

The Girl in the Spider's Web Study Guide

The Girl in the Spider's Web by David Lagercrantz

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Plot Summary

This shorter and yet suspenseful novel written by Stieg Larsson and David Lagercrantz takes time over the course of five days to tie together stories that seemingly have no tie. The story is the fourth story in the Millennium series. This story follows Lisbeth Salander, a Swedish computer hacker, who accidentally discovers that her sister and father's criminal organization is also working with a government agency, the NSA. Frans, a leading scientist in the AI and quantum computing fields, learns his only son, who is autistic, is being abused by his stepfather. Frans cannot stand by and let this happen so he takes a flight from America to Sweden to retrieve his son.

August, Fran's son, is malnourished and not properly cared for because his guardians have used his disability money on other things they wanted instead of things August needed. When Frans and August return to his home they find that August is actually a mathematical savant in art and mathematics. Frans does all he can to make sure that August continues to use his gift and encourages him to attempt harder math and more delicate drawings.

During the time in which Frans is retrieving August, Gabriella Crane discovers that Frans could be in danger and sends a security team to him to try and save his life. Gabriella learns of this because she is an analyst for the Swedish Security Police, SAPO. Frans refuses to leave to go to the safe house so Gabriella arranges for security patrols to run to keep Frans and August safe. Frans makes a few calls out including one to The Millennium, a local newspaper.

When the reporter arrives to the house to interview Frans about some secrets, the reporter finds that Frans is already dead. Frans was killed by a hitman hired by Spider to kill him. The murderer leaves August alive since August can't speak. Mikael is a washed up journalist for The Millennium, who is going broke and may have to shut down. The company is then bought by a bigger corporation and is told that if they don't gain new readers then the corporation will change the "essence" of The Millennium.

With this news heavy on Mikael's heart he decides to follow up on the Frans murder, hoping that this story will be what keeps their doors from closing. The Swedish police investigate the murder of Frans further, even though there is a set back within their ranks due to secrets being leaked that place in jeopardy several operations. Salader hacks herself into the NSA mainframe and steals secrets about her sister and father's organization, named, Spider. Along with those secrets Salander finds out that the NSA has ties with Spider. Not only ties with Spider but also with the company that Frans worked for before he died.

August, since his father's death, is returned to his abusive mother who puts him in a hospital for medically needy children. This is so she doesn't have to care for him anymore but will still continue to receive her government checks. While August is in the medical facility they do not allow him to draw at all. Many people realize shortly, though, that August can technically help the officers by drawing a picture of the guys who



murdered his father. Because of the NSA leaks, the Spiders have set out to kill August. Spider sends a fake email pretending to be the DR. When Salander realizes that this a trap designed to take August. Salander races to the institution and barely makes it there in time. She takes a shot to the shoulder when she rescues August from the hitman.

Erika is in the getaway car that August and Salander are in. Erika arranges for the two of them to go stay in a safe house, Erika's summer home. While Salander and August are at the home Salander decides to give August some paper in case he is able to draw what happened that night. Salander even encourages him to solve complex mathematics again. Once August feels safe and secure, he sits down and draws a detailed sketch of his father's killer.

Mikael develops a way to communicate safely with Salander and August with some help from Mikael's assistant, Zander. One night Mikael goes out for a drink and asks his assistant to go but she declines in favor of staying and working on the story. While Mikael is out he bumps into a beautiful woman who eventually seduces him and takes him to her apartment. Mikael doesn't feel good about this so he leaves. Zander is then lured to the apartment and beaten and tortured by this woman's colleagues.

The woman in charge of the kidnapping and interrogation is Salander's sister, the leader of the Spiders. They torture Zander to find out the whereabouts of August and Salander, which she eventually gives to Spider. The hitman ends up killing Zander. Spider uses this information to hunt down Salander and August at the summer home. August sees the hitmen outside his window and screams. This scream alerts Salander and she runs out and shoot the hitman, who turns out to be the same man that killed August's father based on August's drawings. Salander then sneaks around and kills two other men who are waiting to kill them, and then she escapes with August in tow.

After escaping the shooting at the summer home Salander takes August to his mother to be safe and runs off the stepfather who is abusive. He is 'persuaded' to never come back. Salander then uses the money to help pay for August and his mother to have a good life somewhere safe. Salander keeps in touch and August helps her crack the mathematical code on the NSA file she couldn't figure out. This allows for Salander to expose the NSA. The story is covered by Mikael who single-handedly saved the company. When he returns from a party, Salander is waiting on his doorstep.



