

A LIVING IN THE COUNTRY
SHORT TALE

**HANNIBAL
LECTER'S
BREAKFAST**



HARTLEY STEVENS

Hannibal Lecter's Breakfast

A Living-In-The-Country Short

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By

Hartley Stevens

In the beginning months of a budding romance, some years ago, the lady involved had recently moved in with me and my roommate, Andy—who, of course, had his own room.

One morning I was up and at 'em, right early for me. I'd decided to make her breakfast.

The condo was two-story with two bedrooms, and two and a half baths. It sounds grand, but it was really just an off-campus student residence.

Rather happy with myself on my early entry into the land of the living and plans for a suitor's in-bed spread, I had a spring in my step as I went downstairs. I rarely ate breakfast, so this was an event.

She liked bagels. I'd bought some, along with cream cheese and all manner of fruit. I'd learned to make coffee on her account. I set the machine to brewing.

I sliced strawberries, a banana, even a kiwi. I washed blueberries and raspberries in the sink.

The coffee-maker gurgled its last drop. Bagel time.

They were frozen bagels. I shucked one from the wrapper and set it on the cutting block. The two halves were cut, but they'd frozen back together. I grabbed a large Cutco knife, one with a flat rounded point meant for spreading, but still very sharp on the cutting edge.

I tried to find a seam between the two bagel halves. Couldn't, the damn thing was frozen tighter than a constipated clam shell. I fumbled the blade along the edges. The bagel crumbled into pieces and in disgust I tossed the remnants in the garbage.

I set another frozen puck on the cutting board and found a meager crease in the pastry. I wiggled the blade, cajoled. All to no avail.

As the lizard brain sent signals of frustration to my hands, my front lobes warned, *You've heard about people cutting themselves while conducting bagel surgery. Caution, patience.*

I heard stirring above. She was in the bathroom, the shower. *Hurry.* This is supposed to be breakfast in bed.

I rammed the blade into the seam. Knife in one hand, the bagel in the other, I raised them both a foot above the cutting board with the intention of smashing it down (I'd seen it done before).

Smart-lobe said, *Don't do it. Watch your hand, bagels are dangerous.*

Lizard-brain yelled, *Do it you sissy-assed bitch. Teach that frozen bread who's boss.*

I listened to the lizard, slamming the bagel and knife down into the cutting board. A split second of glee as the bagel neatly broke open. A second of consternation and horror realising the knife had sliced, ever so easily, into the soft webbing between my thumb and forefinger.

The blade bit deep, the serrated edge grinding against thumb-bone.

It didn't hurt, not at all, not yet. But there was blood, *lots* of blood and it went everywhere. Getting mad at myself didn't help.

Knife still firmly lodged in my hand, my only thought was, *Stupid, stupid, stupid.*

The blood squirted high, spraying the cabinets. Blood was all over the counter top, in my eyes, all over my shirt, covering my arms up to elbows.

I plucked out the knife and, still furiously angry, I wiped the counter clean sweeping the blood into the sink and onto the floor. Then I stood, trembling with rage, gazing across the living room towards the sliding-glass doors.

The lady was a gardener, completing her degree in environmental horticulture. We'd constructed a multi-level, board rack with shelves against the sliding glass doors. She'd planted a hundred little seedlings of flowers and vegetables in tiny little pots and trays, the pale leaves reaching for sunlight through the glass.

Temper, temper. I trudged away from the kitchen wall and leaked blood over the carpet as I went to stand next to the shelves. I was boiling with rage, but there was nobody else to blame. I stopped in front of her art of flowering, hopeful seeds.

Still bleeding.

A *dibble* leaned against the shelves. A dibble is a large, pointed stick meant for punching a hole the correct depth in soil to plant seeds. This one had a metal-encased funnel wrapped around the point to prevent rot. Upside-down, it stood in a clay pot on the lowest level of the rack.

I stood, frothing, with far too much anger, in front of her art, looking out at the woods beyond the glass doors.

Then... Karma, the true intent of the whole damn world, caught me in its wicked embrace. One knee went wobbly and before I could react, gravity took over. I remember thinking, *get a grip*.

There *was* no grip, My life-blood drenching the carpet, I fell forward into her art—her project, her final grade.

As I collapsed, smashing through one, two levels of plant seedlings, lizard-brain treacherously twisted my body. The dibble, the @#\$%^ dibble, impaled itself sixteen hair-lengths this side of my anus hole. In the last moment, rolling on my side before the darkness came, I snatched the dibble from my flesh and flung it across the room.

I woke to a slap. My two favorite faces staring down on me. The lady was worried, concerned. Andy, my dear good best friend was laughing.

He said, “Do we need to call the cops? Did you murder the neighbor?”

I fumbled with focus. They’d staunched the bleeding. “I... was trying... to make... breakfast.”

The lady and my friend toasted cups of coffee. Andy said, “I’ll call Hannibal Lector, this is *his* kind of breakfast.”

The End

Before You Go...

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