The Case of the Cooling Corpse:
A Mathematical Mystery

The Cast: Narrator, Agent 008, Dr. Dedman, Ajax Boraxo, Dr. Quincy, Sergeant Foust

Setting: The coroner’s office inside the courthouse.

Narrator: The coroner’s office is kept at a cool 17°C. Agent 008 kept pacing back and forth trying to keep warm as he waited for any new information about his latest case. For more than three hours now, Dr. Dedman had been performing an autopsy on the Sideroad Slasher’s latest victim, and Agent 008 could see that the temperature of the room and the deafening silence were beginning to irritate even Dr. Dedman. The Slasher had been creating more work than Dr. Dedman cared to investigate.

008: Dr. Dedman, don’t you need to take a break? You’ve been examining this body for hours! Even if there were any clues, you probably wouldn’t see them at this point.

Dedman: I don’t know. I just have this feeling something is not quite right. Somehow the Slasher slipped up with this one and left a clue. We just have to find it.

008: Well, I have to check in with headquarters. Do you mind if I step out for a couple of hours?

Dedman: No, that’s fine. Maybe I’ll have something by the time you return.

008 (to himself): Sure! Someone always wants to be the hero and solve everything himself. The doctor just does not realize how big this case really is. The Slasher has left a trail of dead bodies through five states!

Narrator: Agent 008 left, closing the door quietly. As he walked down the hall, he could hear the doctor’s voice describing the victim’s gruesome appearance into the tape recorder fade away.

008 (to himself): The hallway from the coroner’s office to the elevator is long and dark, but this was the only way to Dr. Dedman’s office. Doesn’t this frighten most people? Well, it doesn’t seem to bother old Ajax Boraxo. There he is mopping the floor.

(008 shakes his head in wonder as he passes Ajax Boraxo mopping.)

Narrator: Agent 008 stopped briefly to use the restroom and bumped into one of the deputy coroners, who asked…

Quincy: Dedman still at it?

008: Sure is, Dr. Quincy. He’s totally obsessed. He’s certain there is a clue.

Narrator: As usual, when leaving the courthouse, 008 had to sign out.

(008 goes to sign out, where he encounters Sergeant Foust.)

Foust: How’s it going down there, Agent 008?

Narrator: Sergeant Foust asked. Foust spent most of his shifts monitoring the front door, forcing all visitors to sign in, while he recorded the time next to the signature. Agent 008 wondered if Foust longed for a more exciting aspect of law enforcement.
008 (to himself): If I were doing Foust’s job, I would get a little stir-crazy sitting behind a desk most of the day. Why would someone become a cop to do this?

008 (to Foust): Dr. Dedman is convinced he will find something soon. We’ll see!

008 (to himself, looking at his watch): It’s already 10 minutes before 2:00. Will I make it back to headquarters before the chief leaves?

Foust: Well, good luck!

(008 heads out the door.)

Narrator: It was later in the afternoon when Agent 008 returned to the courthouse, sighing deeply.

Foust: Would the secret guest please sign in?

008 (to himself): Sign in again. Annoying! 5:05 pm. Wow, I hadn’t planned to be gone so long.

Narrator: For a moment, Agent 008 saw a positive point to having anyone who came in or out of the courthouse sign in: He knew by quickly scanning the list that Dr. Dedman had not left. In fact, the old guy must still be working on the case.

As he approached the coroner’s office, he had a strange feeling that something was wrong. He could not hear or see Dr. Dedman. When he opened the door, the sight inside stopped him in his tracks. Evidently, Dr. Dedman was now the newest victim of the Slasher. But wait! The other body, the one the doctor had been working on, was gone! Immediately, the security desk with its annoying sign-in sheet came to mind. Yes, there were lots of names on that list, but if he could determine the time of Dr. Dedman’s death, he might be able to scan the roster to find the murderer!

Quickly, he grabbed the thermometer to measure the Doctor’s body temperature. He turned around and hit the security buzzer. The bells were deafening. He knew the building would be sealed off instantly and security would be there within seconds.

Foust (rushing in): Oh no! How could this happen? I spoke to the doctor less than an hour ago!

Narrator: As the security officers crowded into the room, Agent 008 explained what he knew, which was almost nothing. He had stopped long enough to check the doctor’s body temperature.

008 (looking at the thermometer): 27°C. That’s 10°C below normal.

Narrator: Then 008 remembered: the tape recorder! Dr. Dedman had been taping his observations; that was standard procedure. They began looking everywhere. The Slasher must have realized that the doctor had been taping and taken the tape recorder as well. Some time later…

008: The thermometer is still in Dr. Dedman’s side. Exactly an hour has passed during the search and the thermometer clearly reads 24°C. Now I can determine the time of death!