Part One, Chapters 1-3

Summary

Chapter 1

The National Security Administration in the U.S. is known to monitor millions of correspondences throughout the week. It is November and Frans Balder has quit his very lucrative job in order to focus on his family life. He's gotten word that his autistic son, August, has been abused by his ex-wife and her new boyfriend. Learning this, and turning in his resignation on the spot, Frans boards the first plane to Sweden and confronts his ex-wife. He was expecting a major confrontation, but to his surprise, his ex-wife almost willingly gives August to him.

The reader can immediately tell that something is not quite 'right' with August. He doesn't speak, make eye contact, or interact with anyone in a consistent manner. Frans begins researching the autistic and how he might 'reach' his son. During dinner with an old friend of his, she mentions a few therapies and known research discoveries about autism, that often the smallest actions on the part of the parent give the autistic child something to 'hold' on to.

The next day as he and August are standing on a street corner, out of reflex Frans grabs his son's hand as a car barely misses them. In those moments their eyes meet, and for the first time Frans notices his son actually looking around him and 'seeing' things for the first time. Frans is encouraged.

Chapter 2

Mikael Blomkvist is a journalist for The Millennium, a magazine that used to offer hard hitting investigative reporting. Due to its declining subscriptions, it was recently purchased by Ove Levin who came in, initially, with no changes...just plenty of money. Unfortunately, an article that Blomkvist has written comes back to haunt the magazine and Levin takes this opportunity to implement some 'changes'. Mikael realizes at that moment that 'money talks and bullshit walks'. At first Mikael accepts the changes in direction, and decides to leave the office to clear his head.

He remembers when they were younger men and he and Levin had worked together for a temp agency. Levin had wanted to be a journalist, too, only it had never happened for him. Mikael wonders if this is a type of jealousy that is playing out. The long time editor, Berger, had left the meeting completely despondent. Maybe, thinks Mikael, he knows more than he is telling.

The weather turns nasty outside and the wind whips angrily against his face. Just as he gets home he hears his phone ringing. It is someone who wishes to remain anonymous. They say that they have a huge story and wonder if Mikael will meet them in a local bar down the street. Mikael, put out with the day he's had, reluctantly agrees.



Chapter 3

The reader is introduced to Edwin Needham, who is a security officer for the NSA. The reader learns that he grew up with an alcoholic father, but had overcome it to work security in the NSA building, mainly because he's been able to keep his nose out of anyone's business. Until now. In November the entire security system was hacked. This made Edwin extremely upset because he'd set up that security system himself and it was impenetrable.

Mikael arrives at the bar and waits but the anonymous caller doesn't show up. Considering it just another sign that he should end his day early, he moves to leave.

The action cuts to another character, a former policewoman, named, Gabriella Grane. The reader learns that she used to be a policewoman, but then caught the eye of SAPO (Swedish Security Agency..equivalent to the NSA) and has worked there ever since. She was told that she was to go to the U.S. to assist the NSA in a delicate matter. A woman named, Alona Casales needs Grane's help. It is suggested that there might be a casual sexual relationship between the two women.

Back at the pub, Mikael is opening the door to leave when a man looking like someone who is homeless, enters. He approaches Mikael and tells him that he's there to meet him. Mikael is rather dubious about it all, but humors the man.

Mikael changes his mind as the disheveled man begins to tell him about a type of artificial intelligence that was developed to be used in a video game. The AI allows the players to discuss war strategies and the players don't always know if they are talking to a live player, or a digital interface. The man's name is Brandell and as he continues to tell his story, Mikael stops him and tells him that this is not the type of story that his magazine likes to cover. Brandell mentions another name: Frans Balder, and pauses to see if that name has any impact on Mikael. When it doesn't Brandell enlightens him.

Frans Balder is the father of AI, he tells Mikael. An idealist, Balder worked at a University as a computer science professor, and is one of the youngest developers for AI in the world. Recently, Balder's AI gaming program was hacked and stolen by a Russian hacker. Balder, Brandell explains, had always been an idealist and so it was a huge shock when he abruptly left the University and took a corporate job called, Solifon. Mikael tells Brandell that it is interesting but that the magazine is moving in a new direction. He asks the informant to tell him more about the Russian hacker.

