



The Silence of the Lambs

Thomas Harris

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There's a killer on the loose who knows that beauty is only skin deep, and a trainee investigator who's trying to save her own hide. The only man that can help is locked in an asylum. But he's willing to put a brave face on — if it will help him escape.

The Silence of the Lambs Details

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From Reader Review The Silence of the Lambs for online ebook

Alex ? Deranged KittyCat ? says

What more is there to say about this wonderful book that spawned an amazing movie?

Hannibal Lecter is the absolute monster: ruthless, above morals, and charming at the same time. The way he acts, the way he talks, he truly is a predator. He traps you in his web and there's nothing you can do about it. He's not beautiful, mind you. No body perfection, no sparkling in the sun, yet he's irresistible.

Martine says

Call me a freak, but I have a bit of a crush on Hannibal Lecter. He may be the scariest fuck out there (certainly scarier than the supposed monster of the book, Buffalo Bill), but he just oozes style and knowledge. In fact, he has so much style and knowledge that he doesn't come off as a ridiculous prick when he says things like, 'A census taker tried to quantify me once. I ate his liver with some fava beans and a big Amarone'* or 'Can you smell his sweat? That peculiar goatish odour is trans-3-methyl-2 hexenoic acid. Remember it, it's the smell of schizophrenia.' Quite the contrary -- he sounds *cool* saying these things. Sophisticated, even. In this and many other ways, Dr Lecter is so utterly fascinating that you'll still find yourself rooting for him after he has committed several heinous (but brilliant!) murders, hoping he'll stay out of the hands of the police and live out his life in freedom. Now that's quality writing for you.

As you can probably tell from the above, I like *The Silence of the Lambs*, which is to say the book on which the movie was based. Except for the fact that Harris makes Clarice rather stupid** and that the dialogue in the book is a bit too clever and masculine for its own good***, it's a solid and exciting will-they-find-him-in-time-to-save-the-girl story -- a page-turner if ever there was one. The characters aren't terribly easy to identify with, but that's all right, because for one thing, they're *cool* (had I mentioned that yet?), and for another, they all have a clearly defined quest. They don't necessarily have the *same* quest, but hey, that only serves to increase the tension.

In some regards the book is better than the film. Remember those stupid anagrams from the movie? They're not in the book (except for the bilirubin one, which I actually quite like). The book makes its connections in a much more logical, less what-the-fuck?-ish way. It also has a more realistic romance, though not necessarily a better one. On the down side, I think Thomas Harris must have kicked himself for not having come up with the closing line of the film ('I'm having an old friend for dinner') himself. In my opinion, it's the best closing line in cinematic history, unmatched by the ending of the book. Still, it's a satisfying read. Very satisfying. As satisfying as the movie, and that's saying a fair bit.

.....

* Yes, that's what he says in the book. Not 'a nice Chianti'. I've been reliably informed by those in the know

(I myself do not actually drink wine) that Amarone and Chianti are not in fact the same thing. 'Chianti' does sound better than 'Amarone' in this line, doesn't it?

** In the book, Dr Lecter tells Clarice in one of their first interviews that Billy has kidnapped large-chested Catherine Martin because 'he wants a vest with tits on it'. He then goes on to say in their next meeting that 'Billy is making a girl suit out of real girls'. And despite these incredibly obvious clues (which cannot be rude jokes on Lecter's part as he's far too sophisticated to make such rude jokes) it takes Clarice, who is supposed to be *really* intelligent, the entire rest of the book to figure out what it is that Billy wants from his victims. They wisely changed that in the movie, where Clarice doesn't have her entire quest spelled out for her right at the beginning.

*** I've never met any women who speak to each other the way Clarice and Ardelia do. Then again, I've never met any brilliant FBI trainees, so what do I know? Perhaps they do speak to each other like that at Quantico. I guess I'll never find out. (Anyone out there have FBI-trained friends? Anyone? Bueller?)

Erin says

4.5 Stars

I've seen the movie *The Silence of the Lambs* more times than I can count. I'd read this book back in High School and I like it but it didn't have real impact. Sometimes you have to read something more than once or be in a particular frame of mind.

