



Fake: Forgery, Lies, & eBay

Kenneth Walton

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It was the golden age of eBay. Optimistic bidders went online to the world's largest flea market in droves, ready to spend cash on everything from garden gnomes to Mercedes convertibles. Among them were art collectors willing to spend big money on unseen paintings, hoping to buy valuable pieces of art at below-market prices. eBay also attracted the occasional con artist unable to resist the temptation of abusing a system that prided itself on being "based on trust." Kenneth Walton -- once a lawyer bound by the ethics of his profession to uphold the law -- was seduced by just such a con artist and, eventually, became one himself.

Ripped from the headlines of the New York Times, the first newspaper to break the story, Fake describes Walton's innocent beginnings as an online art-trading hobbyist and details the downward spiral of greed that ultimately led to his federal felony conviction. What started out as a satisfying exercise in reselling thrift store paintings for a profit in order to pay back student loans and mounting credit card debt soon became a fierce addiction to the subtle deception of luring unsuspecting bidders into overpaying for paintings of questionable origins.

In a landscape peopled with colorful eccentrics hoping to score museum-quality paintings at bargain prices, Walton entered into a partnership with Ken Fetterman, an unslick (yet somehow very effective) con man. Over the course of eighteen months they managed to take in hundreds of thousands of dollars by selling forged paintings and bidding on their own auctions to drive up the prices. When their deception was discovered and made international headlines, Walton found himself stalked by reporters and federal agents while Fetterman went on the lam, sparking a nationwide FBI manhunt. His elaborate game of cat and mouse lasted nearly three years, until the feds caught up with him after a routine traffic violation and brought him to justice.

In this sensational story of the seductive power of greed, Kenneth Walton breaks his silence for the first time and, in his own words, details the international scandal that forever changed the way eBay does business.

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