

Menu 491

Chapter 491: A Discovery at Last!

Death had already departed,

Yet the pain was still spreading.

Jason had been blown to pieces before,

But to be continuously crushed to dust and still endure the scorching heat was a first for him.

Jason could assure that he had been 'cooked' more than once.

That kind of doneness from the outside in, created a uniquely crisp exterior with a tender interior.

His sense of smell had informed him of this.

For the first time, Jason felt that having a keen sense of smell was also a burden.

Fortunately, Jason wasn't so starved that he wanted to eat himself.

He remained calm and rational.

However, being calm and rational did not lessen the pain.

On the contrary, the more lucid and rational he was, the more pain Jason felt.

He wanted to roar out loud, but he clamped his teeth shut, refusing to let out even the slightest sound.

Because at that moment, Jason had once again returned to the high-backed chair.

In front of him was the familiar, antiquated round table, the dark tablecloth, the silverware, and...that black notebook.

Toward this special place, Jason was always on his guard.

Even though it had offered him considerable help, Jason would never forget the initial scene—

He was 'delivered' here as food.

Moreover, to this point,

He was still 'bound' to this high-backed chair.

Rustle!

The black notebook flipped open automatically, and new words started to appear on the page.

[When you chose it, it was destined to upstage.]

[The bubbles were delightful.]

[They subtly stimulated your taste buds.]

(Note: The unexpectedly frequent aperitif. Its taste... naturally, only you know.)

A few lines of aphorisms casually appeared before Jason's eyes.

"Upstage?"

Jason's thoughts instinctively turned to Aras.

That woman was unforgettable at first sight.

Tall, strong, and exceptionally skilled in combat.

She's probably continuing her training by now, right?

Thinking of Aras's focused demeanor, Jason couldn't help but sigh lightly.

There was no special emotion; Jason simply knew that it seemed impossible to find such a perfect training partner in the future.

However, Jason didn't think it was Aras who was 'upstaging.'

Was it... Edmund, Esther?

Or perhaps Avent?

Jason frowned as he pondered, but ultimately shook his head.

It was similar.

But instinctively, Jason felt it wasn't it.

Who was 'upstaging'?

Is there something important I've overlooked?

Jason asked himself.

While Jason pondered, the words on the notebook continued to appear line by line.

[Main quest: Excellent!]

[Hunting performance: Excellent!]

[Cooking performance: Mediocre!]

[Combat performance: Excellent!]

[Search performance: Good!]

[Overall evaluation: Nearly Excellent!]

(Note: Are you ready to drink in one gulp?)

...

Jason's gaze briefly paused on 'Overall evaluation.'

Then, his eyes moved to 'Cooking performance.'

Clearly, if he wanted to get a good evaluation, he had to master some cooking skills, but... who would tell him how to cook rebar, door panels?

It couldn't be by dipping it in sauce every time, could it?

As for other normal foods?

All things under heaven can be stewed!

All things in the world can be grilled!

Jason firmly believed nothing couldn't be stewed tender, much like there's nothing a skewer meal couldn't solve.

If there was, one would stew and grill skewers at the same time.

Of course, if the opportunity arose, Jason wouldn't mind learning some cooking skills.

But a faster, better solution was to find a chef!

It's just a pity that chefs like Hannibal are so rare!

Jason couldn't help but lament.

Then, his attention was drawn by the brilliance emerging from within the notebook.

With previous experiences in mind, Jason waited quietly.

The next moment, a card of mixed colors appeared.

Unlike the previous cards of solid black, bronze, and metallic sheen, this was a card with an inner layer of black iron and an outer ring of bronze.

The card's face featured an 'esophagus' connecting the mouth to the stomach.

[Esophagus Enhancement: Your esophageal muscles have been specially enhanced, allowing them to work with your strengthened mouth to swallow more and larger morsels at once!]

...

Just like before,

The Talent [Esophagus Enhancement] was listed alongside [Tooth Enhancement], [Taste Enhancement], [Poison Resistance Enhancement], [Stomach and Intestinal Enhancement], [Mouth Enhancement], all marked as 'Passive' under the Talent [Predator].

"Ahem, ahem."

Suddenly feeling an itch in his throat, Jason couldn't help but cough a couple of times.

Then, the area at his throat suddenly expanded, becoming thicker than a watermelon, and as Jason breathed, the expansion continued until it was as thick as his body before stopping.

Quickly, his throat returned to normal.

Having already experienced [Mouth Enhancement], Jason accepted this change with a calm demeanor.

After all, he was just a normal person whose mouth could open wider, esophagus could pass through larger, more food, and whose digestion was a bit faster.

As long as it's normal, there's no need to worry about anything else.

"Bronze and black iron together?"

"Somewhere in between the two?"

Jason speculated.

Then an even brighter light began to emerge from the black notebook,

Unlike the previous silver plate reflection.

This time, a crystal-clear glass appeared before Jason, and out of nowhere, layers of fine liquid began to bubble up inside.

The liquid was clear, yet filled with bubbles.

Chapter 492: Finally Found It! (2)

The bubbles clung densely to the sides of the glass, emitting a faint, refreshing fragrance.

It was somewhat fruity, yet carried a hint of some natural aroma.

Once Jason's hand could move, he directly picked up the glass.

He first brought the glass to his nose and sniffed.

The scent, reminiscent of fruit yet seemingly natural, instantly penetrated Jason's nostrils, alleviating his pain, and without hesitation, he gulped it down.

Glug, glug.

Belch~

After finishing off about 200ml of sparkling water in one breath, Jason let out a loud belch.

[Tasted 'almost excellent' level 'sparkling water'!]

[Physical Strength, Spirit, injuries completely recovered!]

[Attribute point +0.1]

...

Following such prompts, the pain that had been lingering in Jason's body immediately vanished entirely.

Jason's spirit was instantly soothed.

However, upon seeing the last line of the prompt, Jason frowned.

"Excellent is 0.2 points, nearly perfect is 0.3 points."

"Just 0.1 attribute point for 'almost excellent'?"

Although he had speculated before, seeing only 0.1 point of attribute increase, Jason couldn't help but ponder once more who that 'scene-stealing' person might be.

However, that did not hinder Jason from continuing to add the 0.1 attribute point to his constitution.

He needed a stronger constitution, to become stronger, more resilient, to bring his Talent 'Undying Body' to its fullest potential.

The direct increase in attributes continued for a dozen seconds, and when Jason had adjusted to his current body, the notebook began to display more text.

