

Chapter 14

Chapter 14 delves deeper into the audacious world of art theft, with Breitwieser and Anne-Catherine skillfully navigating the chaos surrounding the prestigious European Fine Art Fair in Maastricht. The normally tranquil event is shaken when a thief is caught and restrained by security, attracting the attention of the onlookers. Richard Green, a prominent art dealer, witnesses the spectacle as the thief is apprehended, but what draws even more attention is the sudden emptiness of Green's booth. In the midst of the distraction caused by the commotion, Green's prized artwork is left unattended, presenting a rare opportunity for someone as meticulous as Breitwieser.

The couple, now driving away from the scene, feels the thrill of success as they carry with them a magnificent 1676 still life by Jan van Kessel the Elder. This masterpiece had captured their attention earlier in the day, and now, it is theirs. The rush of adrenaline from their heist is mixed with a sense of satisfaction, especially given their past encounter with Green, who had coldly dismissed their earlier interest in a painting. Though the event was highly secured, the chaos that ensued provided the perfect distraction for Breitwieser and Anne-Catherine to execute their theft without anyone noticing. The stolen artwork is soon hidden safely in France, but Breitwieser's mind is not entirely at peace. Despite their success, the uncertainty of their actions continues to linger.

Breitwieser's methodical and calculated approach to art theft speaks volumes about his dedication to minimizing risk. His criminal endeavors are marked by surgical precision, with each heist carefully planned to avoid detection. For him, the perfect theft is one in which no one realizes anything is amiss until it's too late. This careful control over his actions allows him to maintain the illusion of normalcy in his life, while secretly engaging in increasingly complex crimes. Breitwieser's desire for precision not only stems from a desire to escape detection but also from a belief that art should be

appreciated without consequence. His work is deliberate, and the heist becomes less about the thrill and more about the meticulous execution of a well-planned crime.

Breitwieser's career as an art thief grows more sophisticated with each theft. His ability to operate in the shadows, taking art without immediate notice, reflects the deepening nature of his obsession. Every stolen piece strengthens his sense of accomplishment, and the thrill becomes less about the chase and more about the pursuit of something that feels increasingly personal. When faced with risky opportunities, he pulls back and adapts, ensuring that each theft is calculated and under control. He and Anne-Catherine, keen on maintaining a low profile, often blend in with museum tours, allowing them to steal while appearing like any other group of art enthusiasts. This adaptability keeps them elusive and helps them remain undetected for longer, adding another layer of complexity to their crimes.

In the long run, Breitwieser's methods become even more refined, such as using tools to unlock display cases. His obsession with collecting art continues to grow, and each theft only fuels his desire for more. His focus, however, is not just on acquiring art for financial gain but rather on a deeper, more personal connection to the pieces he steals. This duality is evident in the way he treats his stolen masterpieces, viewing each one as a piece of history that he, in his mind, has somehow "liberated." As the chapter unfolds, it becomes clear that Breitwieser's criminal activities go far beyond mere theft—they are driven by a deep emotional need, further complicating the character of an art thief navigating the line between crime and passion.