

Chapter 43

In Chapter 43 of *We Solve Murders*, Max Highfield finds himself nestled in the luxurious surroundings of a grand library, an environment he now feels he belongs to, unlike in the past. The library is vast, with shelves that reach from floor to ceiling, and large windows letting in natural light. The room is filled with an air of sophistication, with dark oak furniture and green leather accents, creating a refined and welcoming atmosphere. Overhead, grand chandeliers and brass reading lamps add to the elegance, making it a perfect setting for quiet reflection or intellectual pursuits. As Max looks around, he imagines how this opulent space could be transformed into something more personal, perhaps a pool or gym area, should it ever be his own. The contrast between his past and present highlights his evolving sense of self and the new lifestyle he's embraced.

Max eventually seeks out Henk, who is relaxed on a plush leather sofa, deeply engrossed in a medical journal. Their conversation starts off casually, touching on the philosopher Spinoza, whom Henk argues played an essential role in the works of influential thinkers like Kant and Goethe. Max expresses his appreciation for Henk's time, reflecting on the struggles he's facing at his current agency, and reiterating his commitment to stay true to his principles. As they discuss these topics, the tone is light, with philosophical musings on life's complexities interspersed with friendly banter. Henk's detached yet thoughtful responses show a man who navigates the world with calm insight. The discussion deepens, and Max feels a growing sense of connection, both professionally and personally, with Henk. This dialogue highlights their camaraderie, set against the backdrop of intellectual discourse and personal struggles.

The conversation takes a more serious turn as Max brings up Jeff, a figure from his past whose death has had lingering effects on him. Henk, showing little emotion

toward Jeff's fate, offers a philosophical view that people who live by the sword often meet grim ends. Max lightens the mood by making a playful reference to a film he starred in, *Die by the Sword*, a humorous attempt to defuse the somber nature of the topic. He then shifts the discussion to his own safety, expressing concern for his well-being in the wake of mounting threats. Max proposes a lucrative deal to Henk, offering him a two-million-per-year ambassadorship role, emphasizing the importance of having full security coverage. The negotiation highlights Max's willingness to secure his future, making it clear that he is not just focused on immediate concerns, but on long-term stability as well. The interaction subtly underscores Max's need for reassurance, whether through his business ventures or personal safety.

As their discussion continues, Max hands Henk a disturbing card that reads, "You're dead." This card serves as a tangible symbol of the threats against Max, furthering his unease and the tension of the situation. Henk acknowledges the possibility that Max's current agency may not be doing enough to protect him, suggesting that it may be time to explore more reliable options. The conversation shifts to the aftermath of Jeff's death, with Max confirming that clients are increasingly seeking Henk's services. Their lighthearted banter, infused with references to Max's past film roles, serves as a way to cope with the darker undertones of their conversation. It's a reminder that even in the most serious of moments, humor can act as a coping mechanism and a means of maintaining control.

Feeling satisfied with the direction of their conversation, Max decides to formalize a contract with Henk, ensuring that their partnership will be beneficial moving forward. As he prepares to leave, Max notices an elderly woman in the corner of the room, quietly sobbing as she reads about grief. Moved by her distress, Max approaches and offers her an autograph in a gesture of kindness, only to be met with the realization that she doesn't recognize him. This brief yet poignant encounter highlights the complexities of human emotions and connections. It serves as a reminder that grief, no matter the context, is deeply personal and not always alleviated by fame or recognition. As Max leaves the library, he is left reflecting on his own emotional expressions and the ways in which people connect with one another, underscoring the

theme of human vulnerability amidst his otherwise calculated world.

