

We met at Donna's today (Donna, Maggie, Carolyn, Jan, Carla and Laura). Even though there had been a forecast of 4-8 inches of snow, we only got about an inch. Donna served a wonderful lunch including hard boiled eggs, sourdough bread, and a delicious pasta, avocado, caprese salad, and she baked a delightful poke cake which reminded us of orange dreamsicles. Yummm!

We discussed *The Art Thief* by Michael Finkel. Finkel had started as a journalist at the NY Times but was fired from that job for writing a story in which he made up a character based on a composite of people he had interviewed. Apparently fabricating a character in a newspaper publication is an unforgivable misstep in journalism. So he relocated from NY to Montana and France and began writing novels.

*The Art Thief* was Stephane Breitwieser, and he was probably the most prolific art thief ever. We speculated on what may have led him to becoming such a thief (the book proposed some theories too because Breitwieser was analyzed by various psychologists), but we think he really just loved the thrill and adventure of stealing, and he was very good at it. He certainly had no profit motive for his thefts. He worked at a museum for a time and so had some knowledge of how security worked (or didn't work) in museum settings. He had odd relationships with his mom and dad, which may have been a factor too. It's hard to believe that Breitwieser and Anne-Catherine lived in his mom's attic and filled it to the brim with artwork, all while his mom had no idea that this was going on in her own home. And we concluded that the mom had some serious mental issues when she burned and/or flooded all that artwork before the police could get to it. Another hard to believe fact was that he got away with stealing SO much artwork, for SO long. He was finally caught and spent some time in jail, but Anne-Catherine, his accomplice got off scot-free! He commented that he considered museums to be prisons of art. None of us agreed with that. Hiding artwork in an attic where no one else can enjoy it seems more like a prison than a museum does. Donna asked if anyone felt any sympathy for Breitwieser, but the unanimous answer was no. It was a very interesting book and led to a great discussion. Thanks for picking it, Donna.

Nina had dropped off some poetry books at Donna's, and we each picked one. Each Book Ender is to choose a poem from your book, research the author and discuss the poem. That's the reading assignment for next month's gathering at Nina's, scheduled for Thursday, Feb. 12. Check with Nina and/or Donna if don't have your poetry book yet. And Carla is already planning a trip to Mongolia for all of us when we meet at her house in March. The book is *Chasing Courage* by Karin Jensen. Carla has a few copies of the book and hopes we can pass them around so everyone can read it before the meeting. So check with the group before buying the book. It is available on Kindle too.

Carolyn mentioned that the Community Care Clinic (near the hospital in Frisco) is accepting donations of clothing and food in room 110 of their building. This may be an easier place to donate rather than going all the way to Denver. Donations will go to locals in need.

It was a lovely gathering (although small). Hope that 2026 will be happy and healthy for all. Enjoy winter and pray for more snow!

*Laura*