

Study of Characters' Behaviors in *Dark Matter* based on Maslow's Need Hierarchy Theory

Yuying Dai*

Department of English Language and Literature, Nanning Normal University, China

* Corresponding author: Yuying Dai (Email: 3081879847@qq.com)

Abstract: Blake Crouch, a famous American suspense writer, enjoys great reputation in the circle of novel for his successful depiction of characters in *Dark Matter*, his masterpiece. The choices made by the characters in this novel are in a sense driven by desires, which are formed by different psychological needs in different environments. Based on Maslow's Need Hierarchy Theory, the research aims to analyze characters' behaviors, to interpret incentives of protagonists and to reveal Blake's insistence for his creed of "living in the moment". Through the interwoven fates of these characters, Crouch reveals the ultimate paradox within the multiverse narrative: the meaning of life lies not in choosing infinite possibilities, but in the courage to anchor one's existence within the finite reality. When technology grants humans the power to rewrite their destinies, "living in the present" transforms from passive compromise into an active choice-one that confronts the fluidity of hierarchical needs and embraces the inherent incompleteness of life. This interpretation not only deconstructs Maslow's hierarchy of needs through a literary lens but also offers a gentle response to the anxieties of contemporary society.

Keywords: Blake Crouch, *Dark Matter*, Maslow, Need Hierarchy Theory.

1. Introduction

Dai Jinhua [1] stated that "since the mid and late 1980s, all kinds of mass culture have emerged, accumulated and experienced the sweeping tide of commercialization at the end of 1992. In an instant, it creates a cultural market with infinite vitality." The prosperity of the cultural market provides suspense novel, one of the important branches of mass literature, an excellent opportunity to thrive at home and abroad. As an excellent writer holding a crucial place in the domain of American suspense novels, Blake Crouch has published nine suspense novels since 2004. His latest publication in 2017, *Dark Matter*, a mind-blowing sci-fi and suspense novel, has now been the focus of readers' attention. Some critics consider it as his best work and express their appreciation for Blake's nuanced portrait of behaviors and psychological movements each character shows.

Dark Matter tells the story of Jason1, a professor who is unexpectedly thrust into a parallel universe. In this alternate reality, he discovers he never married or had children, instead becoming a successful scientist who invented technology to traverse multiple universes. Determined to return to his original life and family, Jason embarks on a perilous journey across countless parallel worlds, while confronting another version of himself, Jason2, who seeks to take over his life.

Blake Crouch infuses the reality into his work, *Dark Matter*, such as the life and struggle of average people, people's pursuit of liberty and love, the victory over evil forces, which express his own attitude about life-living in the moment is best choice that humans can make. *Dark Matter* arouses the attention of scholars and critics. Foreign critics have conducted researches on *Dark Matter* from different perspectives which mainly revolve about the analysis of intricate scientific theories such as quantum physics, time travel and atmospheric disturbances. For example, Kulke [2] once commented on the use of quantum physics in *Dark Matter*, which reveals that "the interplay between the different stories of quantum physics shows how the science and the

stories shapes each other." These researches are useful in fathoming out the content of this novel, but they appear relatively insufficient in figuring out the theme and fail to answer questions about character like-why love can render Jason perseverance and courage or drive another Jason into madness. Therefore, in order to first explore the motives of characters and then to further understand the theme of *Dark Matter*, analysis from the perspective of behavioral science may be necessary.

Wang Jing [3] praised that "Abraham Harold Maslow is one of the most influential behavioral scientist in the contemporary world. His Need Hierarchy theory has been widely used in analyzing characters in literary works." In this theory, Maslow classifies eight needs which are physiological needs, safety needs, belongingness and love needs, esteem needs, need for self-actualization, cognitive needs, aesthetic needs and transcendence needs and explains how people are influenced from the lower needs to the highest needs. Looking back to the research tendency of fictions based on Maslow's Need Hierarchy theory, the objectives of most researches concentrate on a single character. Besides, no researcher has combined Maslow's Need Hierarchy theory with the analysis of *Dark Matter*, which means that great potential in *Dark Matter* waits to be tapped. This paper is meant to anatomize four characters' behaviors in *Dark Matter* in order to explain the motives of characters' behaviors and then further the understanding of Blake's belief of "cherishing the present and stopping moaning about the past."

2. Jason1-the Pinnacle of Love and Happiness

Jason1, initially driven by esteem needs, imagines a future of scientific acclaim but realizes the irreplaceable value of family after kidnapping by Jason2, a version of himself who craves familial bonds. This shifts his focus to fulfilling belongingness and love needs, compelling him to traverse parallel universes in order to reunite with his family.