[The scene-stealing sparkling water, making everything wonderful.]

[You should not have returned.]

[But there's nothing that a full belly can't solve.]

[Is there?]

[Then why not indulge in the Excitement of Feast!]

[Yes/No spend 500 points of satiety, 30 points of Excitement of Feast to return?]

...

"500 points of satiety?"

"30 points of Excitement of Feast?"

"What exactly did that 'scene-stealing' guy do?"

"Did he break the sky over 'Ang City'?"

Seeing the satiety and Excitement of Feast required to return to 'Ang City,' Jason could no longer maintain his composure.

He could hardly imagine what had happened in the 'Fragment' world after he entered.

When he left, everything was still normal.

How could such things have happened just because he left?

Could it be because that 'scene-stealing' individual was closely related to him?

But if they were closely related, why couldn't he remember anything?

It wasn't possible that the individual was exceptionally fond of him, and because of that love for the house extended to its crows, affected Aras, Edmund, Esther, and the rest, thus doing something earth-shattering that affected the entire world, right?

That's just too, too... incredible.

Judging the situation, Jason used a more positive word.

Although deep down, he had a more apt term in mind.

But to describe himself and his friends, Jason deemed it inappropriate.

Noticing the throbbing of his temples, he looked at the numbers again.

Suddenly, Jason felt his molars tingle.

To think that returning to the world of 'Dining Etiquette,' 'Lorde,' costs 5 points.

'Appetizers' like 'Crab Meat Salad' and 'Fried Meat Roll' worlds cost 50 and 75 points respectively.

The appearance of the latter two already made Jason feel they were costly.

But the 'sparkling water' world made it seem utterly impossible to him.

Nevermind that he didn't have 500 points of satiety and 30 points of Excitement of Feast.

Even if he did!

He would rather upgrade his skills, his secret techniques.

He was very clear about what was important to him.

Almost immediately, Jason temporarily gave up the idea of the 'sparkling water' world.

Until he reached a certain level, it was absolutely out of the question.

Just as Jason made his decision, the black notebook began to turn its pages.

Fourth page: Soup.

[Soup!]

[You have two choices:]

[1, Beef Soup (Clear Soup)]

[2, Creamy Mushroom Soup (Thick Soup)]

[Choosing 1 will consume 7 points of satiety]

[Choosing 2 will consume 7 points of satiety]

(Note: you can choose one of the two soups; when you return after completing the main quest, you can choose the remaining one.)

...

"An all pick?"

"Same satiety requirement?"

Jason was momentarily taken aback.

Then, he set his sights on 'Beef Soup.'

Not for any other reason, he just liked beef.

In fact, at that moment, Jason's mind had already begun to imagine the taste that 'Beef Soup' should have.

And amidst such musings, Jason found himself back at 19 Ter Street.

He was still in the same posture from before, wearing an ice hockey mask, seated on a crate with his beloved broad-blade, short-handle machete resting on his knee.

Apart from that?

In that "Fragment" world, after encountering falling meteors and fiery flames, everything was gone.

However, for Jason at the moment, none of that mattered.

Because the instant he returned to 19 Ter Street,

He felt something slightly different.

There was an almost imperceptible, ethereal presence beside him!

Invisible!

Intangible!

But undoubtedly real!

This sensation did not cause Jason to panic.

On the contrary, he felt a slight relief deep inside.

About that "observer,"

About that great personage's collaborator,

Jason had always been apprehensive.

The appearance of a "map," which was in fact a "warning letter," was like a dagger plunged into Jason's heart, keeping him on alert at all times.

Especially after the last two returns, when his strength increased and he still could not trace the other party, Jason became even more restless.

But now!

He had finally "detected" a trace of the other party.

This was genuinely good news for Jason!

You should know, before entering the world of "bubble water," his attributes were: Strength 2.6, Agility 2.5, Constitution 3.0, Spirit 2.2, Perception 3.8.

After returning once more, his attributes were: Strength 3.7, Agility 3.5, Constitution 4.4, Spirit 2.6, Perception 5.7.

Even Spirit, the least increased attribute, went up by 0.4.

Strength, Agility, and Constitution all increased by at least 1.

And Perception, which increased the most, went up by almost 2.

When Jason closed his eyes again, the temporary +0.3 Perception granted by "Blind Fighting" brought his perception to six times that of an ordinary person.

Under such enhanced perception, Jason became even more sensitive to his surroundings.

The almost imperceptible, ethereal presence began to grow clearer.

But, it was just a little short!

Jason opened his eyes!

His eyes were calm, and no expression could be seen on his face.

He was on the verge of seeing what it was.

But Jason had not a hint of regret.

Because he was well aware that even if he discovered how the other party was observing him, what would it matter?

The other party's methods were certainly not just limited to observing!

Or rather, what he was currently facing was merely one of the other party's setups!

How strong was the other party in reality?

Jason did not know.

So, what use was there in discovering them at this moment?

He could still only wait!

He could only passively search for an opportunity?

Indeed...

I am too weak!

Jason silently affirmed to himself, then, just like an ordinary person tired from sitting, he stood up.

Next, he casually took out a can of food and a bottle of water from the wooden crate on his right.

Without heating it up, Jason simply opened the can and started eating voraciously.

As if he couldn't wait.

As if he had never eaten such canned food before.

I am now a "lucky" little man who took the place of a "pawn" here; I am very cautious and careful, which matches my identity as a "postman" from the Nightless City.

At the same time, I must "struggle"!

I cannot give up!

After gulping down the can—resembling a mix of animal innards and green peas—in just a few bites, Jason opened a bottle of water and chugged it down.

A look of satisfaction spread across his face.

It was as if he had tasted some kind of exquisite delicacy.

In fact, compared to the "post office" where he worked, the food here was indeed decent.

The "old man's" stinginess was well-documented.

And so was his fairly good credibility.

Both were necessary.

But in secret, both had their clear price tags.

Otherwise, he would not be here.

"Damn XXX!"

"You bastard!"

Jason cursed like this.

Being a "postman" was no fool; naturally, he should have guessed what happened.

At the same time, another search began.

This time Jason rigorously searched inside 19 Ter Street several times, taking nearly an hour before he returned to the wooden crate, seemingly exhausted, bewildered, and disoriented as he sat down.

Of course, that's what could be "observed" from the view inside 19 Ter Street.

In places "unseen" by the observer,

Jason pinched a black notebook between his fingers.

With a flick,

The notebook once again opened.

Chapter 493: 'The Writer'... Jason?

