

# Chapter 27

In Chapter 27 of *The Art Thief*, the narrative immerses readers in a tense atmosphere as Breitwieser faces the consequences of his actions, this time behind bars at a Swiss police station. The story begins on November 21, 2001, with the arrival of Inspector Roland Meier, who has been assigned to interrogate Breitwieser. The two men, both from Alsace, share a common dialect, which initially creates a sense of familiarity, but soon, their conversation becomes a cold and calculated interrogation. Meier, familiar with Breitwieser's previous arrest, perceives him as a petty criminal and doesn't suspect any deeper involvement in art theft. However, as the questioning continues, Meier's view begins to evolve, recognizing the complexity of Breitwieser's role in the ongoing art thefts. This shift in perception sets the stage for a deeper investigation into the thief's background and the far-reaching implications of his actions.

The primary focus of this interrogation is a theft from the Wagner Museum, specifically a rare historical bugle that had been stolen from the museum. Despite the mounting pressure from Meier, Breitwieser continues to deny his involvement in the crime, maintaining that he had no hand in the theft. The interrogation reveals crucial details, including the discovery of the theft by Esther Jaerg, the only employee present at the time. Jaerg noticed the theft after a man in a distinctive long green coat had left the museum. Furthermore, a nearby dog walker came forward, claiming to have seen a suspicious individual in the vicinity just before the theft was discovered. Despite these findings, no concrete evidence links Breitwieser directly to the crime, leaving him with a faint sense of hope, as the authorities still lack irrefutable proof of his involvement.

As the interrogation continues, the pressure on Breitwieser increases, yet he cleverly navigates the situation. He is aware that no physical evidence connects him to the crime, which gives him a sense of temporary relief. With a glimmer of hope, Breitwieser considers reaching out to his accomplice, Anne-Catherine, whom he

believes might be able to return the stolen bugle and help exonerate him. However, Breitwieser's situation becomes more dire when he is moved to a high-security cell, severely limiting his ability to communicate with anyone outside the prison. His isolation and anxiety grow as he faces the reality of the situation. Despite his earlier confidence, he is now trapped, vulnerable, and deeply aware of the consequences of his actions. The sense of guilt and regret begins to settle in, as he is confronted by the weight of his criminal past.

Meanwhile, Meier's investigation progresses, and his focus shifts to the broader scope of Breitwieser's thefts. The inspector begins to suspect that Breitwieser may not just be a small-time thief but rather a key player in an extensive network of art criminals. The realization dawns on Meier that Breitwieser's crimes extend far beyond what was initially believed, leading to the discovery of a sophisticated art theft operation spanning across multiple countries. The inspector's perception of Breitwieser undergoes a significant shift, and he now believes that the thief may be part of a larger, well-organized criminal enterprise. This realization prompts a more aggressive investigation strategy, as Meier seeks judicial approval to extend his efforts, including pursuing international warrants for Breitwieser's crimes. The investigation intensifies as authorities prepare to broaden their search for the stolen pieces, with law enforcement agencies from various countries getting involved.

Throughout this period, Breitwieser continues to reflect on his past actions, and the mounting pressure from law enforcement weighs heavily on him. The realization that his art thefts have caught the attention of authorities worldwide fills him with a sense of dread and remorse. Despite his previous feelings of superiority and success, he now faces the harsh reality that his criminal empire is crumbling. His sense of isolation deepens as he remains cut off from the outside world, unable to communicate with anyone, including Anne-Catherine. As the investigation moves forward, the stolen artworks become central to the case, and the stakes grow higher for Breitwieser. The once confident thief is now trapped in a situation that feels increasingly out of his control, and the prospect of a lengthy prison sentence looms over him. With each passing day, his hopes of escaping the legal consequences of his actions diminish, and

he is forced to confront the gravity of his choices.