Throughout his journey, his actions are further dictated by basic physiological needs, such as food and shelter, as he navigates harsh realities.

2.1. Hoping for Achievements and Respect

In the original reality, Jason1's life as a college teacher may appear mundane, yet it securely occupies the third tier of Maslow's hierarchy of needs—belongingness and love. His intimate relationship with his wife Daniela and paternal devotion to their son Charlie constitute his existential significance, creating a facade of stability that masks the latent deprivation of higher-level needs.

Wang Jing [3] pointed out that “when the lower needs are relatively gratified, the higher needs will be activated.” After the love and belongingness needs are satisfied, the needs to gain recognition, achievements, and esteem become more significant. About esteem needs, there are two forms of esteem needs, a lower one and a higher one. Maslow [4] concluded that the lower one is the need of respect from others, called “the desire for reputation or prestige, status, fame and glory, dominance, recognition, attention, importance, dignity, or appreciation. The latter is the need of self-esteem or self-respect containing the desire for strength, for achievement, for adequacy, for mastery and competence, for confidence in the face of the world, and for independence and freedom.” At the beginning, Jason1's behaviors are both spurred by pursuing the respect from others and self-respect.

Jason1 suffers from a significant deficiency in both the fourth level of Maslow's hierarchy—esteem needs—and the fifth level—self-actualization. He often fantasizes that abandoning his family to focus on scientific research might have led to monumental achievements, revealing his unfulfilled desire for self-respect. At a party celebrating his friend Ryan's winning prize, Jason1 admires Ryan, who, despite being less talented, has earned such a prestigious accolade. This admiration underscores his craving for esteem. Due to the unsatisfied esteem needs, Jason1 abruptly leaves the party, feeling so dejected that he runs a red light. On his way home, he reflects on his youthful potential, overwhelmed by the collapse of his dreams. To calm himself, he takes a detour. This series of actions highlights the impact of Jason1's deficiency of esteem needs on his emotional state and behavior.

The reason behind Jason1's series of behaviors could be well explained by Maslow's [5] words that “people need respect from others as well as self-respect. The satisfaction of self-respect needs will produce the feeling of courage and self-confidence. On the contrary, the deficiency of self-respect needs will produce diffidence and distress.” Running a red light and taking a detour are triggered by his uncontrollable anger and the feeling of depress respectively. These behaviors are caused by the deficiency of esteem needs. Jason1 longs for achievement, for mastery and competence. Being an ordinary college teacher can't gratify his needs for self-respect. He still feels a little void and regretted about giving up his scientific project. And this regret reaches the summit and changes into anger after he sees what his friend Ryan has achieved, which makes Jason1 perform a series of behaviors to relieve himself of the deficiency of needs for self-respect.

2.2. Yearning for Familial Reunion

Duane and Schultz [6] written on their papers that “Maslow held that needs for love and belongingness can be gratified

from both social relationships within a group such as clubs, office, culture, religious groups, professional organizations, sports teams, gangs, and close relationships with family members, intimate partners, mentors, close colleagues, confidants.” Needs for belonging and love needs mainly contain affection, friendship and love, which are emotionally significant relationships. Familial reunion is an important source for the satisfaction of love and belongingness.

In *Dark Matter*, taking advantage of Jason1's desires for achievements, Jason2 kidnaps Jason1 when the latter is taking a detour and forces Jason1 to exchange the life with him. When Jason1 comes to Jason2's world, he feels isolated and panicked and racks his mind to escape from the laboratory. Blake [7] wrote that “He is not exactly sure but he wants to go home.” At that moment, Jason1's connection with his families is temporarily cut off. To Jason1, Daniela is not only his wife but also the meaning of his life. Daniela cares about Jason1 and sacrifices a lot in order to raise a family with Jason1. She is incapable of continuing her career as an artist because of postpartum depression. Daniela makes Jason1 feel love, belonging and warm. The need for love and belonging takes the lead, which pushes him immediately to escape the lab and to risk his life to reunite with his families.

