

T H E   S I L E N C E   O F   T H E   L A M B S

screenplay by

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based on the novel by

THOMAS HARRIS

SHOOTING SCRIPT

4th Draft

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FADE IN:

INT. FBI ACADEMY - QUANTICO, VIRGINIA - DAY

CLARICE STARLING approaches us briskly down a long corridor. Trim, very pretty, mid-20s. She wears a gray "FBI Academy" sweatshirt, an ID badge, a navy ball cap. There are grass stains on the knees of her khakis, grass and sweat stains on her shirt. She reaches a closed door, stops, a bit flushed.

A NAME PLATE

there reads "BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE / Special Agent Crawford."

CLARICE

pulls off her cap, then doesn't know where to put it. She takes a deep breath, knocks on the door. No response.

CUT TO:

INT. CRAWFORD'S OFFICE - DAY

Clarice opens the door, steps hesitantly inside. There is no one here. She looks around the office curiously, seeing it for the first time.

HER POV

A cramped and obsessively cluttered room. Case file materials - police and lab reports, manila folders, photos - are stacked mountainously high on the desk, the floor, the chairs. On the walls: maps, charts, and screaming newspaper headlines ("Buffalo Bill Claims 5th Victim," "FBI: Still No Leads on Buffalo Bill"). Most prominent of all is a row of five enlarged black & white photos - the faces of young women, taken from life.

CLARICE

steps further into the room, staring at

A BLACKBOARD

filled with feverishly scrawled notes: "Big women only... Skin-ning = Hunter? Trapper?... Lunar cycle? No."

CRAWFORD (O.S.)

Starling, Clarice M. Good morning.

NEW ANGLE

as Clarice turns, sees JACK CRAWFORD, 46, who has slipped in behind her. He is haggard, haunted; his face is a road map of places we could not bear to visit. Between this master and

we know 1  
that the  
movie  
started with  
Clarice  
running thru  
the woods.  
The effect  
was greater.

so far we  
know that the  
story involves  
an FBI agent  
and can  
assume that  
there will be  
crime. 2  
-----

But it doesn't  
start with a  
murder. This  
makes it  
much more  
interesting.

we're shown  
that Buffalo  
Bill is a  
dangerous  
serial killer

1

2

2  
CONT

pupil we will come to sense a subtle, muted tug of sexuality.

2  
CONT

CLARICE

Good morning, Mr. Crawford.

CRAWFORD

Sorry to pull you off the firing range at such short notice...

He goes to his desk, sets down two folders.

CRAWFORD (contd.)

Your instructors tell me you're doing well. Top quarter of your class.

CLARICE.

I hope so. They haven't posted any grades.

CRAWFORD

A job's come up and I thought about you. Not really a job, more of - an interesting errand. Here, sit, sit...

He clears a big stack of papers from a seat, then moves around to his own desk chair. As Clarice goes to sit, she catches a brief glimpse of

A SHOCKING PHOTOGRAPH

left behind on her chair: a woman's nude corpse, with all the skin neatly flayed off her back, from shoulders to hips.

CLARICE -

trying to cover her reaction, sets this photo on the floor.

CRAWFORD (contd.)

I remember you from my seminar at the University of Virginia. You grilled me pretty hard, as I recall, on the Bureau's civil-rights record in the Hoover years. I gave you an A.

CLARICE

A minus.

Crawford smiles faintly, opens a folder - her student transcript.

CRAWFORD

Double major, psych and criminology, graduating magna. Summer internships at the Reitzinger Clinic. And now you're in training for the FBI... It says here you want to come work for me in Behavioral Science,

we're told about our m/c's background thru an allies' dialogue ----- and her insecurity thru her response.

more scare tactics... setup from writer

2  
CONT

CRAWFORD (contd.)  
after you finish the Academy. Think  
you're good enough?

2  
CONT

CLARICE  
You mentioned a job, sir?

CRAWFORD  
(beat)  
We're trying to interview all of the  
serial killers now in custody, for a  
psychobehavioral profile. Could be a  
big help in unsolved cases. Most of them  
have been happy to talk to us. They have  
a compulsion to boast, these people...  
Do you spook easily, Starling?

again, a scare  
tactic... for  
what's to come

CLARICE  
Not yet.

CRAWFORD  
You see, the one we want most refuses  
to cooperate. I want you to go after  
him again today, in the asylum.

CLARICE  
Who's the subject?

CRAWFORD  
The psychiatrist - Dr. Hannibal Lecter.

Clarice goes very still. A beat.

her reaction  
tells us that  
this guy is not  
only  
dangerous,  
but that she's  
scared

CLARICE  
Hannibal the Cannibal...

Crawford doesn't respond, except to study her face.

CLARICE (contd.)  
Yes, well... Okay, right. I'm glad for  
the chance, sir, but - why me?

CRAWFORD  
I didn't pick you out of a hat, Starling.  
I've had my eye on you for months. You're  
qualified and available. And frankly, I  
can't spare a real agent right now.

Clarice notices, in the corner of the room, a rumpled cot, a hot  
plate, soiled dishes. She looks back at him.

CRAWFORD (contd.)  
I don't expect him to talk to you, but  
I have to be able to say we tried. Lecter

2  
CONT

2  
CONT

the subtext here great  
-----  
is she scared to take the assignment? excited at the connection?  
-----  
does he know something he's not telling her?

CRAWFORD (contd.)  
was a brilliant psychiatrist, and he knows all the dodges. If he won't cooperate, then I just want straight reporting. How's he look, how's his cell look, what's he writing? (indicating a second folder)  
Dossier on Lecter, copy of our questionnaire, special ID for you. Turn in your memo by 0800 Wednesday.

CLARICE  
Excuse me, sir, but - why the urgency? Lecter's been in prison for so many years now... Is there some connection between him and Buffalo Bill?

CRAWFORD  
(careful, impassive)  
I wish there were.

He holds out the folder. As she rises to take it, he leans forward, very close. His intensity is scary.

another powerful beat. Commands attention.

CRAWFORD (contd.)  
Now. I want your full attention, Starling. Are you listening to me?

CLARICE  
Yes sir.

continual setup of the danger and purpose  
-----  
we know she doesn't want Hannibal inside her head, but that's exactly what has to happen.

CRAWFORD  
Be very careful with Hannibal Lecter. Dr. Chilton at the asylum will go over the physical procedures used with him. Do not deviate from them, for any reason. You tell him nothing personal, Starling. Believe me, you don't want Hannibal Lecter inside your head... Just do your job, but never forget what he is.

CLARICE  
(a bit unnerved)  
And what is that, sir?

the beat that takes it home. it gives chills down your spine.

CHILTON (V.O.)  
Oh, he's a monster. A pure psychopath...

CUT TO:

without all this scary setup, Hannibal wouldn't be as frightful.  
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The hook is will Clarice, who strives for excellence, be able to do this assignment successfully and avoid the danger of Hannibal the Cannibal?