In the final scene of the "Fragment" world, Jason was very clear about the true disparity between himself and those "Bizarre" entities.

Their superiority over him was almost crushing!

He didn't even have a sliver of a chance to resist.

No!

It was as if he were an ant!

Although Jason was still unable to make an accurate comparison of how strong Lorde's "Bizarre" entities were, after learning about the Bizarre entities in Ang City, Jason had made up his mind.

He wouldn't go back until he pushed himself to his current "limit"!

Absolutely not!

Otherwise, even if he did return, once targeted by Lorde's "Bizarre," escaping death would be difficult.

It could even be said that a fate worse than death awaited him.

Even with his "immortal" Talent, it was the same.

Because this was one of the traits that attracted these "Bizarre" entities.

And besides, if someone could become a Sword God in Novice Village!

Then...

Why can't I train to "One-Punch Peace" in Novice Village?

Jason thought to himself silently.

Within him, his determination only grew stronger.

He slightly adjusted his sitting posture so that his body could better shield the black notebook his fingertips were touching, and then he began his action.

Select Soup (Clear Soup): Beef Soup!

Jason made his selection, and immediately 7 points of satiety were consumed.

Subsequently, more text began to appear in the notebook.

[Clear Soup, always delicious.]

[It can be considered a connector.]

[But more so, it exists on its own!]

[What is it?]

[It depends on your choice.]

[Remember: this is the clear soup you ordered]

...

Following the usual text, a check mark appeared after [Beef Soup].

Then came the footnote—

[Background: As a local writer with a considerable reputation, within ten years, you've only written one moderately successful book, which has led to great skepticism about you, to the point where you've started to doubt whether you have the Talent for writing. Therefore, to produce a truly successful book, you've left your familiar home for a strange city, in search of something special... material?]

[Main Quest: Sell at least 100,000 copies of a new book within 120 days (must be willingly purchased by others, and one person counts for only one book): 0/100,000]

[Temporary language acquisition; disappears upon leaving the instance]

[Clothing, appearance, and equipment temporarily changed; reverts upon leaving the instance]

[Detected no gunpowder weapons]

(Tip: Please enjoy your clear soup.)

...

Me, Jason, a writer?

Jason was taken aback.

Before he could gather his thoughts, the black notebook closed.

In that instant, he found himself in a room.

The room was small and very cramped.

In front of him was a large desk, with piles of books on both sides. Each pile was about 40 centimeters tall and included books of various thicknesses, each marked with a wooden bookmark that protruded from the pages but otherwise was unremarkable. In the space between the two piles of books was a thick stack of manuscript paper, beside which lay two fountain pens and a bottle of ink.

The manuscript paper was completely blank, nothing was written on it.

Looking forward from the desk, there was an open desk lamp, its orange bulb casting a bright light over the desk, Dispel the gloom.

Moving his gaze away from the desk, Jason lifted his head to see the clock on the wall.

The desk was right up against the wall, leaving no gap whatsoever.

Turning to the left, thick, floor-length curtains blocked everything.

On the right side, there was a single bed, which would require him to get up and take five steps before he could lie down on it.

However, the single bed was very narrow.

Not that the bed itself was narrow, but it was piled with books, which made it appear so.

Indeed, not just the bed, but the floor was also covered in books.

Turning back, Jason saw three bookshelves side by side.

The shelves were crammed full of books.

"Is this a writer's room?"

Jason was somewhat astonished.

In his imagination, writers were always high-end.

They were supposed to light a cigarette, holding it in the left hand, and pen in the right, occasionally writing furiously, other times carefully crafting each stroke, and while pausing for deep thought, taking a drag of the cigarette would bring inspiration springing forth, prompting them to continue writing.

Even in the most hurried times, writers maintained their poise.

Formal attire wasn't necessary, but a certain formality was expected.

And him?

His upper body was clad in pajamas, and his lower half in boxer shorts, with bare feet.

His slippers had been thrown into a corner of the room.

Looking around, Jason didn't find the mask or the broad-bladed, short-handled machete, so his gaze fell on the desk drawer.

Based on past experience, his mask and machete should be nearby.

This experience wasn't wrong.

When Jason opened the desk drawer, he found his mask and broad-bladed, short-handled machete.

Touching the mask and his weapon,

Jason couldn't help but feel a bit more grounded. Then, he stood up and walked toward the slippers in the corner of the room.

He carefully avoided several piles of books on the way.

After putting on the slippers, Jason then headed toward the door.

Outside the door was a small living room.

Compared to the study cum bedroom, the small living room was much tidier and cleaner.

From where Jason stood in the living room, it could be divided into two parts.

On the left-hand side was a round coffee table surrounded by four armchairs.

On the right-hand side was the hallway leading out of the suite.

Stepping out of the room, one could see a refrigerator, TV, telephone, and other items against the wall, with a coat rack on the side of the hallway.

Chapter 494: 'Writer'...Jason? (2)

From the thin coat hanging on the rack, Jason found the wallet, keys, and other items.

Inside the wallet, there was an ID card and two bank cards, as well as 173 bills and three 1-dollar coins.

Of the keys, there was one big and one small, both strung together.

Attached to the back of the bigger key was a small tag.

Clearly written on the tag was: 'Apartment 3A-313'.

And on the back of the tag was a phone number: 0054444944.

It was evident that the larger key was for this apartment.

After putting the wallet back into the coat pocket, Jason took the keys and directly pushed open the door.

The big key was for the apartment.

The small one was likely for something like a mailbox.

And since this was a rented apartment, the likelihood of a mailbox outside the door was quite high.

With a mailbox, there would be newspapers.

He needed newspapers or similar paper items to help him confirm more information.

Just as Jason had surmised, he found a stuffed mailbox on the wall outside the door. Using the smaller key, Jason easily unlocked the small lock and took out the newspapers.

There were also four letters.

Along with the letters, Jason brought them back into the room.

Of course, Jason didn't forget the television.

After turning on the TV, he began to flip through the newspapers.

The newspapers were delivered consecutively. The earliest one was dated D99.7.10.

And the most recent newspaper was dated D99.7.17.

Through the broadcast on the television station, Jason could confirm that this was today's date.

There were a total of eight newspapers, dates consecutive, with none missing.

Similarly, there was nothing on them that Jason found worth noting.

Setting aside the newspapers, Jason took the four letters.

Out of the four letters, one had no return address, just the destination; the remaining three were formatted traditionally, with both a sender and a recipient.

The senders of the three letters were respectively John, Brian, and McCaul.

