

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

These PDF script pages are for analyzing the hook of a particular screenplay, in this case, Silence of the Lambs.

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SHOOTING SCRIPT

4th Draft

October 6, 1989

FADE IN:

INT. FBI ACADEMY - QUANTICO, VIRGINIA - DAY

1

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

2

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

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

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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 question-
naire, 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.

The hook is will Clarice, who strives for excellence, be able to do
this assignment successfully and avoid the danger of Hannibal
the Cannibal?