I decided to do this."

"You got stuck in the hiring freeze."

Starling nodded. "I was lucky though--- I found out in time to qualify as a Forensic Fellow. Then I could work in the lab until the Academy had an opening."

"You wrote to me about coming here, didn't you, and I don't think I answered--- I know I didn't. I should have."

"You've had plenty else to do."

"Do you know about VI-CAP?"

"I know it's the Violent Criminal Apprehension Program. The *Law Enforcement Bulletin* says you're working on a database, but you aren't operational yet."

Crawford nodded. "We've developed a questionnaire. It applies to all the known serial murderers in modern times." He handed her a thick sheaf of papers in a flimsy binding. "There's a section for investigators, and one for surviving victims, if any. The blue is for the killer to answer if he will, and the pink is a series of questions an examiner asks the killer, getting his reactions as well as his answers. It's a lot of paperwork."

Paperwork. Clarice Starling's self-interest snuffled ahead like a keen beagle. She smelled a job offer coming--- probably the drudgery of feeding raw data into a new computer system. It was tempting to get into Behavioral Science in any capacity she could, but she knew what happens to a woman if she's ever pegged as a secretary--- it sticks until the end of time. A choice was coming, and she wanted to choose well.

Crawford was waiting for something--- he must have asked her a question. Starling had to scramble to recall it.

"What tests have you given? Minnesota Multiphasic, ever? Rorschach?"

"Yes, MMPI, never Rorschach," she said. "I've done Thematic Apperception and I've given children Bender-Gestalt."

"Do you spook easily, Starling?"

"Not yet."

"See, we've tried to interview and examine all the thirty-two known serial murderers we have in custody, to build up a database for psychological profiling is unsolved cases. Most of them went along with it--- I think they're driven to show off, a lot of them. Twenty-seven were willing to cooperate. Four on death row with appeals pending clammed up, understandably. But the one we want the most, we haven't been able to get. I want you to go after him tomorrow in the asylum."

Clarice Starling felt a glad knocking in her chest and some apprehension too.

"Who's the subject?"

"The psychiatrist--- Dr. Hannibal Lecter," Crawford said.

A brief silence follows the name, always, in any civilized gathering. Starling looked at Crawford steadily, but she was too still. "Hannibal the Cannibal," she said.

"Yes."

"Yes, well--- Okay, right. I'm glad of the chance, but you have to know I'm wondering--- why me?"

"Mainly because you're available," Crawford said. "I don't expect him to cooperate. He's already refused, but it was through an intermediary--- the director of the hospital. I have to be able to say our qualified examiner went to him and asked him personally. There are reasons that don't concern you. I don't have anybody left in this section to do it."

"You're jammed--- Buffalo Bill--- and the things in Nevada," Starling said.

"You got it. It's the old story--- not enough warm bodies."

"You said tomorrow--- you're in a hurry. Any bearing on a current case?"

"No. I wish there were."

"If he balks on me, do you still want a psychological evaluation?"

"No. I'm waist-deep in inaccessible-patient evaluations of Dr. Lecter and they're all different."

Crawford shook two vitamin C tablets into his palm, and mixed an Alka-Seltzer at the water cooler to wash them down. "It's ridiculous, you know; Lecter's a psychiatrist and he writes for the psychiatric journals himself--- extraordinary stuff--- but it's never about his own little anomalies. He pretended to go along with the hospital director, Chilton, once in some tests--- sitting around with a blood-pressure cuff on his penis, looking at wreck pictures--- then Lecter published first what he'd learned about Chilton and made a fool out of him. He responds to serious correspondence from psychiatric students in fields unrelated to his case, and that's all he does. If he won't talk to you, I just want straight reporting. How does he look, how does his cell look, what's he doing. Local color, so to speak. Watch out for the press going in and coming out. Not the real press, the supermarket press. They love Lecter even better than Prince Andrew."

"Didn't a sleazo magazine offer him fifty thousand dollars for some recipes? I seem to remember that," Starling said.

Crawford nodded. "I'm pretty sure the *National Tattler* has bought somebody inside the hospital and they may know you're coming after I make the appointment."

Crawford leaned forward until he faced her at a distance of two feet. She watched his half-glasses blur the bags under his eyes. He had gargled recently with Listerine.

"Now. I want your full attention, Starling. Are you listening to me?"

"Yes sir."

"Be very careful with Hannibal Lecter. Dr. Chilton, the head of the mental hospital, will go over the physical procedure you use to deal with him. Don't deviate from it. *Do not deviate from it one iota for any reason.* If Lecter talks to you at all, he'll just be trying to find out about you. It's the kind of curiosity that makes a snake look in a bird's nest. We both know you have to back-and-forth a little in interviews, but you tell him no specifics about yourself. You don't want any of your personal facts in his head. You know what he did to Will Graham."

"I read about it when it happened."

"He gutted Will with a linoleum knife when Will caught up with him. It's a

wonder Will didn't die. Remember the Red Dragon? Lecter turned Francis Dolarhyde onto Will and his family. Will's face looks like damn Picasso drew him, thanks to Lecter. He tore a nurse up in the asylum. Do your job, just don't ever forget what he is."

"And what's that? Do you know?"

"I know he's a monster. Beyond that, nobody can say for sure. Maybe you'll find out; I didn't pick you out of a hat, Starling. You asked me a couple of interesting questions when I was at UVA. The Director will see your own report over your signature-- if it's clear and tight and organized. I decide that. And I *will* have it by 0900 Sunday. Okay, Starling, carry on in the prescribed manner."