Upon my second reading of this book I loved it. Maybe its because I'm older or maybe its because I'm reading the series in order. I liked this book more than *Red Dragon* and I really liked that one. I still prefer Will Graham to Clarice Starling and I need more background on Jack Crawford. Maybe I'll get more Jack Crawford in the next book *Hannibal*. I'd say the main reason reason I liked this book more than *Red Dragon* was simple Dr. Hannibal Lecter. In *Red Dragon* he was a scene stealing B-Character but in this book he gets bumped up to second lead. Dr. Lecter is maybe in a 1/3 of the book but he makes his presence felt on every page. I have to admit I don't really get Buffalo Bill, I find him hilarious and I couldn't stop saying "It puts the lotion in the basket" a phrase from the movie not the book.

I don't know if I need to recommend this book. I think everyone has heard of the movie and either you're interested or not. I'd say read it and then watch the movie or vice/versa.

Popsugar 2018: A book made into a movie you've already seen.

Ahmad Sharabiani says

?The Silence of the lambs (Hannibal Lecter #2), Thomas Harris (1940)

The Silence of the Lambs is a novel by Thomas Harris. First published in 1988, it is the sequel to Harris' 1981 novel *Red Dragon*. Both novels feature the cannibalistic serial killer Dr. Hannibal Lecter, this time pitted against FBI Special Agent Clarice Starling. Its film adaptation directed by Jonathan Demme was released in 1991 to box office success and critical acclaim. Clarice Starling, a young FBI trainee, is asked to

carry out an errand by Jack Crawford, the head of the FBI division that draws up psychological profiles of serial killers. Starling is to present a questionnaire to the brilliant forensic psychiatrist and cannibalistic serial killer, Hannibal Lecter. Lecter is serving nine consecutive life sentences in a Maryland mental institution for a series of murders.

Lightreads says

I'm assuming this book was once shocking and groundbreaking. And okay, yes, eww with the eating people and the skinning. But also? Shut the fuck up, Thomas Harris. There are few things more obnoxious than a male author with a hard-on for his female protagonist. Worth reading for *Hannibal the Cannibal*, because I dig that abnormal psychology stuff, but did I mention the objectification? The sexism? The way the reader is never allowed to forget

about gender? How every male she meets falls for the heroin? Yeah, as it turns out, the unnamed and hovering Harris narrator is by far the most hateful and creepy personality around, and that's including the aforementioned cannibal.

Councillor says

“I ate his liver with some fava beans and a nice chianti.”

(Or, "a big amarone" as in the novel.)

Thomas Harris's story of "The Silence of the Lambs" has always been a fascinating one for me, and I believe wholeheartedly that this is one of the most unique, most fascinating and most enthralling crime novels ever written (and rarely has any mystery/thriller been adapted to film so successfully). The 1991 film is one of my favorite films of all time, even though much of the praise must belong to Jodie Foster and Anthony Hopkins,

both of whom committed dedicated and convincing performances to Jonathan Demme's adaptation.

It has been more than half a year since I finally read this novel, but I don't think anything has had a similar impact on me ever since finishing the book. In general, one of the biggest problems I have with crime novels is that it is so easy for them to become procedural, to feel as if they were written according to a guide on how to write a crime novel. I have a lot of trouble relating to many of these novels, and even if the mystery is intriguing and keeps you turning the pages, it often comes at a disadvantage as characters, especially investigating ones, are in constant danger of remaining too shallow, too detached for the reader to really care about what ultimately happens to them. In Thomas Harris' novel, however, we have Clarice Starling, Dr. Hannibal Lecter, Jack Crawford, Dr. Frederick Chilton, Buffalo Bill - all of them iconic and unforgettable characters in their own right. They become real persons between the binding holding together this book, and that's something many crime authors should always keep in mind while writing their novels, at least in my opinion.

