

Chapter 36

In Chapter 36 of *The Art Thief*, Anne-Catherine looks back on the tumultuous relationship she had with Breitwieser, a relationship that, over time, has become a source of deep regret. Her lawyer, Eric Braun, describes Breitwieser as an undeniable tragedy in her life, but Anne-Catherine is determined to move on from the past. She has settled into a quieter, more peaceful life in a small village near Mulhouse, where she managed to buy a modest apartment for about \$100,000. With a twenty-two-year mortgage, she has ensured her future stability despite the many challenges she's faced. Though police once raided both her home and her parents' residence in search of stolen art, nothing was found. These events allowed her to raise her son, born in 2003, in peace while continuing her job at a local hospital. Anne-Catherine now enjoys a life of discretion, far removed from the chaotic, crime-filled existence she once shared with Breitwieser.

Since her legal troubles subsided, Anne-Catherine has kept a low profile, intentionally avoiding attention or recognition related to her past. She has had no contact with Breitwieser or his family, making a conscious choice to sever ties and live in seclusion. Additionally, she has not remarried nor had any further children, preferring a life of quiet reflection and inner peace. Braun, her lawyer, believes that Anne-Catherine has found a measure of solace in her new life, despite her past. Unlike Breitwieser, who remains mired in controversy and legal issues, Anne-Catherine has effectively built a life where her criminal past no longer defines her. While she never sought fame, her past as an accomplice in some of the most high-profile art thefts remains a shadow she must constantly avoid.

Looking back, Anne-Catherine acknowledges that it has now been nearly fifteen years since she first met Breitwieser at a birthday party, an encounter that led her down a dangerous path. Together, they roamed the backroads of Europe, stealing valuable

artwork from some of the most prestigious museums. The thrill of their crime spree was intoxicating, and their youthful enthusiasm for stealing treasures created an unlikely bond between them. Unlike infamous figures such as Bonnie and Clyde, who met their end in a violent shootout with law enforcement, Anne-Catherine managed to escape the consequences of her actions relatively unscathed. While Breitwieser faced multiple arrests and a ruined reputation, she slipped under the radar, evading the public's scrutiny. It is almost miraculous, as her lawyer describes it, how she avoided the devastating legal consequences of her past. Anne-Catherine's decision to leave that life behind was not an easy one, but she's successfully embraced a quieter existence, choosing to step away from the world of theft and deceit that once consumed her.

However, despite her best efforts to distance herself from her past, the memories still linger in Anne-Catherine's mind. She can never completely erase the moments when she held priceless, unframed paintings in her hands or when she dined in the company of stolen art. These memories are intertwined with the beauty of Europe, where she and Breitwieser marveled at landmarks like Mont Saint-Michel and the Chartres Cathedral, moments where the allure of art met the chaos of their criminal lives. Though she chooses not to dwell on these memories, they remain with her, a constant reminder of her involvement in one of the most notorious art theft rings in history. As much as she has tried to move forward and leave her past behind, the specter of her actions is impossible to erase completely. Anne-Catherine understands that she will always carry these memories, but instead of allowing them to consume her, she has embraced the quieter life that now defines her, one that balances peace with the weight of the choices she made long ago.