Crawford smiled at her, but his eyes were dead.

CHAPTER 2

Dr. Frederick Chilton, fifty-eight, administrator of the Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane, has a long, wide desk upon which there are no hard or sharp objects. Some of the staff call it "the moat." Other staff members don't know what the word *moat* means. Dr. Chilton remained seated behind his desk when Clarice Starling came into his office.

"We've had a lot of detectives here, but I can't remember one so attractive," Chilton said without getting up.

Starling knew without thinking about it that the shine on his extended hand was lanolin from patting his hair. She let go before he did.

"It is *Miss* Sterling, isn't it?"

"It's *Starling*, Doctor, with an *a*. Thank you for your time."

"So the FBI is going to the girls like everything else, ha, ha." He added the tobacco smile he uses to separate his sentences.

"The Bureau's improving, Dr. Chilton. It certainly is."

"Will you be in Baltimore for several days? You know, you can have just as good a time here as you can in Washington or New York, if you know the town."

She looked away to spare herself his smile and knew at once that he had registered her distaste. "I'm sure it's a great town, but my instructions are to see Dr. Lecter and report back this afternoon."

"Is there someplace I could call you in Washington for a follow-up, later on?"

"Of course. It's kind of you to think of it. Special Agent Jack Crawford's in charge of this project, and you can always reach me through him."

"I see," Chilton said. His cheeks, mottled with pink, clashed with the improbable red-brown of his hair. "Give me your identification, please." He let her remain standing through his leisurely examination of her ID card. Then he handed it back and rose. "This won't take much time. Come along."

"I understood you'd brief me, Dr. Chilton," Starling said.

"I can do that while we walk." He came around his desk, looking at his watch. "I have a lunch in half an hour."

Dammit, she should have read him better, quicker. He might not be a total jerk. He might know something useful. It wouldn't have hurt her to simper once, even if she wasn't at it.

"Dr. Chilton, I have an appointment with you now. It was set at your convenience, when you could give me some time. Things could come up during the interview--- I may need to go over some of his responses with you."

"I really, really doubt it. Oh, I need to make a telephone call before we go. I'll catch up with you in the outer office."

"I'd like to leave my coat and umbrella here."

"Out there," Chilton said. "Give them to Alan in the outer office. He'll put them away."

Alan wore the pajamalike garment issued to the inmates. He was wiping out ashtrays with the tail of his shirt.

He rolled his tongue around in his cheek as he took Starling's coat.

"Thank you," she said.

"You're more than welcome. How often do you shit?" Alan asked.

"What did you say?"

"Does it come out lo-o-o-o-nng?"

"I'll hang these somewhere myself."

"You don't have anything in the way--- you can bend over and watch it come out and see if it changes color when the air hits it, do you do that? Does it look like you have a big brown tail?" He wouldn't let go of the coat.

"Dr. Chilton wants you in his office, right now," Starling said.

"No I don't," Dr. Chilton said. "Put the coat in the closet, Alan, and don't get it out while we're gone. *Do it*. I had a full-time office girl, but the cutbacks robbed me of her. Now the girl who let you in types three hours a day, and then I have Alan. Where are all the office girls, Miss Starling?" His spectacles flashed at her. "Are you armed?"

"No, I'm not armed."

"May I see your purse and briefcase?"

"You saw my credentials."

"And they say you're a student. Let me see your things, please."

Clarice Starling flinched as the first of the heavy steel gates clashed shut behind her and the bolt shot home. Chilton walked slightly ahead, down the green institutional corridor in an atmosphere of Lysol and distant slammings. Starling was angry at herself for letting Chilton put his hand in her purse and briefcase, and she stepped hard on the anger so that she could concentrate. It was all right. She felt her control solid beneath her, like a good gravel bottom in a fast current.

"Lecter's a considerable nuisance," Chilton said over his shoulder. "It takes an orderly at least ten minutes a day to remove the staples from the publications he receives. We tried to eliminate or reduce his subscriptions, but he wrote a brief and the court overruled us. The volume of his personal mail used to be enormous. Thankfully, it's dwindled since he's been overshadowed by other creatures in the news. For a while it seemed that every little student doing a master's thesis in psychology wanted something from Lecter in it. The medical journals still publish him, but it's just for the freak value of his byline."

"He did a good piece on surgical addiction in the *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*, I

thought," Starling said.

"You did, did you? *We* tried to study Lecter. We thought, 'Here's an opportunity to make a landmark study'--- it's so rare to get one alive."

"One what?"

"A pure sociopath, that's obviously what he is. But he's impenetrable, much too sophisticated for the standard tests. And, my, does he hate us. He thinks I'm his nemesis. Crawford's very clever--- isn't he?--- using you on Lecter."

"How do you mean, Dr. Chilton?"

"A young woman to 'turn him on,' I believe you call it. I don't believe Lecter's seen a woman in several years--- he may have gotten a glimpse of one of the cleaning people. We generally keep women out of there. They're trouble in detention."

Well fuck off, Chilton. "I graduated from the University of Virginia with honors, Doctor. It's not a charm school."

"Then you should be able to remember the rules: Do not reach through the bars, do not touch the bars. You pass him nothing but soft paper. No pens, no pencils. He has his own felt-tipped pens some of the time. The paper you pass him must be free of staples, paper clips, or pins. Items are only passed to him through the sliding food carrier. Items come back out through the sliding food carrier. No exceptions. Do not accept anything he attempts to hold out to you through the barrier. Do you understand me?"