Of course, it's hard to judge this book on its own. Stories surrounding Hannibal Lecter have been covered through five films (Manhunter, The Silence of the Lambs, Red Dragon, Hannibal and Hannibal Rising) and a very successful three-season TV series, and everyone has formed a different mindset about Hannibal. We may see him in the form of Brian Cox from Manhunter, Mads Mikkelsen from the TV series or Gaspard Ulliel from Hannibal Rising, but undoubtedly the man who shaped this character and made him the icon he is nowadays was Anthony Hopkins, so much that the American Film Institute even selected him as the Number One Villain of All Time. Reading a novel after seeing one or even several treatments of the source material by filmmakers has always been quite a challenge for me, as it generally became quite difficult to see the book in its own right without being overruled by images from the adaptations which have burned themselves into my mind, but in the case of Thomas Harris' novel, for me it just added to the pleasure of getting to know these characters and their unique fates.

You may have realized that I don't even know what to write about the book anymore, to an extent that I started rambling about the different actors who portrayed this iconic character. That's simply because it left me speechless, even now, quite a long time after watching the movie and the TV show and just a few months after reading the novel. There is no doubt I will read "Red Dragon" and "Hannibal" as well (they are already resting on my shelves): just as there is no doubt that I can only assure everyone who hasn't read this yet that "The Silence of the Lambs" is the crime/thriller/mystery novel you were waiting for.

Darth J says

So, I read these books out of order. I started with Hannibal (which gives better background and fleshes out the character of Lecter much more than the mess that was Hannibal Rising), then read Red Dragon and finally this one. **Can I just say that I love Clarice Starling?** I just have such a deep respect and admiration for her (also, Jodie why didn't you come back for the sequel?? I mean, Moore was great but I don't like a break in continuity, nor do I like how they changed the ending of Hannibal where (view spoiler)).

I was about 12 when I read these books and what really resonated with me, more than the tête-à-têtes, was the sheer intelligence of both Starling and Lecter. Both equally formidable characters (view spoiler), Clarice and Hannibal are some of the most interesting characters that I've ever read about. Please, dear writers, learn from them.

Alejandro says

One of my favorite books and film too!

This is the second novel in the "Hannibal Lecter" book series.

GAME CHANGER

Back then, in 1991, I didn't know that *Silence of the Lambs* had been first a book, and even less that it was actually the second book in the literary series, but...

...I knew that the film adaptation became, in an instant, one of my all-time favorite films. A game changer indeed that swept away with the 5 most respected awards by the Academy (best film, best script, best director, best actor and best actress) that you can't diminish since this particular combination of these 5 Oscars, had been only accomplished three times in the history of the Oscars, *It Happened One Night* (1934) and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1975), along with the said film.

A curious thing is that while Dr. Hannibal Lecter became the lead character of the book series generating adaptations of each book along with a TV series inspired in the said character...

...for me, my attachment to *Silence of the Lambs* was the young FBI trainee Clarice Starling, since she was a formidable character facing overwhelming challenges: dealing with disturbing interviews with the insidious Dr. Hannibal Lecter, an unwilling pawn of FBI Special Agent Jack Crawford, and having to face the insanely dangerous "Buffalo Bill".

Clarice Starling is a beacon of light in the middle of a hopeless world of darkness. She is smart, intuitive, resourceful and brave.

THE END JUSTIFIES THE MEANS...

Hardly, anyone thinks himself as the villain, each character (real or fiction) thinks that they are doing the right thing and that the end justifies the means...

...and young FBI trainee Clarice Starling is "the means" for Special Agent Jack Crawford to get the insight of Dr. Hannibal Lecter about the case of the criminally insane one known as "Buffalo Bill", so exposing an unexperienced Starling to the wicked cunning Dr. Hannibal Lecter, is justified if that can accomplish the arrest of the wanted serial killer.

This kind of "justified manipulation" isn't strange to Crawford since he has done it before with Special Investigator Will Graham, that not matter his natural talent to get to know how the serial killers think, Graham was already a fragile character looking for peace of mind when he was "persuaded" to become involved once again in a serial killer case and getting inside the world of Dr. Hannibal Lecter again with disastrous outcome.

Now, it's turn for young Clarice to become a "pawn" of Jack Crawford that while his intentions are "good" in the angle that he genuinely wants to arrest criminals, he's leaving collateral damage in the path of those manhunting crusades.

Clarice may not fall now...

...but she's already in the watch of Dr. Hannibal Lecter and it was Crawford who put her there.

