

Chapter 36

Chapter 36 of *We Solve Murders* presents Max Highfield in an amusing yet odd scenario, dressed as a Roman centurion and locked inside a modest Winnebago. The atmosphere is a blend of both humor and tension as Max prepares for his scene, trying to embody the gravity of the character he is portraying. The cramped quarters of the Winnebago stand in stark contrast to the grandiose set, where towering columns and golden statues evoke the splendor of ancient Rome. Max stands in front of a bamboo-framed mirror, running through his lines with a tone that reflects the emotional weight of his character's rejection of Caesar. His refusal to praise the emperor, despite the pressure and danger surrounding him, hints at a deeper, more personal internal conflict. The director, seated nearby in a director's chair, critiques Max's performance with intense focus, occasionally scribbling in her notes. Max, ever the perfectionist, contemplates tweaking his delivery, wishing to infuse the lines with more authenticity, as though the words are born not from a script, but from raw, unfiltered emotions.

The stillness of the set is broken by a knock on the Winnebago's door, and a runner enters with an unexpected delivery: a bouquet of vibrant flowers. The gesture feels oddly out of place in the context of the film's serious tone, but Max's lighthearted nature takes over as he interacts with the runner. The assistant, surprised by the sight of Max in full costume, hands him the flowers, triggering a brief, playful exchange between them. Max, maintaining his character's air of authority, insists on staying in character, joking about Roman centurions and their mythical love for coffee, despite the oddity of the situation. The assistant, bemused, looks confused as Max orders a soy milk latte, blending his real-world personality with the character he's meant to portray. The director, who has overheard the conversation, briefly interjects, quipping that coffee has existed for thousands of years, even before the time of the Romans. Max, undeterred, maintains his act, proving his ability to remain in character despite

the distractions.

After the runner exits, Max shifts his focus to the accompanying card that came with the flowers. He expects a typical note of admiration or a small gesture of goodwill, but the message he reads is far more disturbing. "You're Dead" is written in bold, stark letters, sending a wave of unease through Max. At first, he wonders whether it's some sort of joke or a prank intended to lighten the mood on set, but the more he thinks about it, the more troubling it becomes. The ominous message seems to hint at something deeper—a threat not just to his character, but perhaps to him personally. Max feels a chill run down his spine as he contemplates the meaning of the note. Could this message be connected to the script, or does it hold a more sinister implication that he hasn't yet grasped? As Max stares at the card, he senses the looming presence of danger, realizing that this cryptic warning could signal a new level of intrigue or risk for him in both his professional and personal life.

Max tries to dismiss the thoughts racing through his mind, knowing he cannot allow the message to distract him from his work. However, the eerie words continue to echo in his thoughts, amplifying the tension he feels. In the middle of his preparations for the next scene, he wonders whether someone out there has a personal vendetta against him, or if it's simply a random threat meant to unsettle him. As the reality of the situation sinks in, Max's thoughts return to the nature of his role in the film and whether his character's internal struggle mirrors his own. This subtle parallel between fiction and reality begins to shape his performance, and he starts to realize that the lines between his character and his personal life might blur in ways he hadn't anticipated. The mystery surrounding the message builds suspense, leaving readers curious to know who is behind this ominous note and whether it's just the beginning of something far more dangerous that Max has yet to uncover.