"I understand."

They had passed through two more gates and left the natural light behind. Now they were beyond the wards where inmates can mix together, down in the region where there can be no windows and no mixing. The hallway lights are covered with heavy grids, like the lights in the engine rooms of ships. Dr. Chilton paused beneath one. When their footfalls stopped, Starling could hear somewhere beyond the wall the ragged end of a voice ruined by shouting.

"Lecter is never outside his cell without wearing full restraints and a mouthpiece," Chilton said. "I'm going to show you why. He was a model of cooperation for the first year after he was committed. Security around him was slightly relaxed--- this was under the previous administration, you understand. On the afternoon of July 8, 1976, he complained of chest pain and he was taken to the dispensary. His restraints were removed to make it easier to give him an electrocardiogram. When the nurse bent over him, he did this to her." Chilton handed Clarice Starling a dog-eared photograph. "The doctors managed to save one of her eyes. Lecter was hooked up to the monitors the entire time. He broke her jaw to get at her tongue. His pulse never got over eighty-five, even when he swallowed it."

Starling didn't know which was worse, the photograph or Chilton's attention as he gleaned her face with fast grabby eyes. She thought of a thirsty chicken pecking tears off her face.

"I keep him in here," Chilton said, and pushed a button beside heavy double doors of security glass. A big orderly let them into the block beyond.

Starling made a tough decision and stopped just inside the doors. "Dr. Chilton, we really need these test results. If Dr. Lecter feels you're his enemy--- if he's fixed on you, just as you've said--- we might have more luck if I approached him by myself. What do you think?"

Chilton's cheek twitched. "That's perfectly fine with me. You might have

suggested that in my office. I could have sent an orderly with you and saved the time."

"I could have suggested it there if you'd briefed me there."

"I don't expect I'll see you again, Miss *Starling*--- Barney, when she's finished with Lecter, ring for someone to bring her out."

Chilton left without looking at her again.

Now there was only the big impassive orderly and the soundless clock behind him and his wire mesh cabinet with the Mace and restraints, mouthpiece and tranquilizer gun. A wall rack held a long pipe device with a U on the end for pinioning the violent to the wall.

The orderly was looking at her. "Dr. Chilton told you, don't touch the bars?" His voice was both high and hoarse. She was reminded of Aldo Ray.

"Yes, he told me."

"Okay. It's past the others, the last cell on the right. Stay toward the middle of the corridor as you go down, and don't mind anything. You can take him his mail, get off on the right foot." The orderly seemed privately amused. "You just put it in the tray and let it roll through. If the tray's inside, you can pull it back with the cord, or he can send it back. He can't reach you where the tray stops outside." The orderly gave her two magazines, their loose pages spilling out, three newspapers and several opened letters.

The corridor was about thirty yards long, with cells on both sides. Some were padded cells with an observation window, long and narrow like an archery slit; in the center of the door. Others were standard prison cells, with a wall of bars opening on the corridor. Clarice Starling was aware of figures in the cells, but she tried not to look at them. She was more than halfway down when a voice hissed, "I can smell your cunt." She gave no sign that she had heard it, and went on.

The lights were on in the last cell. She moved toward the left side of the corridor to see into it as she approached, knowing her heels announced her.

Chapter 3

Dr. Lecter's cell is well beyond the others, facing only a closet across the corridor, and it is unique in ether ways. The front is a wall of bars, but within the bars, at a distance greater than the human reach, is a second barrier, a stout nylon net stretched from floor to ceiling and wall to wall. Behind the net, Starling could see a table bolted to the floor and piled high with softcover books and papers, and a straight chair, also fastened down.

Dr. Hannibal Lecter himself reclined on his bunk, perusing the Italian edition of *Vogue*. He held the loose pages in his right hand and put them beside him one by one with his left. Dr. Lecter has six fingers on his left hand.

Clarice Starling stopped a little distance from the bars, about the length of a small foyer.

"Dr. Lecter." Her voice sounded all right to her.

He looked up from his reading.

For a steep second she thought his gaze hummed, but it was only her blood she heard.

"My name is Clarice Starling. May I talk with you?" Courtesy was implicit in her distance and her tone.

Dr. Lecter considered, his finger pressed against his pursed lips. Then he rose in his own time and came forward smoothly in his cage, stopping short of the nylon web without looking at it, as though he chose the distance.

She could see that he was small, sleek; in his hands and arms she saw wiry strength like her own.

"Good morning," he said, as though he had answered the door. His cultured voice has a slight metallic rasp beneath it, possibly from disuse.

Dr. Lecter's eyes are maroon and they reflect the light in pinpoints of red. Sometimes the points of light seem to fly like sparks to his center. His eyes held Starling whole.

She came a measured distance closer to the bars. The hair on her forearms rose and pressed against her sleeves.

"Doctor, we have a hard problem in psychological profiling. I want to ask you for your help."

" 'We' being Behavioral Science at Quantico. You're one of Jack Crawford's, I expect."

"I am, yes."

"May I see your credentials?"

She hadn't expected this. "I showed them at the... office."

"You mean you showed them to Frederick Chilton, Ph.D.?"

"Yes."

"Did you see *his* credentials?"

"No."

"The academic ones don't make extensive reading, I can tell you. Did you meet Alan? Isn't he charming? Which of them had you rather talk with?"