The recipient was him, Jason.

He opened the first of these letters, signed by John.

Hello, Jason:

You said you wanted to know some special things?

I have some stories here, not sure if you want to hear them.

If it's possible, call me at this number XXXXXXXX.

Your stranger friend: John

99.7.14

...

This was the first letter.

"A stranger friend?"

Jason furrowed his brows and unfolded the second letter.

Hello, Jason:

I might have some information you'll find interesting.

But I hope you would listen to some of my issues first.

In exchange, I will tell you the things you're interested in.

Your trustworthy friend: Brian

99.7.15

...

Without hesitating, after double-checking to make sure there was nothing dangerous inside, Jason opened the third letter.

Hello, Jason:

I pondered for a long time over whether or not I should write this letter.

After hesitating, I decided to write to you.

Not to satisfy your curiosity, I just hope to give you a piece of advice.

Your loyal friend: McCaul

99.7.16

...

As he looked at the three letters before him, Jason's brows wrinkled more deeply.

Three friends with various prefixes.

A letter a day.

Regarding the motives of the three individuals, Jason could roughly guess, after all, 'he' came here to gather material, and the three were likely to be the ones providing the 'material.'

But...

From what the three of them wrote, Jason always felt something strange.

Moreover, the three people had different personalities.

The first, John, seemed to prefer one-sided disclosure but didn't want to meet in person, undoubtedly a very solitary person.

The second, Brian, although wanted him to listen, had the precondition of exchange, clearly a person who abides by his own principles.

The third, McCaul, was the strangest, different from the first two's disclosures, the person seemed very concerned about him, wanting to offer help, a righteous companion?

Jason shook his head and collected the three letters.

Then, he turned to the fourth letter.

This was the only one without a name and address.

Moreover, the envelope was made of thick kraft paper.

"Covering something up?"

Jason murmured to himself in a low voice as he carefully examined the letter.

The thick kraft paper shielded the light, preventing Jason from seeing what was inside clearly, but this didn't stop Jason from determining through touch that inside was something square and thin.

Such an item obviously couldn't be a bomb or the like.

But it didn't rule out other dangerous objects.

Jason stood up, took the letter, and walked into the study.

He remembered, inside the drawer of his desk, aside from his mask and the broad-bladed, short-handled machete, there was also a paper knife.

Picking up the paper knife, Jason carefully slit open the envelope.

Then, the envelope upright—

Clang!

Amidst the sound of metal colliding with the desk, something fell onto the surface.

"A blade?"

Jason looked at the blade on the table in surprise, somewhat puzzled.

Sending a blade?

What does it mean?

A threat?

But there was just a blade, without any threatening words.

There was no letter inside the envelope; just to be sure, Jason also tore the entire envelope open to check.

There were also no words inside the envelope.

This left Jason somewhat perplexed.

However, there was one thing Jason could be certain of.

The person who sent this special letter must be someone familiar with him.

At least, the sender knew he lived here.

Without an address, a 'postman' couldn't possibly know beforehand.

If an excellent 'postman' like himself couldn't manage it, let alone normal postmen.

"Interesting."

Jason muttered to himself.

Then, he prepared to call Mr. John; he hoped to hear some stories about the sender.

He hadn't forgotten his main task: to sell at least 100,000 copies of his new book within 120 days!

This wasn't an easy task!

Jason, though not a writer,

Knew that he hadn't written a single word yet.

A book should be at least 200,000 words, right?

Even a thinner one would need at least several hundred thousand words, right?

Jason guessed uncertainly.

But as he was about to pick up the phone, it rang a step ahead of him—

Ring-a-ling!

After the phone rang three times, and Jason confirmed it wasn't a wrong number, he then picked up the phone.

"Hello."

"Jason? When are you submitting the manuscript?"

"It's already the 17th today!"

"You promised me you'd submit it by the end of the month!"

Just as Jason had begun to speak, a slightly irritated voice came through the receiver.

Chasing for a manuscript?

Is it the editor?

Jason thought subconsciously.

And such silence only made the editor on the other end even more irate.

"Don't play dumb!"

"And don't say you have amnesia!"

"Last time, you already used that excuse!"

"I'm your editor, Raven."

"Our publishing house's address is 221 Broad Bean Street, Qiongsi city, the telephone number is XXXXXXXX."

"I've checked your cat and dog; they're currently at the pet store for grooming—they're both fine, not sick."

"Furthermore, none of your relatives have either married or had a funeral in the last six months!"

"And you?"

"You certainly haven't gotten food poisoning!"

"So, send the new book over before the end of the month!"

After speaking, the person on the other end didn't wait for Jason to respond and hung up the phone.

Click!

Beep, beep!

Listening to the busy tone on the phone, Jason simply shrugged; he could tell that the editor was desperately frustrated, and for good reason, considering all the excuses he'd used before.

They sounded so fake.

If you're taking a leave, it should at least be believable.

At the very least say something like you injured your hand, and it's in a cast, and preferably get a doctor's note as proof.

That would make sense.

Food poisoning?

Too fake.

Who gets food poisoning?

Anyone would avoid it.

Food that's that delicious.

He can never get enough.

With these thoughts, Jason set down the receiver and began to dial Mr. John's number.

Yet again, he was interrupted.

Jason looked towards the door, his perception nearly six times that of an ordinary person, allowing him to clearly hear a series of footsteps ascending the stairs—messy footsteps, at least five people.

And more, after reaching the third floor, these people headed straight for his room.

The next moment, a knock on the door followed—

Thud, thud-thud!

Chapter 495: John's Dog (Thanks to Chief IPFH)

Jason did not open the door immediately.

Instead, he went into the bedroom, where he parted the curtains just enough to peer cautiously outside.

Just as he had heard, and determined, there were the same number of people.

At this moment, five individuals were gathered in front of his door.

Three were holding cameras aloft, one had a microphone, and another was holding something that resembled a voice recorder.

"Journalists?"

"A TV station?"

"What's happened?"

Jason frowned as he looked at the five people.

According to his background, "a bottom-tier writer" like him should not catch anyone's attention; even if something had happened, at most there would be a small square of text tucked away in the local newspaper, a brief feature that would be quite remarkable.

This sort of professional-level interview?

Forget about it.

Unless...

Something truly sensational had occurred.

With that speculation in mind, Jason walked towards the door.

He didn't bother with his appearance.

Without knowing enough about this "writer Jason," he thought it best to stay as he was.

Click, click

The flashbulbs popped the instant the door swung open.

