



# The Vanishing of the Mona Lisa: A Novel

*Martin Caparros*

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On August 22, 1911, the world was shocked by an audacious crime: Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa was stolen from the Louvre. Although some people suspected subversive artists like Picasso or Apollinaire of perpetrating the theft, no arrests were made. Two years later, an Italian named Vincenzo Perugia was detained after attempting to sell the Mona Lisa to an antiques dealer in Florence -- but the mystery of the theft itself was never satisfactorily resolved.

In his spellbinding novel *Valfierno*, Martín Caparrós tackles this enigma, presenting us with a fascinating criminal unable to go to his grave without divulging the details of his outrageous heist. In tantalizing conversations with an American journalist, the Marqués de Valfierno sheds light on his past secrets, including his sordid origins as Bollino, son of a Buenos Aires servant woman, a man ultimately transformed into the most notorious con artist in the world. A sly and consummate entertainer, Valfierno reveals the shifting identities of the anonymous Argentine boy who has gone on to become a veritable artist, creating for himself the perfect role of wealthy aristocrat in Belle Époque Paris as he prepares for his crime.

Featuring an engaging cat-and-mouse drama and unforgettable characters, *Valfierno* is a brilliant fictionalization of the greatest theft of the twentieth century, as well as a compelling psychological portrait of a true mastermind. *Valfierno*, Caparrós's eighth novel, won the prestigious Premio Planeta award in 2004.

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