

Chapter 2: The Observer

The morning sunlight streamed through the window, casting a warm glow across the room. A soft breeze rustled the curtains as the girl stirred from her sleep. She stretched, a gentle smile forming as the light bathed her in quiet warmth. The start of a new day felt calm—comforting.

She slipped out of bed and made her way to the bathroom, splashing cold water on her face. Her voice hummed a soft tune, echoing off the tiles as she stepped into the shower. There was a lightness in her movements, as if the world were inviting her to step forward.

After dressing in a simple outfit, she made herself a quick breakfast—just toast and a warm cup of tea. She sat at the small kitchen table, savoring the moment. Everything felt still. Peaceful. Ordinary.

Then, with her bag slung over her shoulder, she stepped out and headed for the train.

The station buzzed with commuters, but the noise didn't bother her. She slipped into her seat on the train and pulled out a thick book from her bag. It wasn't casual reading—but it helped her focus.

“When does someone get diagnosed with a psychotic disorder?”

“People can be obsessed with anything—money, food, hobbies, even love. But it becomes a problem when those obsessions begin to consume their reality.”

She read the passage aloud under her breath, her eyes narrowing slightly. Something about it lingered in her mind—a chill she quickly brushed away. Today wasn't the day for overthinking. Today was about proving herself.

When the train arrived at her stop, she tucked the book away and stepped off with purpose. The hospital wasn't far. She walked briskly, following the signs until she reached the front desk and asked for directions.

Moments later, she stood outside a quiet room. Inside, a serious-looking doctor sat at a desk, reviewing a file. Across from him, a patient sat, staring into space with blank, glassy eyes. The air inside was heavy—too still.

The doctor looked up as she entered. “You're here for the interview?”

She nodded. “Yes. That's me.”

“Good,” he said, tone clipped. “Let's get started. Your task is simple—evaluate this patient. Tell me if he's mentally sound.”

She approached the patient slowly, observing him. His expression was distant. His gaze didn't follow her. Still, she kept her tone light.

She picked up a bowl from the nearby table and held it out. "Hey," she said with a smile. "The ramen's getting cold. You should eat it while it's hot."

No reaction. The patient didn't move, didn't speak. Just kept staring into nothing.

She hesitated, but didn't back down. Then, with calm certainty, she turned to the doctor. "He's coherent. He knows what's happening. He's aware."

The doctor arched an eyebrow, saying nothing. He stepped toward the patient.

"Come on, kid," he said. "Why aren't you eating?"

For a long moment, the patient remained still. Then, in a low voice, he muttered, "I only eat ramen with egg. There's no egg in this. And it looks too spicy."

The girl blinked. The response was unexpected—but undeniably clear. Logical, even.

Then, the door burst open.

A nurse rushed in, breathless and shaken. "Doctor—bed 744... He's gone. He's dead."

The room froze.

The girl's heartbeat skipped. She looked to the doctor, confused, alarmed.

"Dead?" the doctor repeated, his voice strained. "How?"

The nurse shook her head, eyes wide with disbelief. "He was laughing, doctor. Laughing like it was a game. He... he ripped off his own fingernails. One by one. Then he... shoved them down his throat."

She swallowed hard. "He choked himself. To death."

The girl's stomach turned. Her chest felt tight.

Behind her, the patient finally moved. Slowly, he lifted his head, revealing a crooked, unsettling grin. His eyes glinted with something too bright—too alive.

The girl took a step back.

"When do people really get called insane?" she murmured.

No one answered.

The nurse stood frozen. The doctor stared, silent.

And in that moment, everything she thought she knew... cracked.