

Chapter 66

In Chapter 66 of "We Solve Murders," Max Highfield sits alone in the Emirates First Class Lounge, his frustration simmering just below the surface. Betrayed by his bodyguard, Henk, who failed to show up as promised, Max feels isolated and vulnerable. His irritation intensifies as he's left to serve himself, fetching his own salad, a task he considers beneath him given his status. The situation stirs up feelings of frustration and anger, as Max is used to being taken care of, especially when it comes to the simplest of tasks. As he stewes in his annoyance, a nervous teenager approaches, confirming that he is indeed Max Highfield. Max, still irritated, raises his sunglasses briefly in acknowledgment, his response short and dismissive. The teen, excited and nervous, goes on to express his admiration for Max's role in "Titans of War," prompting Max to comment on his underwhelming performance in the film and how he felt sidelined in that role. He also briefly reflects on how his work in "The Rose of Sarasota" went largely unrecognized, further fueling his dissatisfaction with his career.

Max's discomfort grows as the conversation continues, not just because of the intrusion on his solitude, but because he begins to suspect that this young teen, who clearly doesn't belong in such a lavish environment, might have gained access to the lounge in a less-than-legal manner. This question gnaws at him as he watches the boy continue to gush about Max's past films. The boy's persistent admiration, though somewhat flattering, only adds to Max's sense of annoyance, especially considering his current frustration with his bodyguard's absence and the looming pressures of his professional life. Max is also preparing for a major ceremony at a Diamond Conference, where he is expected to deliver a comedy routine crafted by Shaun and Christine. The pressure of this looming responsibility, paired with the unexpected encounter with the teenager, feels overwhelming. Eventually, the boy asks for a photograph with Max,

and despite his irritation, Max reluctantly agrees, noticing the boy's hands shaking with excitement. As the teenager eagerly rushes back to his parents, Max returns to his meal, feeling both violated and, oddly enough, slightly appeased by the boy's admiration.

Max's thoughts then shift to his bodyguard, Henk, whom he tries to contact to express his frustration. However, his attempt to make a phone call is thwarted by lounge staff who inform him that calls are prohibited in the area. Max, still simmering with anger, identifies himself and tries to reason with the staff member, but they remain unmoved, adding to his sense of helplessness. The situation causes him to reflect on the differences between Henk and his old friend Jeff Nolan, who would always answer Max's calls, no matter the time or situation. This comparison leads Max to question his relationship with Henk, wondering if his trust in the bodyguard is misplaced. Given the recent threats he's been receiving, this moment of vulnerability forces him to reassess his reliance on Henk, especially in light of the darker, more sinister forces he feels are beginning to close in around him. The emotional turmoil Max experiences in this scene is marked by both anger and a creeping sense of fear, as he contemplates whether a bodyguard is truly necessary or if these recent threats are simply a sign of deeper troubles lurking beneath the surface.

Amidst this emotional turmoil, Max's mind drifts to his film career, specifically his role in "The Rose of Sarasota." Max had hoped that the film would provide him with the recognition he so desperately craved, especially considering the complexity of his role as a terminally ill soldier. He had envisioned the film earning him an Oscar nomination, an accolade that would have solidified his place in Hollywood. Instead, the film's failure left Max feeling not only disappointed but deeply frustrated. In the world of film, death is often treated as a trivial plot point or an afterthought, something Max finds both insulting and reductive. As he sits in the luxury of the lounge, surrounded by high-end comforts and indulgence, his thoughts turn dark, and he finds himself confronting his own mortality. The contrast between the superficial luxury surrounding him and the deeper, more existential reflections he is having highlights the internal conflict Max is grappling with. In the end, this chapter offers a profound glimpse into Max's psyche,

illustrating his inner battle between his external persona as a successful actor and the vulnerability he feels when faced with the reality of his own life and career. The themes of isolation, frustration, and the superficiality of fame resonate throughout, leaving Max with a haunting realization that even in the most luxurious settings, the weight of personal and professional failure can feel all-consuming.