In three parallel worlds, Jason1's actions profoundly reflect the core influence of the need for love and belongingness. In Jason2's world, where Daniela is shot and killed, Jason1's sense of belonging is violently stripped away, driving him to seek out Daniela in a desperate attempt to compensate for this loss. In the world ravaged by an infectious disease, he euthanizes Daniela with morphine, transforming his need for belonging into a sacrificial fulfillment, replacing physical presence with spiritual connection. In the world where Jason1 dies in a car accident, he chooses to quietly leave a Daniela who does not know him, demonstrating self-restraint and an ethical reconfiguration of his need for belonging. These behaviors reveal that the need for belonging is not static but dynamically adapts to extreme circumstances, balancing ethical considerations and emotional complexity.

Blake [7] described Jason1's mind that “I was hardwired to love and protect that woman.” The needs for love and belongingness drive Jason1 into repeated traveling and protecting Daniela in every parallel world until he come back to his original world and reunite with his own Daniela.

2.3. Struggling for Survival

Maslow [4] explained that “physiological needs, as the most basic, aboriginal and preferential needs, can be seen as the needs to protect individual survival and race development, including food, water, air, sleep, excretion, sex, and so on.” In the early stages of his journey through unfamiliar universes, Jason1 is compelled to address physiological needs, such as searching for food, evading capture, and adapting to differences in physical laws. Details such as Jason1's barefoot escape through the snow highlight how the degradation of needs deconstructs human dignity.

In a parallel world of an apocalypse, Jason1's behaviors are primarily driven by the need for safety. Confronted with catastrophic scenes of volcanic ash and collapsing buildings, he and Amanda immediately retreat to the “Schrödinger Box”—a self-contained, resource-abundant space that exists independently of parallel worlds and offers absolute safety. Wang Jing [3] concluded that “The needs for safety are seen as the active and dominant factors in mobilizing of the potential of organisms in real crises, such as war, healthy

problem and natural disaster. That is to say, in the face of real crises, the first thing that comes to mind is security.” The box’s enclosed nature and comprehensive resources symbolize the temporary fulfillment of safety needs, providing Jason1 with a brief period of stability and protection.

In a world dominated by blizzards, where the Schrödinger Box is buried under snow, Jason1’s hierarchy of needs rapidly regresses to the level of physiological needs. He and Amanda trek barefoot through the extreme cold, driven entirely by survival instincts as they search for shelter and food. Upon discovering a cabin, the scarcity of food pushes Jason1 to the brink of psychological collapse, ultimately leading him to “roll the dice” in a desperate attempt to locate the Schrödinger Box. This series of actions illustrates that when basic needs remain unmet, individuals abandon higher-level needs and revert to the most primal survival mode. Through this narrative, Crouch reveals the “atavistic” nature of humanity in extreme situations—no matter how advanced technology becomes, the instinct for survival remains the fundamental code of behavior.

Maslow [8] described that “a sated man no longer feels hungry, a safe man no longer feels endangered.” For Jason1, the starting point of searching for food and endeavoring to return the box is to gratify his physiological needs in dire situations like apocalypse and snowstorm. Food and a safe shelter are extremely basic items for the satisfaction of physiological needs.

3. Jason2—the Consummate in Career and Invention

Jason2, a symbol of success, sacrifices his relationship with Daniela for scientific ambition, only to later regret his choice. Driven by unmet needs for belongingness and love, he creates the “box” to forcibly exchange lives with Jason1, seeking to reclaim what he lost—a happy family. While his time with Daniela in Jason1’s universe temporarily satisfies his longing, his deceit is eventually exposed, leading to her departure and his downfall. Jason2’s tragic fate illustrates how the interplay of self-actualization and needs for love and belongingness can drive destructive actions, culminating in irreversible loss. This section examines how his unmet needs shape his choices and lead to his demise.

3.1. Sacrificing love to achieve self-actualization

Jason2 is immersed in his scientific project rather than marrying Daniela, driven by the needs for self-actualization. For the definition of self-actualization needs, Maslow [4] stated that “self-actualization need is what a man can be. He must be true to his own nature. Self-actualization is the highest need for people to pursue, which is that people achieve their ideals and ambitions depending on their potential. If a person can improve his ability and solve problems based on his own efforts and this process makes him feel happy, his self-actualization will be satisfied. If a person likes to do one thing and has done this thing successfully and happily, his self-actualization also can be satisfied.”