"On the whole, I'd say Alan."

"You could be a reporter Chilton let in for money. I think I'm entitled to see your credentials."

"All right." She held up her laminated ID card.

"I can't read it at this distance, send it through, please."

"I can't."

"Because it's hard."

"Yes."

"Ask Barney."

The orderly came and considered. "Dr. Lecter, I'll let this come through. But if you don't return it when I ask you to--- if we have to bother everybody and secure you to get it--- then I'll be upset. If you upset me, you'll have to stay bundled up until I feel better toward you. Meals through the tube, dignity pants changed twice a day--- the works. And I'll hold your mail for a week. Got it?"

"Certainly, Barney."

The card rolled through on the tray and Dr. Lecter held it to the light.

"A trainee? It says 'trainee.' Jack Crawford sent a *trainee* to interview me?" He tapped the card against his small white teeth and breathed in its smell.

"Dr. Lecter," Barney said.

"Of course." He put the card back in the tray carrier and Barney pulled it to the outside.

"I'm still in training at the Academy, yes," Starling said, "but we're not discussing the FBI--- we're talking psychology. Can you decide for yourself if I'm qualified in what we talk about?"

"Ummmm," Dr. Lecter said. "Actually... that's rather slippery of you. Barney, do you think Officer Starling might have a chair?"

"Dr. Chilton didn't tell me anything about a chair."

"What do your manners tell you, Barney?"

"Would you like a chair?" Barney asked her. "We could have had one, but he never--- well, usually nobody needs to stay that long."

"Yes, thank you," Starling said.

Barney brought a folding chair from the locked closet across the hall, set it up, and left them.

"Now," Lecter said, sitting sideways at his table to face her, "what did Miggs say to you?"

"Who?"

"Multiple Miggs, in the cell down there. He hissed at you. What did he say?"

"He said, 'I can smell your cunt.'"

"I see. I myself cannot. You use Evyan skin cream, and sometimes you wear L'Air du Temps, but not today. Today you are determinedly unperfumed. How do you feel about what Miggs said?"

"He's hostile for reasons I couldn't know. It's too bad. He's hostile to people, people are hostile to him. It's a loop."

"Are you hostile to him?"

"I'm sorry he's disturbed. Beyond that, he's noise. How did you know about the perfume?"

"A puff from your bag when you got out your card. Your bag is lovely."

"Thank you."

"You brought your best bag, didn't you?"

"Yes." It was true. She had saved for the classic casual handbag, and it was the best item she owned.

"It's much better than your shoes."

"Maybe they'll catch up."

"I have no doubt of it."

"Did you do the drawings on your walls, Doctor?"

"Do you think I called in a decorator?"

"The one over the sink is a European city?"

"It's Florence. That's the Palazzo Vecchio and the Duomo, seen from the Belvedere."

"Did you do it from memory, all the detail?"

"Memory, Officer Starling, is what I have instead of a view."

"The other one is a crucifixion? The middle cross is empty."

"It's Golgotha after the Deposition. Crayon and Magic Marker on butcher paper. It's what the thief who had been promised Paradise really got, when they took the paschal lamb away."

"And what was that?"

"His legs broken of course, just like his companion who mocked Christ. Are you

entirely innocent of the Gospel of St. John? Look at Duccio, then--- he paints accurate crucifixions. How is Will Graham? How does he look?"

"I don't know Will Graham."

"You know who he is. Jack Crawford's protégé. The one before you. How does his face look?"

"I've never seen him."

"This is called 'cutting up a few old touches,' Officer Starling, you don't mind do you?"

Beats of silence and she plunged.

"Better than that, we could touch up a few old cuts here. I brought---"

"No. No, that's stupid and wrong. Never use wit in a segue. Listen, understanding a witticism and replying to it makes your subject perform a fast, detached scan that is inimical to mood. It is on the plank of mood that we proceed. You were doing fine, you'd been courteous and receptive to courtesy, you'd established trust by telling the embarrassing truth about Miggs, and then you come in with a ham-handed segue into your questionnaire, It won't do."

"Dr. Lecter, you're an experienced clinical psychiatrist. Do you think I'm dumb enough to try to run some kind of mood scam on you? Give me some credit. I'm asking you to respond to the questionnaire, and you will or you won't. Would it hurt to look at the thing?"

"Officer Starling, have you read any of the papers coming out of Behavioral Science recently?"

"Yes."

"So have I. The FBI stupidly refuses to send me the *Law Enforcement Bulletin*, but I get it from secondhand dealers and I have the *News* from John Jay, and the psychiatric journals. They're dividing the people who practice serial murder into two groups--- organized and disorganized. What do you think of that?"

"It's... fundamental, they evidently---"

"*Simplistic* is the word you want. In fact, most psychology is puerile, Officer Starling, and that practiced in Behavioral Science is on a level with phrenology. Psychology doesn't get very good material to start with. Go to any college psychology department and look at the students and faculty: ham radio enthusiasts and other personality-deficient buffs. Hardly the best brains on the campus: *Organized* and *disorganized*--- a real bottom-feeder thought of that."

"How would you change the classification?"

"I wouldn't."

"Speaking of publications, I read your pieces on surgical addiction and left-side, right-side facial displays."

"Yes, they were first-rate," Dr. Lecter said.

"I thought so, and so did Jack Crawford. He pointed them out to me. That's one reason he's anxious for you---"

"Crawford the Stoic is anxious? He must be busy if he's recruiting help from the student body."

