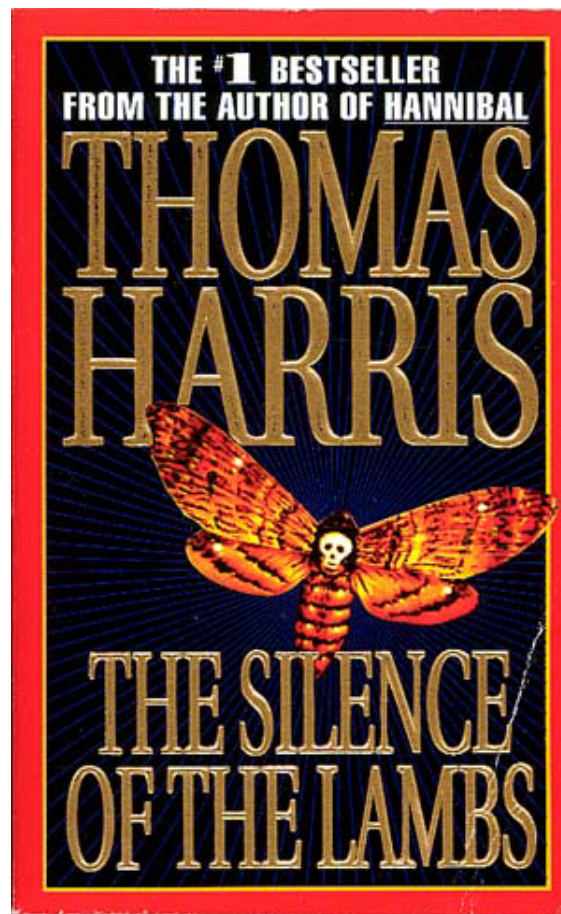


THE SILENCE OF THE LAMB

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-nnng?"

"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.