Almost simultaneously, a microphone was thrust in front of him.

"Mr. Jason, what are your thoughts on someone mimicking the murder plot from your novel?"

"What is your opinion about the killer?"

"Could he be someone you know in your life?"

The interviewer with the microphone asked directly.

Mimicking my novel to kill?

Jason was visibly startled.

Before opening the door, he had speculated on many things, such as being accidentally involved in the assassination of some big shot or a situation threatening the safety of the entire city, but he had never imagined someone "mimicking his novel to kill."

What kind of joke was this?

Surely this was just a plot from a novel, wasn't it?

How could such a thing happen in reality?

Besides...

Did people actually read "his" novels?

Jason's gaze inadvertently swept the copy: as a local writer of considerable fame, you've only written one moderately successful book in the past ten years...

He seemed to have a certain comprehension of the evaluation of "considerable fame" and "moderately successful book."

At the same time, he thought of the razor blade in the brown envelope he had just received.

Was there any connection between the two?

Jason wondered to himself.

However, he immediately came back to his senses.

Because, for now, none of that mattered.

What was important was that he had no idea what the "past him" had written.

He was utterly unable to answer the interviewer's questions.

The eager glint in the interviewer's eyes clearly showed he was seeking a major scoop from him.

Jason was confident that if he said something like "no comment," a pervasive report filled with unfounded speculation would instantly emerge.

Therefore, he answered with all seriousness—

"Illegal actions are wrong!"

"Every citizen should fulfill their duty to abide by the law."

"I hope the police will step up their efforts to solve the case and bring the culprit to justice on behalf of the victims."

After finishing, Jason just looked at the interviewer in front of him.

The interviewer was clearly not expecting such a response from Jason.

For a moment, the interviewer was somewhat stunned.

But Jason was not.

He looked down at the interviewer before him.

His towering height cast a shadow over the other man.

"Anything else?"

"If there's nothing else, I need to get back to my writing."

"Your sudden visit has already disturbed me."

Jason stated bluntly, with a look of displeasure naturally appearing on his face, and, together with his height and sturdy physique, the impact made the words the interviewer had at the tip of his tongue retreat.

"No, nothing else," the interviewer stuttered.

"Hmm."

Jason nodded and closed the door.

Bang!

As the sound of the door colliding with the frame echoed, the interviewer snapped back to reality.

He instinctively raised his hand, intending to knock, but ultimately he pulled it back.

He didn't dare.

Just moments ago, he felt as if he was being targeted by some terrifying beast.

There was a feeling that if he spoke further nonsense, he would be torn to shreds and devoured.

"This Jason, a writer?"

Turning, the interviewer inquired of his colleague.

"Yes."

"I checked, and he is indeed a writer; he even wrote a novel that was somewhat well-known and popular in certain circles."

"But that's the only book; the rest aren't very impressive."

"Now, many people are questioning him, thinking that the book wasn't written by him at all," said the recorder, holding the voice recorder with certainty.

"A writer who looks more like a butcher, stronger than a wrestler?"

"What kind of joke is that?"

"Why doesn't he compete in professional wrestling leagues? With his build, he would surely excel, and that would make him far more money than writing books," the interviewer mumbled.

He was venting his dissatisfaction at not achieving his goal.

Of course, there was still fear in his heart.

"What should we do now?"

"The interview was too brief; there's no way to create a full report with what we have."

The recorder with the voice recorder asked.

"Focus on that case, edit the footage we just shot into it, and broadcast it at the end to fill up the full segment," the interviewer suggested.

Having said that, the interviewer hurried downstairs.

He really didn't want to stay here a moment longer.

And he wouldn't be coming back to interview this guy named Jason again.

He always felt that Jason wasn't really a writer.

As for that previous book?

It must be that Jason obtained the genuine manuscript of some writer by some means and then published it.

Chapter 496: John's Dog

The writer must have been treated terribly.

Perhaps he's already been done in by Jason.

Poor writer.

With such speculation, the interviewer hurriedly left.

In the room, Jason heard the conversation of these people clearly.

He wasn't surprised by the interviewer's assessment.

Just to end what was called an 'interview' quickly, he had unconsciously revealed a hint of his aura.

Though it was just a hint, it was enough for the average person.

As he wished, the interviewer wrapped up the session quickly.

However, something the interviewer said served as a reminder to Jason.

"Can I go on to compete in a wrestling match and then write a memoir?"

Jason seriously considered the feasibility of this matter.

In the end, Jason shook his head.

He was confident about the wrestling match, but the time investment was too long.

At the beginning, even with the identity of a 'writer,' it was just a gimmick, and he would definitely not get recognition, let alone sell a memoir, unless he could win a championship or something like that.

But to accomplish this within 120 days was indeed too difficult.

And to methodically sell at least 100,000 copies of a new book within 120 days?

That was fraught with difficulty as well.

Especially with the restrictions that purchases must be voluntary and each person counts for only one copy.

He had to think of a method.

As Jason pondered, he walked back to his study and placed the hockey mask and the wide-bladed short-handle machete behind the bookshelf.

Since the reporter had come.

Could the police be far behind?

The police arrived even faster than Jason expected.

Just two minutes after Jason had placed his mask and machete, his door was knocked on again.

Thud, thud thud!

"Hello, I'm Chief Davide."

"Is Mr. Jason there?"

The rhythmic knocking was accompanied by a very polite voice.

When Jason opened the door, the police chief, roughly forty years old, dressed in plain clothes with a beard, but very clean in clothes and shoes, gave a slight smile.

The chief's smile was quite affable; in his youth, he certainly could have been called a sunshine handsome man.

And now?

He was very charming as well.

Especially when he was exceedingly polite.

"I apologize for the interruption, Mr. Jason."

"This is my assistant, Hunter."

The middle-aged detective gestured to the young man beside him.

This was a serious-looking young man, dressed in a formulaic black suit, white shirt, and black tie, standing silently there, and when Davide introduced him, simply nodded to Jason.

"This is my badge."

Then, the middle-aged detective flashed his badge and passed it over to Jason, making sure Jason could see it clearly.

Hunter did the same.

Jason glanced over both badges; the photos appeared to be of the two individuals, their names were correct, and details like officer numbers and the embossing were all sharp and clear, not a cheap knock-off, likely the real deal.

"May we come in to talk?"

Asked the detective after Jason nodded, indicating that he had seen clearly.

"Yes."

Jason nodded, stepping aside.

"I appreciate it."