"He is, and he wants---"

"Busy with Buffalo Bill."

"I expect so."

"No. Not 'I expect so.' Officer Starling, you know perfectly well it's Buffalo Bill. I thought Jack Crawford might have sent you to ask me about that."

"No."

"Then you're not working around to it."

"No, I came because we need your---"

"What do you know about Buffalo Bill?"

"Nobody knows much."

"Has everything been in the papers?"

"I think so. Dr. Lecter, I haven't seen any confidential material on that case, my job is---"

"How many women has Buffalo Bill used?"

"The police have found five."

"All flayed?"

"Partially, yes."

"The papers have never explained his name. Do you know why he's called Buffalo Bill?"

"Yes."

"Tell me."

"I'll tell you if you'll look at this questionnaire."

"I'll look, that's all. Now, why?"

"It started as a bad joke in Kansas City homicide."

"Yes...?"

"They call him Buffalo Bill because he skins his humps."

Starling discovered that she had traded feeling frightened for feeling cheap. Of the two, she preferred feeling frightened.

"Send through the questionnaire."

Starling rolled the blue section through on the tray. She sat still while Lecter flipped through it.

He dropped it back in the carrier. "Oh, Officer Starling, do you think you can dissect me with this blunt little tool?"

"No, I think you can provide some insight and advance this study."

"And what possible reason could I have to do that?"

"Curiosity."

"About what?"

"About why you're here. About what happened to you."

"Nothing happened to me, Officer Starling. *I* happened. You can't reduce me to a set of influences. You've given up good and evil for behaviorism, Officer Starling. You've got everybody in moral dignity pants--- nothing is ever anybody's fault. Look at me, Officer Starling. Can you stand to say I'm evil? Am I evil, Officer Starling?"

"I think you've been destructive. For me it's the same thing."

"Evil's just destructive? Then *storms* are evil, if it's that simple. And we have *fire*, and then there's *hail*. Underwriters lump it all under 'Acts of God.' "

"Deliberate---"

"I collect church collapses, recreationally. Did you see the recent one in Sicily? Marvelous! The facade fell on sixty-five grandmothers at a special Mass. Was that evil? If so, who did it? If He's up there, He just loves it, Officer Starling. Typhoid and swans---

it all comes from the same place."

"I can't explain you, Doctor, but I know who can."

He stopped her with his upraised hand. The hand was shapely, she noted, and the middle finger perfectly replicated. It is the rarest form of polydactyly.

When he spoke again, his tone was soft and pleasant. "You'd like to quantify me, Officer Starling. You're so ambitious, aren't you? Do you know what you look like to me, with your good bag and your cheap shoes? You look like a rube. You're a well-scrubbed, hustling rube with a little taste. Your eyes are like cheap birthstones--- all surface shine when you stalk some little answer. And you're bright behind them, aren't you? Desperate not to be like your mother. Good nutrition has given you some length of bone, but you're not more than one generation out of the mines, *Officer* Starling. Is it the West Virginia Starlings or the Okie Starlings, Officer? It was a toss-up between college and the opportunities in the Women's Army Corps, wasn't it? Let me tell you something specific about yourself, Student Starling. Back in your room, you have a string of gold add-a-beads and you feel an ugly little thump when you look at how tacky they are now, isn't that so? All those tedious thank-yous, permitting all that sincere fumbling, getting all sticky once for every bead. Tedious. Tedious. Bo-o-o-o-r-i-ing. Being smart spoils a lot of things, doesn't it? And, taste isn't kind. When you think about this conversation, you'll remember the dumb animal hurt in his face when you got rid of him.

"If the add-a-beads got tacky, what else will as you go along? You wonder don't you, at night?" Dr. Lecter asked in the kindest of tones.

Starling raised her head to face him. "You see a lot, Dr. Lecter. I won't deny anything you've said. But here's the question you're answering for me right now, whether you mean to or not: Are you strong enough to point that high-powered perception at yourself? It's hard to face. I've found that out in the last few minutes. How about it? Look at yourself and write down the truth. What more fit or complex subject could you find? Or maybe you're afraid of yourself."

"You're tough, aren't you, Officer Starling?"

"Reasonably so, yes."

"And you'd hate to think you were common. Wouldn't that sting? My! Well you're far from common, Officer Starling. All you have is fear of it. What are your add-a-beads, seven millimeter?"

"Seven."

"Let me make a suggestion. Get some loose, drilled tiger's eyes and string them alternately with the gold beads. You might want to do two-and-three or one-and-two, however looks best to you. The tiger's eyes will pick up the color of your own eyes and the highlights in your hair. Has anyone ever sent you a Valentine?"

"Yep."

"We're already into Lent. Valentine's Day is only a week away, hmmm, are you expecting some?"

"You never know."

"No, you never do... I've been thinking about Valentine's Day. It reminds me of something funny. Now that I think of it, I could make you very happy on Valentine's Day, *Clarice* Starling."

"How, Doctor Lecter?"

"By sending you a wonderful Valentine. I'll have to think about it. Now please

excuse me. Good-bye, Officer Starling."

"And the study?"

"A census taker tried to quantify me once. I ate his liver with some fava beans and a big Amarone. Go back to school, little Starling."

Hannibal Lecter, polite to the last, did not give her his back. He stepped backward from the barrier before he turned to his cot again, and lying on it, became as remote from her as a stone crusader lying on a tomb.

