

The Master Thief Handbook

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Original title: *Håndbok for mestertyver* © Vigmostad & Bjørke 2025

English sample translated from the Norwegian by Olivia Lasky © 2026

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THE MASTER THIEF

“Everything he does is planned down to the smallest detail.”

Graphics:

- Only five hours until I can go home and game...

- * COUGH * * COUGH *

- FIRE! EVERYBODY OUT!

- DRRR!

- PLOP!

- * PICK! * * PICK! *

- CLICK!

- Hey, you!

- Were you thinking about stealing this book?

- I was just gonna borrow it... I swear!

- Borrow it?! This book is only for people who steal! A real master thief doesn't just *borrow*.

- They don't?

- Jeez, you're making one heck of a racket! It's only like that in the movies. You would've been arrested in 10 seconds. Max!

- Okay

- Like that?

- Huh? Where's the book? How'd you do that?

Where'd you go? Hello? HELLO?!

Like a shadow in the night, he sneaks into the grandest palaces, the biggest museums, and the most well-secured banks. Sometimes he does it alone; other times, with accomplices who are experts in their own areas. He gets past heavy iron doors, bulletproof glass, lasers, and sensors that pick up every single tiny movement — without leaving a trace. Everything he does is planned down to the smallest detail. This is how he steals rare treasures, famous paintings, and sparkling jewels from wealthy people. And if you think he does it because he's poor, you're wrong. What this genius loves is a challenge. He does it because he can.

This is how the master thief is often portrayed in books and movies. He's more than a criminal — he's a master at stealing. Always one step ahead of the police. Now you might be wondering what it's like in reality? It's often much less exciting and a lot more destructive. Most criminals are far from the clever, elegant master thieves we see in movies. They destroy things and threaten, harm, and trick others to earn as much money as quickly as possible.

But there are also thieves who commit burglaries so over-the-top they almost take our breath away. Break-ins that no one thought were possible. That create headlines around the world. State-of-the-art alarm systems are crippled, diamonds and gold disappear, and paintings worth millions are gone without a trace. Read about the crooks behind these crimes, how they did it, and what happened to both the thieves and the stolen property.

Welcome into the world of thieves!

Help! This is a...

...theft

Theft means taking something that isn't yours on purpose — and that's illegal. But did you know that Norwegian law distinguishes between three types of theft?

PETTY THEFT: Stealing something that isn't worth much, such as taking chocolate from the store. This might be called *shoplifting*. The punishment? Most often a fine — that is, you have to pay money.

THEFT: More serious than shoplifting, like stealing a bike, for example. The punishment? Up to two years in prison, but the sentence is usually lighter.

AGGRAVATED THEFT: The most serious form of theft, such as breaking into a house, taking something worth a lot of money, or stealing professionally. The punishment? Up to six years in prison, but the sentence is usually lighter.

...burglary

When someone steals by threatening others with violence or a weapon, it's called a burglary. Burglaries have much harsher punishments than theft, up to 15 years in prison.

How a thief thinks

Did you know the police can figure out who's behind a burglary by looking at *how* the thieves broke in? Maybe it was **burglars** who broke a window and took random things that looked expensive? Or is it a specific painting stolen by **professional thieves** someone hired? Or have the thieves gotten past alarms, guards, or digital systems believed to be impenetrable? Maybe there's a **gang of thieves** who've been planning the burglary for years?

No matter how the thieves strike, most of them have one goal: to earn as much money as quickly as possible. That's why thieves prefer to steal expensive and popular items that lots of people want to buy. But there's one problem: not everyone knows how they'll sell the things they've stolen, and they're scared of getting caught. That's why thieves often use middlemen who know how to sell the stolen property. Thieves want it to seem like they've earned their money legitimately so they can spend it without getting caught.

Sometimes, thieves have to hurry to get rid of the stolen goods before the police get on their trail. In that case, they often send the stolen items to other countries. That makes it harder for the police to find what's been taken. Other times, the thieves hide things for several years before selling them once everyone's long since forgotten about the burglary.

