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 keeps pacing back and forth trying to keep warm as he waits for any new information about his latest case. For more than three hours now, Dr. Dedman has been performing an autopsy on the Sideroad Slasher’s latest victim, and Agent 008 can see that the temperature of the room and the deafening silence are beginning to irritate even Dr. Dedman. The Slasher has been creating more work than Dr. Dedman cares 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 walks down the hall, he can 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 bumps 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 has to sign out.

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

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

Narrator: Foust spends most of his shifts monitoring the front door, forcing all visitors to sign in, while he records the time next to the signature. Agent 008 wonders if Foust longs 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 is later in the afternoon when Agent 008 returns to the courthouse, sighing deeply.

Foust: Would the secret guest please sign in?

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

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

As he approaches the coroner’s office, he has a strange feeling that something is wrong. He cannot hear or see Dr. Dedman. When he opens the door, the sight inside stops him in his tracks. Evidently, Dr. Dedman is now the newest victim of the Slasher. But wait! The other body, the one the doctor had been working on, is gone! Immediately, the security desk with its annoying sign-in sheet comes to mind. Yes, there are 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 grabs the thermometer to measure the Doctor’s body temperature. He turns around and hits the security buzzer. The bells are deafening. He knows the building will be sealed off instantly and security will 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 crowd into the room, Agent 008 explains what he knows, which is 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 remembers: the tape recorder! Dr. Dedman had been taping his observations; that is standard procedure. They begin looking everywhere. The Slasher must have realized that the doctor had been taping and has 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!