SERIAL KILLERS' WORLD IS SO SMALL

It seems that the serial killers world, at least in the literary universe created by Thomas Harris, is so small that a character like Dr. Hannibal Lecter, where you have to take in mind that he was a renown psychiatrist too, well, it isn't that hard to notice the particular M.O.s of each criminally insane murderers, and soon enough knowing who in the middle of that twisted club is the designer on each killing spree.

And Dr. Lecter knows that.

He knows that he is a necessary evil for being able by the forces of the law to catch other menaces of this same kind of wicked breed,

And of course, Dr. Lecter has a plan.

He is patient. There is not hurry.

He already got his payback to his accidental captor.

Now, it could be good to get his freedom back.

Since after all, the world is just too boring without him there.

And that fool Jack Crawford keeps sending him the tools to get what he wants.

Dr. Hannibal Lecter is ready to *eat* the whole world once again.

Be afraid.

Be very afraid...

...and turn to look if somebody is following you, ready to take you for dinner.

J. Kent Messum says

Unquestionably one of the best books ever written in the thriller genre. I'd call this required reading for anyone who enjoys, or wishes to write, popular fiction. I'm incredibly hesitant to call anything contemporary a "modern day masterpiece", but there are a handful of exceptions, and this offering from Thomas Harris is undoubtedly one of them.

'The Silence Of The Lambs' is one of the novels I teach in my 'Writing Popular Fiction' course at the University of Toronto, and for good reason: Well written, great plotting/pacing, fantastic complex characters, in-depth research, and excellent dialogue. Clarice Starling is one hell of a protagonist, and Hannibal Lecter is one of the greatest fictional villains in the history of literature (not to mention his pages run parallel to serial killer Buffalo Bill, yet another high-ranking antagonist in the catalogue of men who have become monsters).

Harris' writing hits you in the heart, spears you in the gut, and raises the hairs on the back of your neck all too often. The insatiable hunger of human predators goes several shades darker in this masterpiece, pushing the envelope at all four corners until they tear. There is so much to experience, digest, and unpack in this novel that it is worth reading more than once. Personally, I've read it about half a dozen times. For an extra treat, listen to the audiobook narrated by none other than the great Kathy Bates. Her rendition of Hannibal The Cannibal will chill your blood.

Sandy *The world could end while I was reading and I would never notice* says

EXCERPT: '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 a damned 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?'

ABOUT THIS BOOK: There's a killer on the loose who knows that beauty is only skin deep, and a trainee investigator who's trying to save her own hide. The only man that can help is locked in an asylum. But he's willing to put a brave face on — if it will help him escape.

MY THOUGHTS: This was a re-read for me. I have lost count of how many times I have read and enjoyed this book. Every so often I take it off the shelf, put it on my bedside table and dip into it, savouring each bite.

The movie is good, damned good, but the book is better.

If you haven't read this yet, I recommend you start with Red Dragon. If you have, pick it up for a re-read.

Enjoy . . .

All opinions expressed in this review are entirely my own personal opinions.

Please refer to my Goodreads.com profile page or the 'about' page on sandysbookaday.wordpress.com for an explanation of my rating system.

This review and others are also published on my blog sandysbookaday.wordpress.com
[https://sandysbookaday.wordpress.com/...](https://sandysbookaday.wordpress.com/)

Lou says

I need to get round reading this, what's put me off is that the movie has been played on the TV so many times now Clarice and Lecter are quite vivid in my mind. I am sure the book has lot more to offer as Harris is one of my high ranking thriller writers.

Some trivia on the movie...

Like "Casablanca", this movie contains a famous misquoted line: most people quote Lecter's famous "Good evening, Clarice" as "Hello, Clarice." This is not a misquote from the first movie but an actual quote from the sequel *Hannibal*. In *Hannibal*, when Dr. Lecter and Clarice (now played by Julianne Moore) speak on the phone for the first time, he does in fact say "Hello Clarice". This is the origin for the correctly quoted movie line.