Davide said apologetically.

This way of talking, of course, would close the distance with strangers.

While the younger man, Hunter, still maintained an unwelcoming appearance, his eyes quickly scanned the surroundings.

Clearly, he was observing.

One person amiable to catch attention, and the other calmly surveying the surroundings?

Jason thought to himself as he observed the pair before him.

Then, without any sign, he sat in the sofa.

He chose a sofa against the wall; sitting there, he could clearly see both the front door and the door leading to the bedroom.

Though he had made contingencies, Jason wasn't about to let anyone easily search his bedroom.

As for whether the young man in front of him would do so?

Upon entering the room, he had looked towards the bedroom door at least three times.

Despite his standoffish exterior, this was telling enough.

"Please, take a seat."

Jason said after he was seated.

"Thank you."

Davide was still all smiles.

He sat opposite Jason, and the impassive young man stood behind him.

"Do you know the reason for our visit, Mr. Jason?"

The middle-aged detective asked with a smile.

"I know."

"There was a reporter here just now."

Jason replied.

That was the truth and there was no need to hide it.

"Then could you share with us your thoughts?"

The middle-aged detective continued.

"Breaking the law is wrong!"

"Abiding by the laws and regulations is the duty of every citizen."

"I hope the police step up their efforts to solve the case, bring the culprit to justice, and vindicate the victim."

"That's what I said earlier."

"Now, I feel the same way."

Jason repeated his previous statement completely, firmly expressing his stance.

The middle-aged detective was taken aback.

Like the interviewer before him, the detective hadn't expected Jason to respond this way.

However, unlike the interviewer, the detective quickly recovered.

"Thank you for your support, Mr. Jason."

"Could you perhaps share some of your hypotheses with me?"

"You know, it might be of help to us."

Davide appeared very sincere, even using honorifics in his speech.

Jason's face showed a fitting trace of embarrassment.

He knew this was just the detective's strategy.

But that didn't prevent him from going with the flow.

After all, he also had his share of troubles here.

Chapter 497: John's Dog

The middle-aged detective clearly noticed the embarrassment on Jason's face.

He had never expected that a probe would yield results, a truly unexpected surprise.

Faced with such a surprise, he definitely wouldn't let it slip away.

"Mr. Jason, are you in some kind of trouble?"

"If possible, please tell me."

"I will do my utmost to help you."

Davide became increasingly sincere.

It seemed that such words had moved Jason; he stood up and walked toward the bedroom that doubled as a study.

Davide and Hunter exchanged glances and immediately followed him.

The two tiptoed, very carefully avoiding the piles of books on the floor, and when they reached the desk, they saw that Jason's hand now held a kraft paper envelope.

"This was what I found in my mailbox this morning when I was getting the newspaper."

"No signature, no address."

"Inside is a blade."

Jason said, passing the kraft paper envelope over.

"A blade?"

The middle-aged detective's eyes lit up.

The young man also stopped surveying his surroundings and stared intently at the envelope.

"Yes, that's right."

"I was startled at the time myself," Jason continued.

"Can you confirm when you received it?" the middle-aged detective asked.

"It should have been between 7.10 and 7.17, I can't be sure of the exact date."

"I am a writer, and I've been in seclusion working on my writing these past days," Jason answered.

"Is that so?"

"Don't worry, leave it to us, we will find this person for you."

"If there's anything else, please contact me."

With a lead in hand, the middle-aged detective was not inclined to stay any longer; he handed Jason a business card and then got up to leave with his assistant.

"Please wait a moment."

At the doorway, the detective nodded and spoke.

Jason cooperatively halted, watching as the two men left before closing the door.

His perception, which was beyond that of ordinary people, continued to listen in on the conversation between the detective and his assistant.

"Chief, why didn't you ask more about the case?"

"Do you think he would tell us?"

"Even if he doesn't tell us, it's also a contest; we can look for loopholes in this exchange."

"A contest?"

"I would only think it's a case of startling the snake in the grass; keep an eye on this writer, I want to know his every move, and then, check the nearby surveillance; I hope to find out who sent our writer the blade."

"Right, bring me a copy of the book he wrote called 'Cross Street Pervert.'

"Chief, it's not 'Cross Street Pervert;' it's 'Cross Street Stalker.'

"Aren't stalkers perverts? What's the difference."

The assistant corrected the chief's words.

The chief, however, appeared indifferent.

Listening to the chief's orders, which were so coldly different from his earlier smile, Jason felt no surprise.

Before strangers, everyone wears a disguise.

What's shown is only a mask.

Only in front of one's own people does the mask peel back just a bit.

As for taking it off completely?

That's impossible.

It's self-protection, something everyone does, and he did too.

"'Cross Street Stalker,' huh?"

Jason muttered to himself as he began to search the room.

Although he was not a writer, a writer would definitely keep copies of their published work, and the more successful ones would surely be displayed in a visible spot, carefully preserved.

Even when living away from home, one would take the opportunity to bring them along.

And just as Jason predicted, among the bookshelves, on the one in the middle, he found that very book, right in the most conspicuous position.

He reached out and took the book.

Jason sat at the desk and started to read it closely.

Someone had already committed a murder imitating his book; as the 'author,' he certainly needed to understand what was going on.

Sitting beside the desk, Jason began to flip through the book.

For the next four hours, the only sound in the study was the turning of pages.

'Cross Street Stalker' was a book of mystery tinged with a bit of fantasy.

The protagonist was a down-and-out detective, quite a failure in life; after divorcing his wife, he lived alone in a two-story house on the outskirts, with a detective agency on the ground floor and a living area on the second floor. The house was rented, and he was a month behind on rent. By agreeing to help the landlord find a lost dog, he had avoided being kicked out.

And the story began with a cat.

To find the dog, the protagonist had to post a lost dog notice.

He was just trying it out.

Who would have thought that someone really would call, claiming to know the whereabouts of the dog?

The protagonist rushed to the location, but saw no one; however, he found the dog, leashed and tied to the railing on the side of the road.

Without giving it much thought, the protagonist returned with the dog and handed it over to the landlord, who, in return for the previous agreement, waived the one month's overdue rent and even gave the protagonist a two-week grace period.

In hopes of gathering the rent for the following month within two weeks, the protagonist wished to take on more cases.

Then, someone did come to him with a task.

It was a husband looking for evidence of his wife's affair.

The protagonist accepted the job on the spot and took a deposit.

But the protagonist's competence was poor, and he made numerous mistakes even in such a simple affair investigation.