Jason2 possesses great ambition and he will remove all obstacles blocked in his way to scientific achievements. He makes a significant decision in his life which turns his life entirely different from Jason1’s life. When Jason2 is 27, he is obsessed with his project to create the quantum superposition

of an object. If this hypothesis has been substantiated, Jason2 may get Pavia Prize, million dollars and accolades and great grant money. Meanwhile, Daniela is dating with Jason2, and get pregnant. Unlike Jason1, Jason2 chooses to break up with Daniela and continues to proceed with his research out of his desire for knowledge and self-actualization. About this, Blake [4] wrote that “it is universally acknowledged that a scientist would remain obscure if he didn’t publish a single major discovery before he is 30.” Jason2 is avaricious towards any opportunity that could make him a successful scientist. Jason2 is talented and corroborated his hypothesis after five years of toil in laboratory. He lives a luxurious life, which can be seen from the furniture in his house. Maslow [9] showed that “people don’t have to be 100% satisfied with one need until the next one emerged.” Peng Danling [10] further explained that “before people’s higher needs come into being, the lower needs only need to be partially satisfied.” Though Jason2’s need for love and belongingness hasn’t been satisfied fully, his self-actualization could be satisfied initially. When Jason2 wins the Pavia Prize, he rises to fame and easily obtains recognition, status and wealth. Jason2’s success makes his self-actualization get met greatly.

Nevertheless, Edward [11] explained that “people who acquire self-actualization are also ordinary people. They sometimes have mistakes and weaknesses that ordinary people often have.” After winning the prize, he inevitably falls into endless regret for the choice he made and hankered after something he easily forsake—Love.

3.2. Hankering for the Satisfaction of Love and Belongingness

As Jason2’s achievements earn him the acclaim of the entire scientific community, his life becomes void and purposeless. Blake [7] wrote Jason2’s life that “All he does was work. In the last five years, he doesn’t have a life outside the lab. He practically lived there.” Furthermore, he is tormented by his desire for love. “Jason was obsessed with the path not taken. He talked about it all the time.”

When Jason2 is 27, he prioritizes knowledge and achievements instead of his families. From his perspective, the importance of his project in quantum physics is non-replaceable and it almost becomes the sole aim in his life. The relationship between him and Daniela can not be supported any more, without little love, which makes them break up eventually. During five years of assiduous working on his projects without any communication, Jason2 doesn’t feel a ghost of sincere feelings or have any considerate friend or partner. All he has is his scientific crew who are fanatic towards his hypothesis. Under such atmosphere, love, warmth and care all became remote dreams. Therefore, it can be seen that Jason2’s needs for love and belongingness has hugely ignored since Jason2 thinks his break-up with Daniela would be of triviality in his long life. However, it turns out that sincere communication and company is far more important than superficial fame. Now, Jason2 lives a void and numb life. But, thanks to his invention of the box which can transfer people between different parallel universes, he goes to the most drastic contortions to satisfy his needs for love and belongingness—changing life with another Jason1 who has the most fulfilling and caring family.

Jason2 manages to change life with Jason1 through the box after going through dozens of parallel universes. When he sees Daniela washing the stewpot in the kitchen, he feels alive and refreshed, like the first time they met. He loves Daniela,

and hopes Daniela could love him in that he hankers for love and belongingness so badly and suffered his loneliness for so many years. And Daniela makes him feel the love he has missed in his original world. Jason2's needs for love and belongingness might be satisfied forever if Jason1 doesn't manage to come back to his original world.

When Jason1 succeeds in coming back to his own world and reuniting with his family, Jason2's intrigue has been foiled. Jason2's relationship with Daniela begins to collapse. Jason2 still desires for Daniela's love, which drives him into winning back Daniela with force. In the end, Jason2 is shot dead. Before he died, he feels the loneliness again and the care of family and the warmth leaves him as well. Maslow [5] emphasized the importance of friends as a significant part of needs for love and belongingness—"people are social beings who need social contacts and wish to belong to a group in which they can form and maintain lasting social connections." Pathetically, Jason2 gets any friend or any acquaintance in the world not belonging to him, and Daniela feels angry and disgust about the man who had been lying and pretending for her husband for such a long time, which shows that his needs for love and belongingness couldn't be satisfied after all.

4. Daniela-the Crux of the Conflict between Jason1 and Jason2

Daniela experiences a fading passion in her life with Jason1. When Jason2 enters her life with renewed intensity, she is momentarily driven by physiological needs, indulging in his passion. Despite noticing behavioral differences and feeling cognitive dissonance, she initially remains silent out of trust. However, upon discovering Jason2's true identity, her belongingness and love needs prevail, leading her to reject Jason2 and return to Jason1. This section examines how Daniela's actions reflect the tension between physiological desires and her commitment to family.

