IT NEVER HAPPENED
FBI NEGLIGENCE AND DUPICLICY REVEALED
BARBARA VAN DRIEL
FROM THE INSIDE OUT
For Dad
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

FIRST OFF, I want to thank the many men and women with whom I worked during my years in the FBI. Due to privacy issues, they must remain anonymous. Because of the events chronicled in this book, one might assume I did not hold people within the FBI in high regard. That is not the case. There were many individuals who embodied the admirable qualities that we all desire in our public servants. To them, I remain grateful.

In addition, many family members and friends have supported me over the years, both while I worked as a Special Agent and after my departure from the Bureau. I thank them for trying to understand the reasons I left, even though for most of them it made no sense. Sometimes those closest to you must remain in the dark.

In particular, I would like to thank Sara McLaughlin for her invaluable assistance with the first draft of this book, and my nephew, A. M. Lysy, for his inestimable work on subsequent drafts, including creative consultation and editing. Without them, this book would not be.
Lastly, thanks to Julia and Jared at Wildbound PR for their enthusiasm and insightful recommendations.

The names of all persons in the FBI, except Robert Hanssen and the author, have been changed in order to protect their identities. The opinions expressed in this book are solely those of the author and not the FBI.
I WAS born to be an FBI agent.

From as far back as I can remember, my desire was to find something greater than myself, something to be devoted to. It took years to form my character and personality, but I consistently always strove for excellence in my academics and honesty in my personal dealings.

I learned my work ethic from my dad. Of Dutch and Irish descent, he worked forty-five years as a lithographer. He took pride in his craft, and his level of devotion made a tremendous impression on me. I am my father’s daughter.

When I first began my college education, I studied economics, philosophy, and music. I played the piano, sang contemporary and classical songs, and composed piano music. Some of the lyrics I wrote seem corny now, but I enjoyed the challenge of writing music. I’ve always loved challenges.

After a brief stop out in order to earn some money for school, I transferred to a college in the Midwest and soon found what I thought I’d be truly suited to: an academic
program to prepare me for a career in law. Although I quickly acclimated to my studies, I was still uncertain what my actual career path would be.

And then I met Louie Lee Barney.

He was an attorney, one of my adjunct professors, who soon became my mentor and friend. Eventually, he strongly urged me to apply to the FBI. He saw in me something that I could not see in myself. Much to my surprise, one day he took the opportunity to speak to me very seriously about my future: “You are exactly what the FBI is looking for—patriotic and honest to a fault.”

I was in shock. Perhaps I could get a job as a cop ... but the FBI? ... right out of college? ... with no previous law enforcement experience? What?

But I trusted Louise Lee, and if he believed that I was what the Bureau wanted, then I was going to go for it one-thousand percent. And that’s what I did. I would try to realize a dream that I had first expressed at the age of seven: an older cousin asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up; leaning on the handlebars of my blue Royce Union, without hesitation I said: an FBI agent.

So, this is my story, a true story of dedication, sacrifice, fidelity, courage—and tremendous heartbreak. That’s what happens to a person who truly believes and puts her all into her dream. It was a thrill, it was an honor, and it was a cruel thing.

Would I change anything? Not really. As my career unfolded, as you will see, the path became littered with abuse, deception, and tremendous pressure to
compromise the ethics that I could not compromise. But I was never prepared to live a falsehood, on any level, for any person or organization, even when it cost me personally.

*—*

If you ever wondered what it would be like to be an FBI Special Agent, this book is for you. If you want to know what life was like for a female agent, you’ve come to the right place. When I joined in early 1983, I became part of a distinguished group: only about 420 women had ever been Special Agents. An honor, and a bit of a burden.

A particular psychological seduction makes one feel as if one belongs to a family. Becoming a Special Agent with the FBI had all the feel of just such a seduction, wielding a palpable power over every facet of one’s life. The painful truth was that many members of this “family” could not be trusted. Why? As I came to learn, powerful bureaucracies ultimately serve themselves.

My motivation for joining the Bureau was to serve my country, but for the reasons evident in this book, I could not successfully fulfill my calling. Not only did the Bureau fail to provide crucial support but, in many cases, fellow agents actively discouraged or prevented me from doing my work. To this point, you will meet Robert Hanssen, my first supervisor in New York and the most notorious traitor in the history of the United States. You will see how the Bureau’s counterintelligence culture
fostered indolence, ultimately enabling him to hide his acts of espionage.

I debated over when to write this book—or even whether to write it at all. For years, friends urged me to do so, but I agonized over the decision. I waited this long because I needed time to free myself from judgments clouded by emotion. Leaving the Bureau felt like getting a divorce, and I didn’t want to disparage my “spouse” out of spite.

Some of the events described in this book are so preposterous that, if they hadn’t happened to me, I would have difficulty believing them. My style of writing is in the form of free-flowing “vignettes” as I attempt to capture through the totality of specific experiences the ethos of the FBI’s counterintelligence culture. And I would emphasize that I am specifically referring to that work, those agents, not the agents who worked criminal cases.

However, I promise that every word is true—every incident of sexual harassment/assault, every single betrayal, every threat. They all undermined my efforts to serve. As the title of this book appropriately suggests, with respect to the career that I had hoped for as a Special Agent with the FBI—“it never happened.”