Just as the protagonist thought he was going to fail, he received another anonymous call, which again directed him to a location. There, he found an envelope containing evidence of the affair of his client's wife.

Chapter 498: John's Dog

By this time, the Protagonist had become suspicious, yet facing the evidence he had to obtain, he didn't hesitate.

The commission was completed quite naturally.

The Protagonist received the reward.

With this success, the commissioner introduced even more friends here, and naturally, the mysterious phone calls continued to assist the Protagonist.

Success after success made the Protagonist's reputation soar.

Although the Protagonist had repeatedly asked who the caller was.

The caller never answered, simply placing important clues in crucial spots for the Protagonist to retrieve.

Days went by, one after the other.

Despite his continuing curiosity about who this 'good Samaritan' was, the Protagonist needed their help and had to suppress his curiosity, until one day... the police showed up.

The police came with a search warrant and an arrest warrant.

They suspected the Protagonist was involved in five murder cases.

And they had quite a lot of evidence.

More than one person had seen the Protagonist appearing mysteriously at the crime scenes.

Once could be a coincidence.

But five times?

As the police questioned why the Protagonist was present at the scenes of the five murder cases, he suddenly realized that these were the places where he had picked up the 'clues'.

By this point, the book was more than halfway finished.

In the remaining part, the second protagonist appeared.

The murderer.

A killer who murdered one target to conceal his own identity, and then selected four similar targets, blending the real one amongst them.

Moreover, this killer was extremely cautious.

To make his plan more perfect, he even chose a 'scapegoat'.

'The appearance of a scapegoat makes the crime perfect!' that's what the other side had said.

Unfortunately, in the final conclusion, the killer was still caught by the Protagonist.

Because the landlord's dog recognized the killer's scent.

The killer, wanting to set the Protagonist up, specifically stole the landlord's dog and treated it well, which made this ever-vigilant dog wag its tail non-stop upon seeing the killer, thereby allowing the Protagonist to discover the trick.

Then, the killer was arrested in one fell swoop.

Um...

Having finished reading the book, Jason closed it, deep in thought.

How to put it, the creativity is fine.

But there are quite a few loopholes.

First, despite five murders, the newspaper didn't publish any news, yet when the Protagonist caught the killer, the reporters swarmed in.

Second, the killer didn't have even a trace of a killer's behavioral pattern, instead, he seemed like a joyful criminal.

Third, from beginning to end, the one who hired the killer was never revealed; instead, there was constant description of the crime scenes, as if they were real.

"The first case, armless woman, a female corpse without arms, hung upside down in a narrow, dark alley, with blood writing: Boring, boring, no fun."

"The second case, crushed man, except for a head, a completely crushed body stuffed in a box and thrown onto the road, with a note on the head: Meaningless, no fun."

"The third case, very normal, a woman whose throat was cut for a swift death, was the real target, and there was also blood writing: This is only the third, it's getting less and less fun."

"The fourth case, drowned person, a woman was drowned, and there was a note left by the bank: I'm ready to finish."

"The fifth case, woman burned to death, outside the burning house, leaving a clear message with a note: It's over, I'm not playing anymore."

Jason went over the five cases one by one in his mind.

It should be the first case now.

Thinking this, Jason turned on the TV.

He needed more information to confirm the progress of the cases.

And just at that moment, the phone rang.

Ding-ding-ding.

On the third ring, Jason answered the phone.

"Hello?"

"Hello, is this Jason?"

The voice on the other end was somewhat deep.

"Yes, it is. And you are..."

"I'm John, I sent you a letter before, I've been waiting for your call but you never called, so I reached out."

"I apologize for that, I acknowledge it."

"But, I believe this issue might be related to you."

At this, the deep voice paused for a while.

Then slowly continued—

"My dog has been stolen."

Chapter 499: Imitation? Reproduction!

Dog?

Jason was taken aback, instinctively thinking of the beginning of "Cross Street Stalker" he had just seen.

In that beginning, the protagonist stepped into the killer's trap step by step while searching for the landlord's lost dog.

With that in mind, Jason half-jokingly said,

"You're not my landlord, are you?"

"Mm."

"I am your landlord."

The affirmative answer came from the other end of the phone, making Jason frown.

Such a coincidence?

No!

It wasn't a coincidence, it was a setup!

It's very likely that everything was arranged the moment I moved in here!

And the one who arranged all this?

Naturally, it's the same person who, as described in the book, committed the crime!

What the other person wanted to do was not just create a crime scene!

It was...

To recreate the content of "Cross Street Stalker"!

As Jason's thoughts raced, he formed a rough speculation, but his brow furrowed even tighter.

Because he had no memory of how he came to live here at all.

He had been here from the very beginning.

Previous memories?

Nonexistent!

Even the cat, the dog 'he' had, he didn't know their names now.

While Jason was pondering, the voice on the other end of the phone continued.

"I want to meet and talk, is that okay?"

The other party asked.

"Sure."

Jason gave an affirmative answer.

He wanted to know more, so he had no reason to refuse.

And the landlord named 'John' arrived faster than expected.

Just five minutes after Jason hung up the phone, there was a knock on the door—

Thump, thump-thump!

"It's me, John."

The knocker announced himself.

Jason habitually checked before opening the door.

This was a man who seemed slender but brimmed with strength, quite handsome, yet with a scruffy beard and long hair that spilled over his cheeks and shoulders, giving him a sense of despair, while his simple attire—a pair of jeans and a gray-white long-sleeved shirt with some stains—added to his desolate appearance.

"Sorry, to avoid being seen, I had to do some unnecessary things," he said as he walked in, and after Jason closed the door, he pointed at the stains on his clothes.

Jason nodded noncommittally.

His eyes, however, continued to fix on the man.

Jason could clearly sense the dangerous aura of this seemingly dispirited and forlorn man exuding 'grief'.

In 'Nightless City', Jason had seen quite a few such people.

Each one a famous loner.

Of course, he had no dealings with them, just seen them when delivering goods.

But that didn't stop Jason from heeding the 'old man's' advice: Don't mess with such people, you can't afford to, unless you want yourself, including your relatives, friends, and subordinates, to all be wiped out, then just stay away.

Would anyone dare to steal the dog of such a person?

Jason silently mourned for the thief.

Clearly, this dog was very important to John in front of him.

Simply put, it's no longer about whether he provoked him or not.

It's an endless feud.

While Jason was sizing up John, John was also sizing up Jason.

This was the first time he had seen Jason.