4.1. Possessing Uncontrollable Nature to Sexual Love

Daniela, Jason1's wife, is a tutor teaching private art lessons for middle-age students. She could have achieved more in Chicago artistic community if she didn't raise a family with Jason1 at the peak of her career. Moreover, she gets severe postpartum depression after giving birth to Charlie. Though, she doesn't realize her dream as an artist, she still lives a rather affluent life. And they would never worry about the food since both Jason1 and Daniela have steady jobs though these jobs might not be what they desired. All in all, the expansive house in Chicago, her stable career as a teacher and the present she purchased are the manifestations that Daniela has solid material conditions and her basic physiological needs are met well.

Daniela has been lived with Jason1 for more than a decade and they are very happy for having each other's company indeed. They care for their spouse's feelings. For instance, Daniela would encourage Jason1 to take part in Ryan's party and say that she was always proud of him even though he isn't a prestigious scientist. Nevertheless, it has been such a long time for Daniela to have crazy and giddy sexual love with Jason1 since they have accustomed to each other's patterns of behaviors and have known each other too well. In a nutshell, Daniela could never return to the younger age when Jason1 first caressed her body gently. Therefore, as a significant part of physiological needs, the need for satisfying sexual love has

always lingering in Daniela's mind. Thus, when Jason2 came to Jason1's world, Daniela, driven by her physiological needs, feels his enthusiasm about her and she couldn't resist his fondling. After she is immersed in irresistible and satisfying sexual love, her physiological needs have met.

4.2. Asserting a Steadfast Conviction of Love to Her Family

Daniela has always loved her family steadfastly and gives her unconditional trust to Jason1 and Charlie. However, when Jason2 forces Jason1 to change the life with him, comes back home and pretends Jason1, Daniela feels his unusual enthusiasm and yet doesn't know he was not the original Jason1 anymore. After all, Jason1 and Jason2 are exactly the same including their genes. A few days later, she begins to feel weird about Jason1's daily habits. She feels curious about him and suspects that he has an affair with other women. Daniela's curiosity stems from cognitive needs which are defined by Maslow [4] that "cognitive needs, the needs of knowledge and understanding, curiosity, exploration, meaning and predictability." Driven by the cognitive need, she almost blurts all her questions out. Nonetheless, one kiss from Jason2 dispels all her doubts. Blake [7] described that "for a split second it all falls away-the fear, the questions, the doubt." It means that Daniela curiosity has been temporarily bated. For that moment, her cognitive need is displaced by the need to love and trust her family. Due to the satisfaction of familial love and belongingness, Daniela chooses to believe Jason2 even though he acts extremely differently comparing with the Jason1 she used to know.

5. Amanda-a Temporary Companion of Traveling between Parallel Universes

Amanda, a successful psychiatrist, has her basic needs met through her career and relationships. When Jason1's life is threatened, she risks her safety to help him, traveling through parallel universes. Throughout this journey, Amanda evolves from fear to independence, ultimately choosing to separate from Jason1. This decision reflects her growth in self-esteem and her ability to shape her own future. This section examines how Amanda's actions exemplify the pursuit of transcendence and esteem needs, showcasing her transformation into a self-actualized individual.

5.1. Risking Herself to Offer Her Help

Maslow [4] defined that "Transcendence needs comes from values that transcend one's self such as mystical experiences and certain experiences of nature, aesthetic experiences, sexual experiences, service to others, pursuit of science, religious beliefs, etc." When a person possesses enough food, clothes, a shelter that can protect from external or internal perils, and when he associates with other people and obtains respect from others, his growth need, including self-actualization needs, cognitive needs, aesthetic needs and transcendence needs, will become more and more eager to be satisfied.

When Jason1 comes to the parallel world where Jason2 used to live, Amanda, as one member of Jason2's research team as well as a professional psychiatrist, shows her compassion and empathy towards Jason1. By virtue of her pursuit of scientific research, she feels extremely excited to discuss with Jason1 about his discovery after experiencing the

box and the parallel universe. Even at middle of the night, Amanda still braces herself up and conveys the information to other crew members, who are apparently more obsessive and avid about the research result. At the same time, Amanda pays great attention to Jason1's vital signs and his health since he accepts decontamination just now. She is concerned about Jason1 and wants to offer her limited help to him. And she really does that. Amanda asks other crew member to bring some food or water if Jason1 needs before they carry on a rather long conversation. Besides, when Jason1 is apparently panicked with recollection of what's happened in the box, Amanda immediately terminates the conversation as well as the record. Although these two behaviors may be out of her professionalism, it is still arguable that Amanda's behaviors are dominated by the thought of helping others which is part of transcendence needs.

