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THOMAS HARRIS



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A Novel by the Author of *The Silence of the Lambs*

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A DELL BOOK

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Hannibal

Thomas Harris, 2000

Seven years have passed since Hannibal Lecter escaped from custody, seven years since FBI Special Agent Clarice Starling interviewed him in a maximum security Hospital for the criminally insane. The doctor is still at large, but Starling has never forgotten her encounters with Dr Lecter, and the metallic rasp of his seldom-used voice still sounds in her dreams...

I - Washington D.C.

Chapter 1

You would think that such a day would tremble to begin ...

CLARICE STARLING'S Mustang boomed up the entrance ramp at the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms on Massachusetts Avenue, a headquarters rented from the Reverend Sun Myung Moon in the interest of economy.

The strike force waited in three vehicles, a battered undercover van to lead and two black SWAT vans behind it, manned and idling in the cavernous garage.

Starling hoisted the equipment bag out of her car and ran to the lead vehicle, a dirty white panel van with MARCELL'S CRAB HOUSE signs stuck on the sides.

Through the open back doors of the van, four men watched Starling coming. She was slender in her fatigues and moving fast under the weight of her equipment, her hair shining in the ghastly fluorescent lights.

"Women. Always late," a D.C. police officer said.

BATF Special Agent John Brigham was in charge.

"She's not late - I didn't beep her until we got the squeal," Brigham said.

"She must have hauled ass from Quantico - Hey, Starling, pass me the bag."

She gave him a fast high five. "Hey, John."

Brigham spoke to the scruffy undercover officer at the wheel and the van was rolling before the back doors closed, out into the pleasant fall afternoon.

Clarice Starling, a veteran of surveillance vans, ducked under the eyepiece of the periscope and took a seat in the back as close as possible to the

hundred-fifty pound block of dry ice that served as air-conditioning when they had to lurk with the engine turned off.

The old van had the monkey-house smell of fear and sweat that never scrubs out.

It had borne many labels in its time. The dirty and faded signs on the doors were thirty minutes old. The bullet holes plugged with Bond-O were older.

The back windows were one-way mirror, appropriately tarnished. Starling could watch the big black SWAT vans following. She hoped they wouldn't spend hours buttoned down in the vans.

The male officers looked her over whenever her face was turned to the window.

FBI Special Agent Clarice Starling, thirty-two, always looked her age and she always made that age look good, even in fatigues.

Brigham retrieved his clipboard from the front passenger seat.

"How come you always catch this crap, Starling?" he said, smiling.

"Because you keep asking for me," she said.

"For this I need you. But I see you serving warrants on jump-out squads for Christ's sake. I don't ask, but somebody at Buzzard's Point hates you, I think. You should come to work with me. These are my guys, Agents Marquez Burke and John Hare, and this is Officer Bolton from the D.C. Police Department."

A composite raid team of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, the Drug Enforcement Administration SWAT teams and the FBI was the force-fit product of budget constraints in a time when even the FBI Academy was closed for lack of funding.

Burke and Hare looked like agents. The D.C. policeman, Bolton, looked like a bailiff. He was about forty-five, overweight and yeasty.

The Mayor of Washington, anxious to appear tough on drugs after his own drug conviction, insisted the D.C. police share credit for every major raid in the city of Washington. Hence, Bolton.

"The Drumgo posse's cooking today," Brigham said.

"Evelda Drumgo, I knew it," Starling said without enthusiasm.

Brigham nodded. "She's opened an ice plant beside the Feliciana Fish Market on the river. Our guy says she's cooking a batch of crystal today. And she's got reservations to Grand Cayman tonight. She can't wait."

Crystal methamphetamine, called "ice" on the street, provides a short powerful high and is murderously addictive.

"The dope's DEA business but we need Evelda on interstate transportation of Class Three weapons. Warrant specifies a couple of Beretta submachine guns and some MAC 10s, and she knows where a bunch more are. I want you to concentrate on Evelda, Starling. You've dealt with her before. These guys will back you up."

"We got the easy job," Officer Bolton said with some satisfaction.

"I think you better tell them about Evelda, Starling," Brigham said.

Starling waited while the van rattled over some railroad tracks. "Evelda will fight you," she said. "She doesn't look like it - she was a model - but she'll fight you."

She's Dijon Drumgo's widow. I arrested her twice on RICO warrants, the first time with Dijon.

"This last time she was carrying a nine-millimeter with three magazines and Mace in her purse and she had a balisong knife in her bra. I don't know

what she's carrying now.

"The second arrest, I asked her very politely to give it up and she did. Then in D.C. detention, she killed an inmate named Marsha Valentine with a spoon shank. So you don't know ... her face is hard to read. Grand jury found self-defense. She beat the first RICO count and pled the other one down. Some weapons charges were dropped because she had infant children and her husband had just been killed in the Pleasant Avenue drive-by, maybe by the Spliffs. I'll ask her to give it up. I hope she will - we'll give her a show. But - listen to me - if we have to subdue EVELDA DRUMGO, I want some real help. Never mind watching my back, I want some weight on her.

Gentlemen, don't think you're going to watch me and EVELDA DRUMGO mud-wrestling."

There was a time when Starling would have deferred to these men. Now they didn't like what she was saying, and she had seen too much to care.

"EVELDA DRUMGO is connected through Dijon to the Trey-Eight Crips," Brigham said. "She's got Crip security our guy says, and the Crips are distributing on the coast. It's security against the Spliffs, mainly. I don't know what the Crips will do when they see it's us. They don't cross the G if they can help it."

"You should know - EVELDA DRUMGO is HIV positive," Starling said. "Dijon gave it to her off a needle. She found out in detention and flipped out. She killed Marsha Valentine that day and she fought the guards in jail. If she's not armed and she fights, you can expect to get hit with whatever fluid she has to throw. She'll spit and bite, she'll wet and defecate on you if you try to pat her down, so gloves and masks are SOP. If you put her in a patrol car, when you put your hand on her head, watch out for a needle in her hair and secure her feet."

Burke's and Hare's faces were growing long. Officer Bolton appeared unhappy. He pointed with his wattled chin at Starling's main sidearm, a well-worn Colt .45

Government Model with a strip of skateboard tape on the grip, riding in a Yaqui slide behind her right hip.

"You go around with that thing cocked all the time?" he wanted to know.

"Cocked and locked, every minute of my day," Starling said.

"Dangerous," Bolton said.

"Come out to the range and I'll explain it to you, Officer."

Brigham broke it up. "Bolton, I coached Starling pistol champion when she was inter-service combat three years straight. Don't worry about her weapon. Those guys from the Hostage Rescue Team, the Velcro Cowboys, what did they call you after you beat their ass, Starling? Annie Oakley?"

"Poison Oakley," she said, and looked out the window.

Starling felt pierced and lonesome in this goat-smelling surveillance van crowded with men. Chaps, Brut, Old Spice, sweat and leather.

She felt some fear, and it tasted like a penny under her tongue.

A mental image: her father, who smelled of tobacco and strong soap, peeling an orange with his pocketknife, the tip of the blade broken off square, sharing the orange with her in the kitchen. The taillights of her father's pickup disappearing as he went off on the night-marshal patrol that killed him. His clothes in the closet. His square-dancing shirt. Some nice stuff in her closet now she never got to wear. Sad party clothes on hangers, like toys in the attic.

"About another ten minutes," the driver called back.

Brigham looked out the windshield and checked his watch. "Here's the layout," he said. He had a crude diagram drawn hastily with a Magic Marker, and a blurry floor plan faxed to him by the Department of Buildings. "The fish market building is in a line of stores and warehouses