Buffalo Bill is the combination of three real life serial killers: Ed Gein, who skinned his victims; Ted Bundy, who used the cast on his hand as bait to make women get into his van; and Gary Heidnick, who kept women he kidnapped in a pit in his basement. Gein was only positively linked to two murders and suspected of two others. He gathered most of his materials not through murder, but grave-robbing. In the popular imagination, however, he remains a serial killer with uncounted victims.

Stephen says

CONTENT ANNOUNCEMENT: Out of respect for Thomas Harris's superb novel, I have decided that no pictures of **ANTHONY HOPKINS** will appear in this review. Thank you for your understanding.

4.0 to 4.5 stars. Another one of those terrific situations where I saw the movie first (and loved it) and then eventually decided to read the book... and loved it too. Score!!! Now assuming that most people not suffering from the after-effects of severe head trauma know the basic plot concerning FBI trainee "*Hello...Clariiiice*" Starling, while trying to kibosh a Psychotic Vera Wang wannabe named Buffalo Bill, starts an

unconventional relationship with extreme culinary expert Dr. Hannibalicious Lecter, I thought I would give you my take on the whole movie wins/book wins debate.

Please note that I am going to feel completely free to drop spoilers without warning from here on out so....recognize.

MOVIE GLORY

1. First, I thought the movie's treatment of Starling's time on the Sheep and Horse farm was much better, probably in large part due to Jodie Foster really nailing the angst factor as she describes trying to save a spring lamb from slaughter (in the book it was horses being slaughtered that she was tripping about). Here the movie wins and I can still close my eyes and here Foster/Starling saying "the lambs were screaming" and "it was cold, so cold." She made that scene her chew toy and it is a wonderful example of taking more and condensing it into a more powerful less.
2. The End of the movie, Lecter stalking Dr. Chilton and ending his phone conversation with Starling by saying, "*I'm going to have an old friend for dinner.*" YUM!!! One of my favorite lines/ideas from the movie and I was very bitter that it did not have an analog in the book. The Booest of Hoos on that.

AND SURPRISINGLY...that is it for the movies clear superiority. Now don't get me wrong, I loved the movie and think they did much EXCEPTIONALLY well. However, I was shocked in reading the book that most the best parts in the movie (including Lecter, which shocked me) were handled equally effectively in the book. Thus, where I think it was a tie or too close to call, I have decided not to put it in one camp or another. With that said....on to the book.

BOOK DOMINANCE

1. Need to start with Lecter and this is a surprise because Sir Anthony made this role his like few people on movie history. However, I am not talking about what was in both the movie and the book as I think it is a push, to a slight edge to Mr. Hopkins. No, I am talking about the one AMAZING insight the book provides to the character. Namely, Lecter's motivation is about "amusing himself." This single thread running through the book makes Lecter a far darker, far more sinister character (which also explains why hollywood downplayed it to land Hopkins in the role). Walking away from the book, the reader has a much better sense of Lecter as a conscience-lacking entity of pure evil, than we get from the movie. Kudos to Mr. Harris on that point.
2. As good as Scott Glenn is in the movie, his character found way too much time on the editing room floor and the book truly develops well. His scene with the head of John Hopkins university is one that truly should have found a way on screen as I thought it was perfect.
3. James Gumb (aka Buffalo Bill). As wonderfully icky as Ted Levine is in the movie, he comes across as just a nutso on screen with the naked "tuck" dance an the lotion commercials. Meanwhile, in lit land, Gumby is shown to be so....SAVAGE and calculating that all of the nutso stuff takes on a far more sinister aspect. I was deeply disturbed by the depiction of Gumb's craft skills and the movie never hammered that home enough.

PUTTING IT IN THE NUT'S SHELL'S

Overall, I was deeply impressed with both the movie and book, but the book really gets the gold star for

being able to work with my love of the movie and still blow me away. In closing, if you have only seen the movie, you should read the book and if you have only read the book, you should see the movie as it is deeply respectful of the source material. **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED!!**

P.S. I listened to the audio version read by Frank Muller and he was his usual perfection.

P.P.S. I was fairly insulted that the movie makers felt the need to change Amarone to Chianti (in the famous fava beans scene) presumably because they didn't think the "audience" would get it. **OUCH!!**

Ana says

It rubs the lotion on its skin. It does this whenever it is told.

