

# Chapter 25

In Chapter 25, titled "The Art Thief," the protagonist's urge to steal art intensifies, leading him to a series of significant heists. Initially, he disguises his activities, stealing a silver sugar bowl, two Communion chalices, a stained-glass windowpane, a soup tureen, and a commemorative medallion, while deceiving Anne-Catherine about his crimes in Switzerland. He breaks his personal best by snatching ten items in one day from a museum, including a teapot and several silver cups.

Returning to Gruyères Castle, a memorable spot from his past with Anne-Catherine, he decides to take on a massive tapestry that had captivated him earlier. Despite her reluctance to risk imprisonment for art theft, he feels empowered to act alone, wrapping an empty duffel bag around his leg to aid in the theft. After detaching the tapestry, he struggles to conceal it but eventually hoists it out a window and retrieves it from the muddy ground outside, celebrating his daring achievement.

His criminal exploits continue as he devises a plan to steal a statue of the Virgin Mary from Saint Sebastian Chapel. While Anne-Catherine is at work, he uses her spacious car to transport the 150-pound carving after successfully unbolting it. Although thrilled, he faces her disapproval as the scent of incense lingers in her car, and she resents his unauthorized use of it.

As his collection grows, the once-prized art begins to suffer from neglect. He crams the tapestry from Gruyères under the bed and endangers the integrity of the apothecary painting, which starts to warp due to being stuffed away carelessly. Breitwieser's attempts to restore these pieces himself result in a devastating loss when a ceramic platter and a small still-life painting shatter.

Anne-Catherine feels lost in the chaos, recognizing that his stealing has turned into a compulsive and destructive behavior, contrasting sharply with his earlier appreciation for beauty. Yet, despite this decline and her growing dissatisfaction with his treasures, she doesn't leave him. Their relationship endures as both turn thirty, but the attic, once a repository for their love of art, has transformed into a cluttered tomb of discarded aspirations.