ALARM, ALARM!

Some use special glasses to detect them. Others sneak past them like real-life ninjas. In the movies, world-famous treasures are, of course, protected by red laser beams. But did you think all of this was just film magic? That's not the case. Today, many museums and stores use high-tech alarms to keep thieves from stealing expensive items.

Thieves use different tools to break in. For example, cutting torches that slice through steel, picks to open locks, drills to make holes, and tools that can cut through metal or break into doors that are difficult to open.

1. **Lasers:** Can be both visible and invisible. If someone breaks the laser beam, they set off the alarm.
2. **Pressure sensor:** Is attached under an object or behind a painting. The alarm goes off if someone tries to move the object.
3. **Seismic sensor:** Picks up the tiniest vibration — for example, if someone drills into a wall.
4. **Audio detector:** Reacts to sound. Can be used at night, when it's quiet.
5. **Glass sensor:** Is triggered if someone knocks against or breaks the glass protecting the object.
6. **Motion detectors:** Sensors and cameras that pick up movement.
7. **Ultrasound detector:** Measures the distance to an item or an area. If that distance changes — if someone comes into the room, for example — the alarm goes off.
8. **Lidar:** Uses laser light to make a 3D image of the room. Here, the guards can decide which parts of the image will trigger the alarm.
9. **Gas detector:** Goes off when the room fills with smoke or gas that can knock out the guards.
10. **Temperature sensor:** Reacts when it gets warmer or colder than a specific temperature that the guards have determined.

11. **Moisture detector:** Reacts to moisture — for example, if it gets wet.
 12. **Video analytics cameras:** Cameras that can pick up suspicious behavior — for example, if someone is lurking around or behaving strangely.
 13. **Smoke canon:** When the burglar alarm goes off, the canon fills the room with thick, white smoke so the thieves can't see anything.
-

In this book, you'll hear about enormous sums of money! So how much is...

...50 million kroner? (ca. \$5 million USD)

For this amount, you can go to the amusement park EVERY day for 274 years!

...100 million kroner? (ca. \$10 million USD)

For this amount, you can buy vaccines and save a hundred thousand children from illness. Imagine that!

...500 million kroner? (ca. \$50 million USD)

Now you can enjoy life on your own tropical island!

...a billion kroner? (ca. \$100 million USD)

Congratulations! You can now buy a professional soccer team.

THE JEWEL THIEVES

“What makes jewels so tempting?”

Red rubies, green emeralds, and glittering diamonds. Throughout history, priceless jewels have been stolen right under the noses of guards, cameras, and security systems. So what is it that makes jewels so tempting?

A jewel is a polished gem, and a gem is a mineral that is used to make jewelry. These gems are beautiful, rare, and very durable. Take the diamond, for example — the hardest natural material in existence. The Earth spends billions of years forming a diamond, and only a select few of the diamonds that are mined can be used for jewelry. The bigger and clearer a diamond is, the more it's worth. That's why natural diamonds cost so much, and why they've become a symbol of wealth and luxury.

Today, many people buy diamonds to celebrate important occasions, such as getting married. For centuries, only royalty and powerful people wore diamonds and other precious gems. That's why you find many of the world's biggest and most famous gems in royal

jewelry collections. These are called “crown jewels” and are particularly valuable, but not just because they’re made of gold and expensive, sparkly stones. They are also a part of our history. They are our memories. That makes them irreplaceable.

The world’s largest diamond, the Cullinan Diamond, was found in 1905. It weighed almost 1.5 lbs before it was cut into several pieces. Today, the two biggest pieces are in the scepter and the crown of the British crown jewels.

The world’s greatest diamond heist

February 2003. Antwerp, Belgium

Welcome to the diamond capital of the world! For almost 500 years, a small neighborhood in Belgium has been the heart of the world’s diamond trade. Almost all mined diamonds are sent here to be cut and polished before becoming jewelry.