Starling felt suddenly empty, as though she had given blood. She took longer than necessary to put the papers back in her briefcase because she didn't immediately trust her legs. Starling was soaked with the failure she detested. She folded her chair and leaned it against the utility closet door. She would have to pass Miggs again. Barney in the distance appeared to be reading. She could call him to come for her. Damn Miggs. It was no worse than passing construction crews or delivery louts every day in the city. She started back down the corridor.

Close beside her, Miggs' voice hissed, "I bit my wrist so I can diiiieeeeeeeee--- see how it bleeds?"

She should have called Barney but, startled, she looked into the cell, saw Miggs flick his fingers and felt the warm spatter on her cheek and shoulder before she could turn away.

She got away from him, registered that it was semen, not blood, and Lecter was calling to her, she could hear him. Dr. Lecter's voice behind her, the cutting rasp in it more pronounced.

"Officer Starling."

He was up and calling after her as she walked. She rummaged in her purse for tissues.

Behind her, "Officer Starling."

She was on the cold rails of her control now, making steady progress toward the gate.

"Officer Starling." A new note in Lecter's voice.

She stopped. *What in God's name do I want this bad?* Miggs hissed something she didn't listen to.

She stood again in front of Lecter's cell and saw the rare spectacle of the doctor agitated. She knew that he could smell it on her. He could smell everything.

"I would not have had that happen to you. Discourtesy is unspeakably ugly to me."

It was as though committing murders had purged him of lesser rudeness. Or perhaps, Starling thought, it excited him to see her marked in this particular way. She couldn't tell. The sparks in his eyes flew into his darkness like fireflies down a cave.

Whatever it is, use it, Jesus! She held up her briefcase. "Please do this for me."

Maybe she was too late; he was calm again.

"No. But I'll make you happy that you came. I'll give you something else. I'll give you what you love the most, Clarice Starling."

"What's that, Dr. Lecter?"

"Advancement, of course. It works out perfectly--- I'm so glad. Valentine's Day made me think of it." The smile over white teeth could have come for any reason. He spoke so softly she could barely hear. "Look in Raspail's car for your Valentines. Did you

hear me? Look in *Raspail's car* for your Valentines. You'd better go now; I don't think Miggs could manage again so soon, even if he is crazy, do you?"

CHAPTER 4

Clarice Starling was excited, depleted, running on her will. Some of the things Lecter had said about her were true, and some only clanged on the truth. For a few seconds she had felt an alien consciousness loose in her head, slapping things off the shelves like a bear in a camper.

She hated what he'd said about her mother and she had to get rid of the anger. This was business.

She sat in her old Pinto across the street from the hospital and breathed deeply. When the windows fogged she had a little privacy from the sidewalk.

Raspail. She remembered the name. He was a patient of Lecter's and one of his victims. She'd had only one evening with the Lecter background material. The file was vast and Raspail one of many victims. She needed to read the details.

Starling wanted to run with it, but she knew that the urgency was of her own manufacture. The Raspail case was closed years ago. No one was in danger. She had time. Better to be well informed and well advised before she went further.

Crawford might take it away from her and give it to someone else. She'd have to take that chance.

She tried to call him from a phone booth, but found he was budget-begging for the Justice Department before the House Subcommittee on Appropriations.

She could have gotten details of the case from the Baltimore Police Department's homicide division, but murder is not a federal crime and she knew they'd snatch it away from her immediately, no question.

She drove back to Quantico, back to Behavioral Science with its homey brown-checked curtains and its gray files full of hell. She sat there into the evening, after the last secretary had left, cranking through the Lecter microfilm. The contrary old viewer glowed like a Jack-o'-lantern in the darkened room, the words and the negatives of pictures swarming across her intent face.

Raspail, Benjamin René, WM, 46, was first flutist for the Baltimore Philharmonic Orchestra. He was a patient in Dr. Hannibal Lecter's psychiatric practice.

On, March 22, 1975, he failed to appear for a performance in Baltimore. On March 25 his body was discovered seated in a pew in a small rural church near Falls Church, Virginia, dressed only in a white tie and a tail coat. Autopsy revealed that Raspail's heart was pierced and that he was short his thymus and pancreas.

Clarice Starling, who from early life had known much more than she wished to know about meat processing, recognized the missing organs as the sweet-breads.

Baltimore Homicide believed that these items appeared on the menu of a dinner Lecter gave for the president and the conductor of the Baltimore Philharmonic on the evening following Raspail's disappearance.

Dr. Hannibal Lecter professed to know nothing about these matters. The president and the conductor of the Philharmonic testified that they could not recall the fare at Dr. Lecter's dinner, though Lecter was known for the excellence of his table and had contrib-

uted numerous articles to gourmet magazines.

The president of the Philharmonic subsequently was treated for anorexia and problems related to alcohol dependency at a holistic nerve sanitarium in Basel.

Raspail was Lecter's ninth known victim, according to the Baltimore police.

Raspail died intestate, and the lawsuits among his relatives over the estate were followed by the newspapers for a number of months before public interest flagged.

Raspail's relatives had also joined with the families of other victims in Lecter's practice in a successful lawsuit to have the errant psychiatrist's case files and tapes destroyed. There was no telling what embarrassing secrets he might blab, their reasoning went, and the files were documentation.

The court had appointed Raspail's lawyer, Everett Yow, to be executor of his estate.

Starling would have to apply to the lawyer to get at the car. The lawyer might be protective of Raspail's memory and, with enough advance notice, might destroy evidence to cover for his late client.