This line will be forever etched in my memory! So creepy. And yet so memorable.

The Silence of the Lambs is one of my favorite movies, by the way. It is a movie that I find deeply fascinating (I promise I'm not a serial killer). It never fails to give me chills. It's scary because it's realistic. Some of the events of the film actually happened in real life. The novel is no less brilliant than the movie. Thomas Harris spent years researching the psychological profiles of serial killers. The book was inspired by the real-life relationship between criminology professor and profiler Robert Keppel and serial killer Ted Bundy. The Buffalo Bill character was actually a composite of three real-life killers: Ed Gein, Ted Bundy and Gary Heidnick. If that's not scary, I don't know what is.

The book has a very strong dark, gothic feel to it. I could imagine myself as Clarice, walking down that cell corridor. You feel as though you're a character in the story. And that's not a place you want to be.

Thomas Harris is a brilliant author. The Silence of the Lambs is one of the most gripping thrillers ever written. Same goes for its predecessor, Red Dragon. (The movie wasn't as good as the book. Forgive me Ralph Fiennes, my love!)

I hadn't read Hannibal. (view spoiler)

"I've never said this before - I think he has a form of love for her. I think he loves her in a way. He admires her courage. There's this young woman who doesn't have the physical strength of a man, uh, comes and visits the monster. And I think he's amused by it. He thinks 'Oh, she's got courage. She's coming to visit me? Wow, that's...that's something.'" –Anthony Hopkins

What more can I say? The movie is awesome. The book is awesome. The characters are awesome. The plot is awesome. Everything is awesome. Except murdering people. No. Just, no. That's not awesome.

Well, Clarice, have the lambs stopped screaming?

P.S.

I think the one on the right is so much scarier.

Edward Lorn says

Retro review time!

Loved the movie, so I read the book. Liked the book enough to look into other Thomas Harris books. Read *Red Dragon*. Fucking loved it. And then it was all downhill after that. *Hannibal* was okay. Never read *Hannibal Rising*, and it still holds zero draw for me.

What I remember the most about *Silence of the Lambs* is Clarice catching some spunk to the eye. That, above all else, is my most striking memory from this book. What's worse than a surprise money shot? A surprise money shot from a psycho. Bleck!

The ending is probably the best part. Nerve-shattering fun.

Thomas Harris is so good he takes seven years to write a book. Donna Tartt and Marisha Pessl do the same. Stephen King said in *On Writing* that he (the next quote is paraphrased) couldn't understand why someone would only do something every seven years when they were so damn good at it. This has no bearing on this book, but I like purposeless trivia, so there you have it.

In summation: I figured I'd go back and review all these titles I read before I joined Goodreads (or before Goodreads even existed) because I wanna. Truly, that's the only reason. Because I wanna.

Final Judgment: Better than spunk in the eye.

Rahul Matthew says

Not many books to movie adaptations do justice, but this is definitely how you go about it. Love the slow build up of characters and although saw movie first. I am just going slow as I marvel at a well-written book. When a book asks you to take your time, you are absolutely thrilled. Not many books can command that kind of respect. The book is daring me to read another book, it quite confident that I will come back and remember it!!!

Alright so I finished the thriller and it just made me so happy. Now I am a tough cookie when it comes to

movie adaptions and so many have failed either bookwise or as a movie. You have to give credit to the author for creating a villain you actually rooting for
Hannibal Lector is half beauty(Intelligence, civility, his cussing doesn't irk you) and half beast(Cannibalistic in nature, psychopath). Clarisse
Starling is strong female character yet Hannibal plays with her emotions and compliments him.

I did not want to give any spoilers, rather you enjoy the thriller for yourself. But what makes a really good book- Well if it has the ability to make the movie in your head right!! So the book is asking me to rather than stay happy with the book. Who in your opinion can match this amazing individual? Well someone who can take him on an emotional ride. Well, none other than Sherlock Holmes.

Now some people might disagree with me, but I will state my points. Sherlock(Loves a challenge, takes his opponent head on, not emotionally

involved, mostly solves crimes and has a keen eye for detail). So an author who creates on these two characters would have a tough task. Both are strong characters in their respective fields of expertise!!!
