

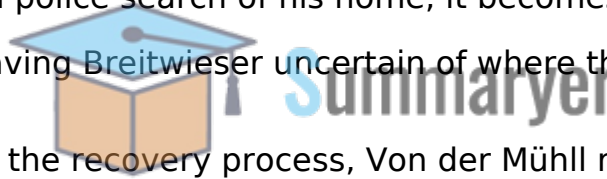
Chapter 30

Chapter 30 of *The Art Thief* explores a pivotal moment in Breitwieser's life as he finds himself locked away in a somber Swiss prison. After his arrest, he is led to an interrogation room where he encounters the experienced art-crime detective, Alexandre Von der Mühl, who has been tirelessly investigating him for over six years. Unlike typical interrogations that are tense and aggressive, this one takes a different approach. Von der Mühl employs subtle psychological techniques and even flattery to establish rapport, creating a sense of trust with Breitwieser. Their conversation, conducted in French, takes on a more informal and conversational tone, as the detective suggests that confessing to his crimes could result in a more lenient sentence. This idea intrigues Breitwieser, prompting him to question whether confessing might offer him a way out of his current situation, while also signaling the beginning of a more complex relationship between the two.

Their interactions continue for nearly a month, with the two meeting daily, and during these sessions, Von der Mühl provides Breitwieser with various art-related materials, even driving him to different locations. Despite the growing sense of camaraderie that is developing between them, Breitwieser remains cautious, strategically downplaying the involvement of his accomplices, such as Anne-Catherine and his mother. He insists that he alone is responsible for the art thefts, even though Von der Mühl is well aware of the role played by others, thanks to surveillance footage and further investigation. The detective, however, allows Breitwieser to maintain his narrative, choosing not to confront him too harshly in order to keep him cooperative and open. This delicate balance between manipulation and rapport-building allows Von der Mühl to continue his pursuit of the truth while keeping Breitwieser engaged in the process.

As their discussions progress, Von der Mühl shifts the conversation toward the stolen artworks, particularly the Renaissance paintings that have been at the heart of

Breitwieser's heists. It is during one of these moments that Breitwieser admits to stealing a total of sixty-nine paintings, a revelation that greatly expands the scope of his crimes. This disclosure marks a significant turning point in the investigation, as Von der Mühl begins to understand just how extensive and calculated Breitwieser's actions have been. The detective now realizes the urgency of recovering the stolen art, as the paintings could degrade with time if they remain hidden. When asked about the current location of the artworks, Breitwieser initially claims that they were hidden in his attic, but after a police search of his home, it becomes clear that the paintings are no longer there, leaving Breitwieser uncertain of where they may have gone.



To further expedite the recovery process, Von der Mühl requests that Breitwieser's mother be allowed to visit him under the condition of immunity from prosecution. When she arrives for questioning, however, she adamantly denies any knowledge of the stolen paintings, despite the detective's repeated questions. Her vehement denial puzzles both Von der Mühl and Breitwieser, as she had likely been involved in some capacity with the stolen art. This interaction deepens the confusion surrounding the stolen items and adds more layers of complexity to the case. As Breitwieser watches his mother refuse to cooperate, he is left to grapple with the emotional turmoil of their relationship, while also questioning her role in the disappearance of the art. Her refusal to acknowledge the stolen pieces adds to the tension, further complicating the investigation as Von der Mühl seeks answers that may never fully come. The chapter leaves readers wondering whether the truth behind the paintings will ever be uncovered, as the mystery surrounding the art thefts deepens with each new revelation.