The focus shifts back to Casales who is talking with Grane about the project. A Swedish scientist, whom they've had under surveillance for a while, has been behaving oddly. As she is filling Grane in on the project, all of their computers begin blinking. The NSA officer in charge comes into the room and informs everyone that they have temporarily been hit with a virus but that it is being contained.

Meanwhile, Needham, the security officer for the NSA, slides out of his chair and begins to refresh all of the computers after a server reboot. Needham knows that it wasn't a virus. It is the hacker and she is back again. The big question is: why.



Back at the bar Mikael asks Brandell to describe the hacker. Had Brandell seen her, does he know her name? Brandell tries to explain that the hacker is not part of the bigger story at all, but all Mikael can do is think about the hacker; about one particular hacker he has in mind. Brandell says that she goes by the name Pippi, but everyone knows that it isn't her real name. Mikael agrees to see the professor and asks for the contact information.

Analysis

In these chapters the theme of Family is apparent from the beginning. Frans gives up a job that he likes in order to go and rescue his son from a bad situation. The theme of Childhood Trauma is also introduced in these earlier chapters, both with August's situation and with Edwin Needham's alcoholic father. The author seems to be suggesting that family ties can be a great source of comfort and strength, but that it can just as easily be an agent for creating horror and deep psychological scars.

The theme of The Corruptive Influence of Big Business is also introduced in these first chapters as the reader sees Blomkvist's magazine being bought and then changes implemented. The new focus is on writing what people want to read, not what should be exposed or reported. Blomkvist is appalled.

When Mikael meets his informant, Brandell, in the bar the only thing about the story that interests him is the inclusion of a woman hacker, whose only tag is Pippi. Mikael thinks that this hacker's MO seems very much like another hacker he used to know, and most certainly wants to find again.

The weather is used by the author to both act as foreshadowing and as an overall plot element to heighten tension. The fact that the wind and rain are lashing at Blomkvist's face suggests that his life is going to take a hit to the face very soon. Additionally, another type of symbolism can be found in Frans reaching down and taking his son's hand to prevent him from being hit by a car. This action on his part seemed to awaken some part of his autistic son's ability to perceive the world. His son represents those who are not involved in the world of computer science, and his father represents those who are involved deeply in the development of AI. This suggests that Frans has created something that will, likewise, change perceptions.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the theme of Family as it is suggested in these early chapters.

Discussion Question 2

What is the author suggesting about Childhood Trauma?



Discussion Question 3

Why did Frans feel that he needed to go and bring August home with him, and what shocked him when he arrived to do so?

Vocabulary

disheveled, melancholy, jowls, bric a brac, narcissism, sagacious, inebriated, taxing, furtive, plaintive, noir



Chapters 4-6

Summary

Chapter 4

Grane turns to leave but Casales calls out. She tells Grane the truth about the project. She says that there is a Russian group that has been bribing and blackmailing many governmental agencies in the U.S. and others. These Russians are comprised solely of hackers, whose leader calls himself Thanos. Grane recognizes the name Thanos as belonging to a character from Marvel. Though the weather is turning bad, Grane continues to stay as Casales leans forward to continue the debrief.

Frans Balder worked for a company called Solifon, a company that has direct links to the Russians, though there's never enough proof. Balder left the company abruptly and took with him a proprietary program that has both the hackers and the company after him. Both Grane and Casales agree that Balder is the key to finding out more about the Russians. They also agree that he needs to be moved to a safe house.

The focus shifts to Blomkvist. He's convinced that the hacker he's been told about is Lisbeth Salander, a woman he was involved with a year ago. Though he'd left a cryptic message for her in his computer, should she ever decide to hack it again (she'd done it many times before), he'd not heard from her and he had thought that she was past history. Now, he's not so sure.

Chapter 5

The reader learns about a hacker that goes by the name Wasp through the memories of another hacker named, Plague. Plague recalls that Wasp was contacted by the Russian hacking group to do a job on the NSA. She'd kept her end of the bargain, but curiously, instead of being jazzed about succeeding, she'd only told them all that she felt empty about it. Plague thinks that being perpetually sad and critical is Wasp's natural mental state.

The reader learns that Wasp's real name is Lisbeth Salander. Lisbeth can't forget the night that she hacked into the NSA and had discovered top secret documents that had only served to confirm her suspicions about those in power. She wonders what is wrong with her that she can't allow herself to enjoy success. She believes that it is because she had truly had a chance at love and had thrown it away.