After Jason1 has been forcefully taken back to the laboratory, Amanda has carried out the second conversation with Jason1, during which she finds that Jason1 isn't Jason2 the man who brings about his mesmerizing hypothesis and invents the box. Though she knows the truth that Jason1 isn't the man used to work together with and she is a completely stranger to him, she is willing to risk her life to help Jason1 escape from maniacal crew members who are very likely to kill him for good just as Daniela and Ryan in this world since Jason1 doesn't possess the information they needed. When Amanda tries to rescue Jason1, Blake [7] wrote her thinking that "because I didn't sign up for this thing. What they did to Daniela. To Holder. What they're about to do to you. They crossed lines that shouldn't be crossed. Not for science. Not for anything." Amanda prioritizes Jason1's life over herself, which clearly shows that transcendence needs has been put in the place and the safety needs has decreased. It corresponds to theories proposing by Maslow [4] that "the order of the needs is changeable for some people in consideration of many exceptions and even reversal situations" and Che Wenbo [12] also claimed that "the development of individual need structure described by Maslow is not discontinuous, jumping, ladder-like process but a continuous, overlapping, wave-like evolution." This theory could be corroborated by people in real life. For example, We Na [13] wrote that "Byron is the poet who is in utter destitution creating 8 tragic dramas ceaselessly." Besides, Shi Kaiyan [14] described that "Van Gogh was immersed in art all his life despite being poor." Therefore, motivated by transcendence needs, Amanda melds determination and courage to risk herself in original to rescue Jason1 in the face of gunshots.

5.2. Acquiring the Independence to Find Amanda's Own World

Amanda rescues Jason1 from the laboratory and becomes the sole companion when Jason1 travels between parallel universes. At first, she is trapped on the way to her esteem. Her mind is awl in that she couldn't go back to her own world or stay in the box forever. At any world, she couldn't feel a ghost of belongingness, let alone to be independent to live in that world forever. In the world of the snowstorm, she could at least rely on Jason1 to carry her to trek across the snow and weather lethal coldness. Blake[7] wrote Amanda's feeling of desperation and laments that "at least you have a destination. A world you want to get back to. I can't return to mine, so where does that leave me?" This shows her needs for accompanying and that Amanda is mystified on her way to self-esteem because Goble [15] wrote that "the satisfaction of

needs for each person in the society must be met through the interaction and communication with others." For now, she isn't capable of staying in a totally strange world.

When Amanda figures out the parallel world depending on their psychological states, Amanda begins to pluck up her courage to envisage her ideal world, which becomes the first step to grow independence. In the world of deadly plague, Amanda and Jason1 have another brush with mortality. Amanda is still uncertain with the future, but this time she is resolved not to return to her world. She decides to not to immersing herself in the past and endeavors to help Jason1 to go back home. After accompanying Jason1 to experience various parallel universes, Amanda gradually realizes that it's impossible for Jason1 to come back home with her by his side because their common conscious effecting the next parallel universe together. She knows it's time to leave and be independent in choosing her own life. In other words, she is able to travel alone, open her own doors now and shoulder the responsibility of decisions. Gaining independence and freedom makes her esteem needs get satisfied more than ever before.

6. Conclusion

Blake Crouch's *Dark Matter* anatomizes the personalities of four characters-Jason1, Jason2, Daniela, and Amanda-mirroring the struggles of ordinary individuals in reality. Through the lens of Maslow's Need Hierarchy Theory, this paper analyzes how their behaviors are driven by inner needs corresponding to different stages of the theory. Zhai Dan [16] said that "each science fiction reflects the realistic reflection and humanistic connotation behind the strong fantasy." The novel reveals that psychological gratification varies depending on circumstances and life stages, offering profound insights into human behavior. Jason1 embodies the modern individual who, despite regrets, learns to cherish the present; Jason2 symbolizes those trapped in past decisions, leading to self-destruction; Daniela represents those who, despite temporary distractions, ultimately prioritize familial bonds and emotional stability, valuing trust and belongingness above fleeting desires; while Amanda represents those who embrace the future with courage and independence. These characters reflect Blake's humanistic concern for those grappling with past mistakes. Ultimately, *Dark Matter* underscores that choices define identity, and chasing the illusion of the past is futile. The novel invites readers to embrace the present and navigate life's complexities with resilience and self-awareness.

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