Starling preferred to pounce, and she needed advice and authorization. She was alone in Behavioral Science and had the run of the place. She found Crawford's home number in the Rolodex.

She never heard the telephone ringing, but suddenly his voice was there, very quiet and even.

"Jack Crawford."

"This is Clarice Starling. I hope you weren't eating dinner...." She had to continue into silence. "...Lecter told me something about the Raspail case today, I'm in the office following it up. He tells me there's something in Raspail's car. I'd have to get at it through his lawyer, and since tomorrow's Saturday--- no school--- I wanted to ask you if---"

"Starling, do you have any recollection of what I told you to do with the Lecter information?" Crawford's voice was so terribly quiet.

"Give you a report by 0900 Sunday."

"Do that, Starling. Do just exactly that."

"Yes sir."

The dial tone stung in her ear. The sting spread over face and made her eyes burn.

"Well God fucking shit," she said. "You old creep. Creepo son of a bitch. Let Miggs squirt *you* and see how you like it."

Starling, scrubbed shiny and wearing her FBI Academy nightgown, was working on the second draft of her report when her dormitory roommate, Ardelia Mapp, came in from the library. Mapp's broad, brown, eminently sane countenance was one of the more welcome sights of her day.

Ardelia Mapp saw the fatigue in her face.

"What did you do today, girl?" Mapp always asked question as if the answers could make no possible difference.

"Wheedled a crazy man with come all over me."

"I wish *I* had time for a social life--- I don't know how you manage it, and school too."

Starling found that she was laughing. Ardelia Mapp laughed with her, as much as the small joke was worth. Starling did not stop, and she heard herself from far away, laughing and laughing. Through Starling's tears, Mapp looked strangely old and her smile had sadness in it.

CHAPTER 5

Jark Crawford, fifty-three, reads in a wing chair by a low lamp in the bedroom of his home. He faces two double beds, both raised on blocks to hospital height. One is his own; in the other lies his wife, Bella. Crawford can hear her breathing through her mouth. It has been two days since she last could stir or speak to him.

She misses a breath. Crawford looks up from his book, over his half-glasses. He puts the book down. Bella breathes again, a flutter and then a full breath. He rises to put his hand on her, to take her blood pressure and her pulse. Over the months he has become expert with the blood pressure cuff.

Because he will not leave her at night, he has installed a bed for himself beside her. Because he reaches out to her in the dark, his bed is high, like hers.

Except for the height of the beds and the minimal plumbing necessary for Bella's comfort, Crawford has managed to keep this from looking like a sickroom. There are flowers, but not too many. No pills are in sight--- Crawford emptied a linen closet in the hall and filled it with her medicines and apparatus before he brought her from the hospital. (It was the second time he had carried her across the threshold of that house and the thought nearly unmanned him.)

A warm front has come up from the south. The windows are open and the Virginia air is soft and fresh. Small frogs peep to one another in the dark.

The room is spotless, but the carpet has begun to nap--- Crawford will not run the noisy vacuum cleaner in the room and uses a manual carpet sweeper that is not as good. He pads to the closet and turns on the light. Two clipboards hang on the inside of the door. On one he notes Bella's pulse and blood pressure. His figures and those of the day nurse alternate in a column that stretches over many yellow pages, many days and nights. On the other clipboard, the day-shift nurse has signed off Bella's medication.

Crawford is capable of giving any medication she may need in the night. Following a nurse's directions, he practiced injections on a lemon and then on his thighs before he brought her home.

Crawford stands over her for perhaps three minutes, looking down into her face. A lovely scarf of silk moiré covers her hair like a turban. She insisted on it, for as long as she could insist. Now he insists on it. He moistens her lips with glycerine and removes a speck from the corner of her eye with his broad thumb. She does not stir. It is not yet time to turn her.

At the mirror, Crawford assures himself that he is not sick, that he doesn't have to go into the ground with her, that he himself is well. He catches himself doing this and it shames him.

Back at his chair he cannot remember what he was reading. He feels the books beside him to find the one that is warm.

CHAPTER 6

On Monday morning, Clarice Starling found this message from Crawford in her mailbox:

CS:

Proceed on the Raspail car. On your own time. My office will provide you a credit card number for long distance calls. Ck with me before you contact estate or go anywhere. Report Wednesday 1600 hours.

The Director got your Lecter report over your signature. You did well.

JC
SAIC/

Section 8

Starling felt pretty good. She knew Crawford was just giving her an exhausted mouse to bat around for practice. But he wanted to teach her. He wanted her to do well. For Starling, that beat courtesy every time.

Raspail had been dead for eight years. What evidence could have lasted in a car that long?

She knew from family experience that, because automobiles depreciate so rapidly, an appellate court will let survivors sell a car before probate, the money going into escrow. It seemed unlikely that even an estate as tangled and disputed as Raspail's would hold a car this long.

There was also the problem of time. Counting her lunch break, Starling had an hour and fifteen minutes a day free to use the telephone during business hours. She'd have to report to Crawford on Wednesday afternoon. So she had a total of three hours and forty-five minutes to trace the car, spread over three days, if she used her study periods and made up the study at night.

She had good notes from her Investigative Procedures Classes, and she'd have a chance to ask general questions of her instructors.

During her Monday lunch, personnel at the Baltimore County Courthouse put Starling on hold and forgot her three times. During her study period she reached a friendly clerk at the courthouse, who pulled the probate records on the Raspail estate.

