

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 of *The Art Thief* begins with Breitwieser's first taste of excitement from committing a theft—this time, a pistol from a museum, which fills him with a potent mix of exhilaration and fear. With Anne-Catherine at his side, the two escape without detection, the scenic drive through the Alsace region offering a brief respite as they process their daring act. The absence of immediate police pursuit leaves them feeling victorious, as if they have outsmarted the authorities. Over the next several weeks, what began as fear gradually shifts to a sense of relief, then pride. Breitwieser soon comes to relish the audacity of his actions, and the stolen pistol becomes a cherished symbol of their success. Its presence in his possession fuels his growing obsession, reminding him of the boldness of his crime and the escape they managed to pull off.

As the weeks pass, Breitwieser's thrill with stealing intensifies. He reflects on a childhood memory of visiting a medieval museum, where an object—a crossbow—had caught his eye. Recalling the allure of this artifact, he plans to steal it, and Anne-Catherine, ever loyal, joins him on the journey back to the museum. Their plan takes shape as they enter the cold, cavernous castle with few other visitors in sight due to the winter season. The lack of attention and the castle's labyrinthine design offer the perfect opportunity to execute their plan. The crossbow is suspended too high to be easily accessed, but with ingenuity and quick thinking, Breitwieser finds a way to get to it. Using a chair to reach the high shelf, he and Anne-Catherine keep a careful watch for guards. Once the crossbow is retrieved, they realize it's too large to fit in their bags. Thinking fast, Breitwieser opens a window to lower the crossbow to the ground, timing their exit so as not to raise suspicion. Their swift getaway is punctuated by only a small noise, but nothing alarming enough to draw attention. Their escape is a success, and as they drive away, they feel an overwhelming sense of achievement.

The thrill of their successful theft is heightened when a local newspaper reports the crime. However, much to their delight, the article fails to connect them to the heist, which only adds to their sense of pride. Their pride soon leads them to celebrate their heist by making a scrapbook of their accomplishments. For Breitwieser and Anne-Catherine, each stolen item is more than just an object; it's a mark of their triumph over the mundane world. Their criminal activities provide a thrilling escape, and the attic, provided by Breitwieser's mother, becomes their refuge—a private world where their illicit lifestyle is uninterrupted. His mother remains unaware of their illegal pursuits, allowing them to continue without fear of detection. Inside the attic, they begin to collect their stolen treasures, furnishing the space with pieces that reflect their desires for wealth and status. Their growing collection takes on a symbolic meaning, representing not just their success in art theft, but their fantasy of living a more glamorous, aristocratic life. The attic becomes a manifestation of their shared dreams and desires, providing them with a space where their criminal lifestyle can thrive.

This newfound life, built on art theft, grows as their relationship deepens. They continue to steal, adding to their collection, and each new heist strengthens the bond they share. Breitwieser reflects on how their criminal acts have brought them closer, a shared thrill bonding them even more. The attic, with its growing collection of stolen artwork, serves as a physical manifestation of their new reality—one that separates them from the ordinary world. Yet, even as their sense of accomplishment grows, there is an underlying tension between their desires and the potential consequences of their actions. The more they indulge in their criminal activities, the more their relationship with society becomes strained. As they continue to build a life based on stolen art, they must confront the inevitable fallout from their choices, which looms ever larger. Despite the thrills and excitement, Breitwieser and Anne-Catherine's future remains uncertain, and the consequences of their actions are waiting to catch up with them.