Previously, when Jason moved in, the apartment manager had reported to him, but at that time, he didn't care to pay attention.

He had never seen a writer like this before.

Nearly two meters tall, solidly muscled, his arms thicker than most people's thighs, he looked more like a wrestler than a writer.

Writers holding pens should be genteel.

Jason holding a pen?

It would only make people nervous, worried!

Because they fear that Jason would stab them with the pen!

Is the pen indeed the writer's weapon?

John couldn't help but recall a famous saying.

At this moment, he thought the saying made a lot of sense.

Then, he quietly stepped back.

Not just out of fear that Jason would lash out, but also because he keenly felt the lethal danger on Jason's person.

This was the intuition given to him by his former profession.

An intuition that never fails!

Jason and John stood facing each other in the hallway of the entrance hall.

After a good ten seconds or so, they both moved simultaneously.

The two shifted their steps, sidestepping, step by step, to the side of the couch, and throughout this process, their gazes never left each other, watching each other's eyes as well as being alert to each other's arms and legs, even after standing by the couch, the gaze and cautiousness remained unchanged, and unconsciously, their hands clutched the back of the couch.

The couch could be used not only for sitting but also for swinging.

Of course, it could also serve as a shield.

Squeak, squeak!

Amid the sound of the couch legs scraping against the floor, Jason and John each dragged their couch backwards.

Not until they both touched the wall behind them did they stop.

Then, at the same time, they sat down on the couch.

John's body leaned forward, like a tense leopard ready to pounce at the slightest disturbance.

Jason, on the other hand, sat much more normally, the body upright, legs slightly apart, but his feet subtly slid back in his slippers, using the front of the slippers to conceal the bent, tucked-in toes.

Jason assured himself that with a toe-tap, he could spring up at any moment,

And in the event of an accident, he would not only be able to react instantly but also carry out an effective counterstrike.

Chapter 500: Imitation? Reproduction! (2)

The two fell silent once again.

Only the sound from the television remained—

"According to reports, this homicide occurred in a secluded alley, where a pitiful woman was found with her arms severed and hanging; on her body was written: 'Boring, boring, can't have fun.'

"Those who have seen 'Cross Street Stalker' must be very familiar with this scene."

"However, this time it is not within the pages of a book, but in reality."

"Someone is imitating the murderer from 'Cross Street Stalker,' carrying out a killing spree."

"Luckily, we've interviewed the author of the book..."

The television showed pixelated images that seemed to incite an even greater desire to peer closer.

One after another, photos accompanied by the host's commentary appeared, giving viewers an eerily chilling feeling.

Excitement, fear.

The combination of the two birthed a curiosity strong enough to attract attention.

Especially with the insertion of Jason's interview toward the end.

Jason's voice wasn't heard, only an image was shown.

And it was this image that continued to tremble up and down.

As if something had happened

Then, the scene switched back to the studio.

"We saw the writer of 'Cross Street Stalker,' but it seems the signal was quite poor..."

The host continued to speak.

But Jason was no longer interested in listening any further.

He directly turned off the television.

A bunch of people hungry for ratings, what can't they fabricate?

If they said he was the one who killed, Jason wouldn't be surprised.

After all, a washed-up author taking risks to gain attention was a plausible narrative.

"I've read your book."

John suddenly spoke up after Jason turned off the television.

"How did it feel?"

Jason casually asked.

He hoped to break the silence between them.

Otherwise, he wouldn't be able to ask anything else, let alone get some useful information.

"The descriptions of the corpses are quite impressive."

"Professional level!"

"Before, I wondered how you could write something so professional, and now?"

John said, glancing at Jason again, but he didn't continue.

Even though he didn't say it, the implication couldn't have been clearer.

"I'm a writer,"

Jason emphasized.

Then, he added silently to himself: At least that's the role he assumed.

"And I am just a landlord,"

"Someone who just lost his wife, and then, managed to lose the most precious thing she left behind for me."

John likewise emphasized.

"Your wife?"

Jason inquired appropriately.

"Disease took her life,"

John said somberly.

"Sorry."

Jason offered his sincere condolences.

He could tell that the man before him must have loved his wife dearly.

Naturally, he would also cherish the pet his wife had left behind.

Listening to Jason's sincere apology, John seemed to open up.

"After meeting my wife, I chose to retire. I wanted to live a simple and safe life with her, but accidents always happen."

"Disease took her before."

"There was nothing I could do."

"Because I am not a doctor."

"But now that someone has taken the most precious thing she left me, I believe I need to do something."

John spoke slowly.

"I believe you can make it,"

Jason nodded in affirmation.

"So now, we need to find that bastard who stole my dog—I'm worried about Daisy getting hurt. I don't want her to suffer even the slightest harm."

John spoke and then took a deep breath.

Following that, he continued, "Since he's imitating everything in your book, he will naturally call you."

"Hmm."

Jason didn't refute.

Then, out of curiosity, he asked.

"How did you manage to lose... hers?"

Jason originally meant to say 'it.'

But as the word reached his lips, he changed it to 'her.'

Jason didn't mind respecting the pet owner's terms, as long as there was no ill intent.

"This morning, when I went to see my wife, Daisy stayed in the car. When I returned, Daisy was gone, and my car had been broken into with professional skill."

"No fingerprints were left, neither were there any footprints or any other traces."

"Then, the broadcast announced the 'Cross Street Stalker' copycat murder, and naturally, I thought of you, the author, plus, I'm your landlord."

John explained, his gaze drifting towards the only phone in the room.

He was waiting for the impostor to make the call.

And then?

He would deliver the caller to repentance.

"An imitation?"

"I don't think it's an imitation,"

Jason adjusted his sitting position slightly before saying so.

Instantly, John's attention was captured.

"From the moment I moved in here, and you just happened to have a dog, it's no longer imitation."

"It's..."

"Reenactment!"

Jason stressed his words, his eyes unblinkingly fixed on John.

"The person wants to reenact everything that happened in 'Cross Street Stalker,' where events in the book happen synchronously, with the protagonist being lured step by step into traps, while the murderer simultaneously kills innocent people. And now?"

"Your dog should be right near the scene of that recent murder!"

No sooner had Jason finished speaking than John rose to his feet, ready to head out.

John couldn't wait to get his Daisy back.

But just at that moment—

Ding-a-ling!

The phone rang.

John halted in his tracks, his gaze turning to the phone.

Jason, however, went straight for the receiver.

"Hello."

"How does it feel to be back in the spotlight?"

A deliberately disguised voice came through.