The clerk confirmed that permission had been granted for sale of an auto and gave Starling the make and serial number of the car, and the name of a subsequent off the title transfer.

On Tuesday, she wasted half her lunch hour trying to chase down that name. It

cost her the rest of her lunch period to find out that the Maryland Department of Motor Vehicles is not equipped to trace a vehicle by serial number, only by registration number or current tag number.

On Tuesday afternoon, a downpour drove the trainees in from the firing range. In a conference room steamy with damp clothing and sweat, John Brigham, the ex-Marine firearms instructor, chose to test Starling's hand strength in front of the class by seeing how many times she could pull the trigger on a Model 19 Smith & Wesson in sixty seconds.

She managed seventy-four with her left hand, puffed a strand of hair out of her eyes, and started over with her right while another student counted. She was in the Weaver stance, well braced, the front sight in sharp focus, the rear sight and her makeshift target properly blurred. Midway through her minute, she let her mind wander to get it off the pain. The target on the wall came into focus. It was a certificate of appreciation from the Interstate Commerce enforcement division made out to her instructor, John Brigham.

She questioned Brigham out of the side of her mouth while the other student counted the clicks of the revolver.

"How do you trace the current registration..."

"...*sixtyfivesixtysixsixtysevensixtyeightysixty*..."

"...of a car when you've only got the serial number..."

"...*seventyeightseventynineeightyeightyone*..."

"...and the make? You don't have a current tag number."

"...*eightynine ninety. Time.*"

"All right, you people," the instructor said, "I want you to take note of that. Hand strength's a major factor in steady combat shooting. Some of you gentlemen are worried I'll call on you next. Your worries would be justified-Starling is well above average with both hands. That's because she works at it. She works at it with the little squeeze things you all have access to. Most of you are not used to squeezing anything harder than your" ---ever vigilant against his native Marine terminology, he groped for a polite simile--- "zits," he said at last. "Get serious, Starling, you're not good enough either. I want to see that left hand over ninety before you graduate. Pair up and time each other--- chop-chop.

"Not you, Starling, come here. What else have you got on the car?"

"Just the serial number and make, that's it. One prior owner five years ago."

"All right, listen. Where most people f--- fall into error is trying to leapfrog through the registrations from one owner to the next. You get fouled up between states. I mean, cops even do that sometimes. And registrations and tag numbers are all the computer's got. We're all accustomed to using tag numbers or registration numbers, not vehicle serial numbers."

The clicking of the blue-handled practice revolvers was loud all over the room and he had to rumble in her ear.

"There's one way it's easy. R. L. Polk and Company, that publishes city directories--- they also put out a list current car registrations by make and consecutive serial number. It's the only place. Car dealers steer then advertising with them. How'd you know to ask me?"

"You were ICC enforcement, I figured you'd traced a lot of vehicles. Thanks."

"Pay me back--- get that left hand up where it ought to be and let's shame some of

these lilyfingers."

Back in her phone booth during study period, her hands trembled so that her notes were barely legible. Raspail's car was a Ford. There was a Ford dealer near the University of Virginia who for years had patiently done what he could with her Pinto. Now, just as patiently, the dealer poked through his Polk listings for her. He came back to the telephone with the name and address of the person who had last registered Benjamin Raspail's car.

Clarice is on a roll, Clarice has got control. Quit being silly and call the man up at his home in, lemme see, Number Nine Ditch, Arkansas. Jack Crawford will never let me go down there, but at least I can confirm who's got the ride.

No answer, and again no answer. The ring sounded funny and far away, a double rump-rump like a party line. She tried at night and got no answer.

At Wednesday lunch period, a man answered Starling's call:

"WPOQ Plays the Oldies."

"Hello, I'm calling to---"

"I wouldn't care for any aluminum siding and I don't want to live in no trailer court in Florida, what else you got?"

Starling heard a lot of the Arkansas hills in the man's voice. She could speak that with anybody when she wanted to, and her time was short.

"Yessir, if you could help me out I'd be much obliged. I'm trying to get ahold of Mr. Lomax Bardwell? This is Clarice Starling?"

"It's Starling somebody," the man yelled to the rest of his household. "What do you want with Bardwell?"

"This is the Mid-South regional office of the Ford recall division? He's entitled to some warranty work on his LTD free of charge?"

"I'm Bardwell. I thought you was trying to sell me something on that cheap long distance. It's way too late for any adjustment, I need the whole thing. Me and the wife was in Little Rock, pulling out of the Southland Mall there?"

"Yessir."

"Durn rod come out through the oil pan. Oil all over everywhere and that Orkin truck that's got the big bug on top of it? He hit that oil and got sideways."

"Lord have mercy."

"Knocked the Fotomat booth slap off the blocks and the glass fell out. Fotomat fella come wandering out addled. Had to keep him out of the road."

"Well I'll be. What happened to it then?"

"What happened to what?"

"The car."

"I told Buddy Sipper at the wrecking yard he could have it for fifty if he'd come get it. I expect he's parted it out."

"Could you tell me what his telephone number is, Mr. Bardwell?"

"What do you want with Sipper? If anybody gets something out of it, it ought to be me."

"I understand that, sir. I just do what they tell me till five o'clock, and they said find the car. Have you got that number, please?"

"I can't find my phone book. It's been gone a good while now. You know how it is with these grandbabies. Central ought to give it to you, it's Sipper Salvage."