In the middle of the city, you’ll find Antwerp World Diamond Center — one of the most tightly secured buildings in the world. The safe-deposit boxes in the subterranean vault contain diamonds worth billions of dollars. To get into the vault, you have to go through eleven layers of security, and it’s designed to be impossible to break into.

A safe-deposit box is a secure box at a bank where you can store precious items such as cash, jewelry, or other valuables you don’t want to lose. The box often has two locks: one that the bank can open and one that only the box’s owner has the key to. This helps keep your items extra safe. Today, it’s no longer common to use safe-deposit boxes in Norway.

ANTWERP DIAMOND VAULT

THE DOOR:

1. Combination lock with 100 million possible combinations
2. Key lock
3. Built-in seismic sensor that picks up teeny-tiny vibrations
4. Steel bars that can only be opened from the security guards’ control room
5. Magnetic sensor that alerts the police
6. Security camera

THE VAULT:

7. Keyboard to deactivate sensors
8. Light sensor

9. Security camera
 10. Heat and motion detectors
 11. Safe-deposit boxes with their own keys and codes
-

But one night, the impossible happens: the world's greatest diamond heist! Without a single alarm going off, jewels, diamonds, and cash worth \$100 million disappear without a trace. Pearls, gemstones, empty safe-deposit boxes, and burglary tools are scattered around the floor of the vault. The thieves were quite simply not able to take everything with them.

The police realize they have a difficult task. Finding the thieves behind the perfect crime has to be impossible... or is it?

Two years earlier

"Thank you!" he says with a friendly smile to the guard.

Leonardo Notarbartolo goes into his new office at the Diamond Center. As a diamond dealer, he can visit the big vault in the basement whenever he wants. What the guards don't know is that Leonardo isn't a nice diamond dealer at all; he's an infamous thief from Turin, Italy! Now, he and four other thieves are planning the craziest heist the world has ever seen.

While he pretends to be working, Leonardo films everything he sees with a tiny camera hidden in his bag. The thieves need to know every tiny detail, such as the security camera model numbers and who manufactured the heavy vault door. They study the tapes over and over again to find weak spots in the security systems.

And they find them. When the Center is closed, no one is watching the security cameras. The guards have all gone home! That means the thieves can sneak in even though the cameras are filming everything. But how will they get into the building without getting caught? The main entrance is monitored by police round the clock — but the garage door isn't. That's where the thieves have their solution!

But the biggest challenge is getting into the vault itself. The vault door seems impossible to open, and only two employees at the Diamond Center have the key and code. The thieves can't drill through the wall, either, because that would set off all the alarms.

After several years of thorough planning, the thieves are finally ready to break in. If something goes wrong, they won't be able to escape. The police will be there in minutes. Has Leonardo really thought of everything?

The Antwerp Diamond District ↑

Meet the School of Turin

LEONARDO NOTARBARTOLO

Professional thief. The brains behind the heist and the leader of the gang.

PIETRO “SPEEDY” TAVANO

An old friend of Leonardo’s. Driver and lookout during the heist. Known for being nervous and scared.

ELIO “THE GENIUS” D’ONORIO

Alarm expert. Can disable any alarm.

FERDINANDO “THE MONSTER” FINOTTO

Electrician and mechanic. Expert at lockpicking. The “muscle” of the gang.

“THE KING OF KEYS”

Expert at lockpicking. The only person in the gang the police haven’t been able to identify.

The thieves strike one weekend when the Center is closed and many of the diamond traders are away at a tennis match. Using a homemade remote control, they open the old garage door and sneak all the way to the vault. Now, they can move on to the real part of the plan. First, they have to get the key to the vault door. Luckily, Leonardo knows that the guards keep it in a small cupboard in the room next to the vault. Bingo! They also need the code to the door. The key won’t fit in the lock without it. Leonardo has also thought of that and secretly filmed the guards typing in the code.

