

Chapter 23

In Chapter 23, titled "The Art Thief," the complex relationship between Anne-Catherine and Breitwieser unfolds as she faces a dire ultimatum: it's either him or the art. Their love is entangled with crime, complicating Anne-Catherine's feelings about their life together. Despite knowing the consequences of Breitwieser's actions, she acknowledges that she wants to remain with him, demonstrating her willingness to compromise even amid the chaos.

Anne-Catherine proposes a truce—a less frequent and more cautious approach to theft, with Switzerland entirely off-limits due to their previous arrest. Breitwieser agrees, but the allure of art proves too strong. During a Paris trip, despite their arrangement, Breitwieser's desire leads him to steal a painting from an auction house with Anne-Catherine as the lookout. This time, they evade capture, and he feels invigorated by the adrenaline of stealing.

In the days following their heist, Breitwieser can't suppress his compulsion to steal, and Anne-Catherine's initial compromise only fuels his criminal activities further. As they travel through France, he claims more art, dismissing her concerns. Their dynamic, as analyzed by César Redondo, a therapist, highlights a troubling power imbalance, suggesting Anne-Catherine is not merely an accomplice but a victim of emotional and possibly physical abuse from Breitwieser. Despite this, observations from those who know her suggest she is not the weak link in the relationship; she has a stable job and enjoys some sense of agency.

However, their relationship drastically changes when Breitwieser discovers a medical bill revealing that Anne-Catherine had undergone an abortion. Feeling betrayed by her secrecy, he confronts her in a fit of rage, slapping her in a moment of uncontrolled anger. The aftermath leads Anne-Catherine to leave, returning to her parents' home, signaling a significant turning point in their tumultuous union marked by art, theft, and emotional turmoil.