Chapter 6

This chapter opens with Frans Balder who is looking through some documents while his son plays quietly at his feet. Frans had given the boy some easy math sums to do, but it seems to Frans that the boy is simply not interested. Frans doesn't see that the back portion of the paper, the portion containing the more advanced sums, is completely



finished. As Frans stands to walk out of the room he sees that the boy is quietly drawing something. He leans over to look and it is a picture of the street light that had been on the corner earlier. Frans is excited because this means that the boy is noticing the outside world and might be only steps away from openly communicating.

The focus shifts to Frans' ex-wife, Hanna. She is glad that Frans came to take August. Her current boyfriend used to smack August, and she felt helpless to do anything about it. She doesn't blame August if he hates her. Just at this moment her phone rings. It is Frans. He excitedly tells her about August's drawing and tells her to come over straight away if she can. Her boyfriend, Lasse, is home and she quietly tells Frans that she can't come over.

The focus shifts back to Frans who is definitely disappointed that Hanna couldn't come over. He is holding August's drawing. Under the streetlight there is the figure of a man. The features are indistinct and he wonders why August put the man in the scene as he, himself, doesn't remember seeing any man under the streetlight. All of a sudden his son looks up at him from where he is sitting on the floor. Frans tells him that he loves him and Frans can tell that the boy has heard him and understands.

Analysis

The theme of Family is evident in all of these chapters as the reader sees Frans continue to work with his son and is rewarded with some success as August is able to communicate through his drawings. The drawings also suggest that August has begun to tune in to the world around him, which Frans also finds encouraging. When he reaches out to his ex-wife, the reader sees that perhaps there is still some hope, at least on Frans' part, for a reconciliation with Hanna.

In the sections that focus on Wasp (aka Salander) the theme of the Corrupting Influence of Power is evident as her former activities exposing the NSA's antics are chronicled. Though she has helped to bring people to justice, she's hollow inside because it came at a personal cost to her. She also has a difficult time deciding if she is one of the good guys or a delusional villain.

The symbolism of August's drawing is fairly evident since it is of a street light, indicating a light in the darkness of the isolated world in which he used to reside. It also shows that in August's life there may be sinister forces occurring shortly, with the introduction of the mysterious man's figure under the streetlight.

The theme of Childhood Trauma is touched upon lightly in these chapters as it is made known that Lasse, Hanna's boyfriend, has been abusive to August. That the boy has retreated into his own mind is part of the boy's coping mechanism.

The allusion to comic books and characters crops up in the scenes involving Casales and Grane. They are discussing the leader of the Russian Hackers who goes by the name Thanos. In the Marvel Comic series he has a weapon called the Infinity Gauntlet



which allows him to proceed with his goal to take over the galaxy. This seems to suggest the motive and mindset of the leader.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the theme of Family as it is presented in these chapters.

Discussion Question 2

What does August's drawing represent?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Frans call Hanna about August's drawing?

Vocabulary

solitude, nominally, erudite, aberration, berate, trajectory, olfactory, corrosive, laborious, enigma, lackadaisical



Chapters 7-9

Summary

Chapter 7

Berger, Mikael's editor, calls Mikael Blomkvist and tells him that she's coming over. Blomkvist tries to get her to stay home because the weather is so bad, but he can't dissuade her and shortly afterward she shows up half frozen. She is nearly incoherent and tells him that she needs to tell him everything. He tells her to quit talking and makes her get into a warm bath while he goes and makes her some tea. Afterward, while still in the tub she tearfully tells him that she'd had a clandestine meeting with Levin many weeks before and that Levin had openly told her that he was going to work toward getting Mikael to quit so that the sale of the magazine would fetch more money. Slowly, she stands out of the tub, an inviting look in her eyes.

Chapter 8

This chapter focuses on Frans and his continued interactions with his son. He sets up a bowl of fruit and gives August some paper and pencils, hoping that August will draw the fruit. August isn't interested. The phone rings. It is a policewoman named Grane. She warns him that he is in danger and that they are going to be moving him to a safehouse. He refuses but Grane says that he must be protected anyway. Frans doesn't mention August as he's afraid that the way in which he acquired his son might be used against him, and this must not happen with August having such breakthroughs in communication.

Frans reaches out to a doctor specializing in working with autistic children, named Edelman. Edelman encourages him to bring August in to be tested. He warns Frans that August may never speak to him, as is the norm with most savants. Discouraged, Frans sits in his easy chair and cries silent tears of disappointment. Though Frans is unaware of it, his computer has been turned on. A man is watching the house.