The trickiest task for the thieves will be getting past the magnetic sensors that keep the door shut. If the door is opened, the magnetic field is broken, and the alarm will go off. Then the police will be notified. Does that mean the door can’t be opened? Absolutely not! The magnets are attached on the outside; one on the door itself and one on the doorframe. As long as the thieves make sure the magnets stay together, they can open the door. That’s when it’s handy to have an alarm expert on the team! Using a metal plate, he’s made sure the magnets stick together in advance. Then he can detach bolt after bolt that connect them to the door. In the end, they’re all dangling from a wire attached to the ceiling, and the door is free to open!

The thieves hold their breath. Has the alarm gone off without them knowing? They listen for steps coming from above. It’s dead quiet. They turn off the lights before carefully opening the vault door and prying open the metal grate. Using a plastic shield, the thieves conceal themselves from the heat sensor. In pitch darkness, they cover the light sensor and heat sensor with tape. And voila: now they can turn the lights back on! Leonardo has taken the motion detectors out of commission in advance — using hairspray! The thieves fooled all those expensive alarms with cheap things you can buy at the store.

Using a special tool, they open the safe-deposit boxes one by one and fill their bags with gold, diamonds, and cash. The thieves take only the nicest diamonds, but soon, their bags are so heavy they can barely lift them. Before they escape, they take the security camera tapes from the guards’ control room. Then, the thieves drive off — with diamonds and cash worth over \$100 million in the trunk.

The School of Turin has pulled off the perfect heist. And best of all: the theft won't even be discovered until the guards get to work the next day! By then, the gang would have already escaped to Italy. But first, they have to get rid of four large garbage bags full of evidence, including tape, rubber gloves, tools, receipts, and leftover food.

A little way outside the city, Leonardo and Speedy find a deserted forest. *We can burn the evidence here*, Leonardo thinks, and gets out of the car to light a fire. When he turns around, he jumps in surprise. What on earth is Speedy doing?

"I think someone's coming!" Speedy says, his voice shaking.

He's been nervous the whole drive. In a complete panic, Speedy is now scattering the garbage all around the woods. The security camera tapes get stuck on the branches like Christmas tree decorations.

"Get back in the car!" Leonardo orders him irritably.

They don't have time to clean up the mess. *Luckily, no one will find the evidence all the way out here*, Leonardo thinks before they drive off. But the thieves couldn't have had worse luck. Already the next day, a ranger goes out to check on the woods. He's sick of people dumping their garbage here. When he discovers the mess the thieves left behind, he is furious. This time, he's not going to let these littering hooligans get away with it — and he calls the police.

Back in Antwerp, the police have now become aware of the robbery. While investigators scratch their heads, the solution practically falls in their laps when the ranger calls them that very same day. Amongst the garbage, the police find the destroyed tapes, envelopes marked Antwerp World Diamond Center, a receipt for a mini camera with Leonardo's name, and a half-eaten salami sandwich.

In Italy, the thieves meet to divide the loot. They're filthy rich now! But Leonardo has to go back to Antwerp one last time to remove the last traces from the apartment they were staying in.

What Leonardo doesn't realize is that the police are waiting for him. When he goes back to the Center a few days later, he steps right into their trap and is arrested. The police found his DNA on the salami sandwich, which linked him to the rest of the evidence. The master thief behind the world's greatest diamond heist is exposed... by a sandwich!

Leonardo is sentenced to 10 years in prison for being the brains behind the heist. The three others get five years each. The last thief, the King of Keys, has still never been found.

Today, Leonardo is a free man living a quiet life in a small village in Italy. And the diamonds? They were never found. Some think they're hidden somewhere in the Italian Alps.

With all of its diamonds, Antwerp is a paradise for thieves, and someone tries to steal the precious treasures every once in a while. In 2019, thieves crept through narrow sewage pipes and dug a tunnel into a bank vault. They emptied 30 safe-deposit boxes of cash and expensive items before they disappeared. The thieves must have planned the whole thing quite well, since they could have suffocated on toxic fumes in the sewer or drowned if it had started to rain.