Chapter 9

Salander wakes up. She'd been dreaming of her father and his abuse when she was younger. She also wonders if she's just like him, believing herself above the law like he does. Salander can't stop thinking about Mikael and it irritates her.

The focus shifts to Frans. An alarm is sounding in the apartment and Frans is afraid that the threat that he'd been warned about is happening. He goes to check on August and ends up calming the boy down as best he can. He turns the alarm off and goes to call Grane to ask about that protection detail after all. Before he can his cell phone rings. It is the home alarm company asking if everything is okay. They tell him that their cameras had observed a man watching the apartment and that the man had been investigating



the building. He is not there now, however. Suddenly, the sound of a car's horn sounds from the garage.

The focus cuts to Blomkvist as his phone rings. Over his shoulder it is evident that he is not in bed alone. Berger has stayed the night, even though she is married. The reader learns that she and her husband have an arrangement and share her with Blomkvist. As Blomkvist reaches for his phone he wonders at the arrangement and if it might actually be a bad idea. His cell phone stops ringing and he sees that there is a message from Salander. He starts to text her back.

The focus cuts to Frans who is speaking on the phone to Grane. He says that a man calling himself Blomkvist had called and left a voicemail. He wonders if Grane knows him and if he should return the man's phone call. Grane states that Blomkvist is a top-notch journalist but was absolutely hated in the security world. Frans thanks her and immediately calls Blomkvist up and asks him to come over. As he hangs up the phone he sees a police cruiser pull into the area. The security service called them to make Frans feel better. Still, there had been a man lurking. Fearing for his life and that of his son, he goes to his computer and with a push of a button erases his life's work. The police leave their cruiser and in a few minutes have a man in custody. It is Lasse, Hanna's boyfriend. He accuses Frans of kidnapping August, but the police assure him that there is no child in the apartment.

Analysis

Once again, the weather is used as a precursor and foreshadowing for important events. In Chapter 7 this is most evident when despite how bad the weather is, Berger comes over to see Mikael. The severity of the weather nearly kills her and Mikael is compelled to take care of her. This happens on the cusp of Salander reaching out to Mikael.

The theme of Childhood Trauma is demonstrated in Chapter 8 with Lisbeth waking from a nightmare about her father. As has been suggested in earlier novels by the author, Salander was traumatized in all ways imaginable by her biological father. His abuse of her as a child has shaped her world views, has acted as a subconscious lens through which she judged all of her past relationships, and it is what has made it virtually impossible for her to form and maintain long term intimate bonds with anyone. This theme is continued with the appearance in Chapter 9, of the abusive stepfather, Lasse, who is found lurking outside of Frans' apartment.

The theme of Family is also continued in all of these chapters as two very different views are contrasted and compared. Frans is a loving father, kind and caring toward his child. In contrast, Salander's father was abusive and harsh. With Frans' kindness and ongoing patience, August is beginning to accomplish tasks and exhibit talents that he never did before. However, in the oppressive environment with Lasse, August never thrived in that way. The author is suggesting that children especially benefit from kindness and security.



Discussion Question 1

Discuss the contrast of parental environments and what message the author seems to suggest with them.

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the theme of Childhood Trauma as seen in the book thus far.

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the theme of Family as seen in the book thus far.

Vocabulary

morbid, larceny, incognito, counterfeit, placid, remuneration, abhor, nuance, tangent, engender, bilk, abrasive



Chapters 10-11

Summary

Chapter 10

Frans' luck runs out in this chapter as a hired mercenary is sent to kill him. The assassin comes through the window and kills Frans in front of August. Though the assassin had instructions to leave no witnesses, he can't kill a kid, and he leaves August rocking back and forth against the wall in the room.

Before he dies, Frans utters one word: disabled.

The focus shifts to Blomkvist. It is after two o'clock in the morning and as he gets out of the taxi he sees a police cruiser with two officers. One of the officers is standing outside of the car arguing with someone on the sidewalk. From the building another man, dressed in black, dashes out. Mikael instinctively dives for cover, shouting to the officers that there is a gun. They turn to pursue the man and Mikael runs into the building. The door is open and he finds August whimpering and hitting himself. As the police enter the building, August looks up, terror in his eyes, and then bolts for the door.

Chapter 11

Grane arrives on the scene and begins assessing the situation. She's also left to attend to the matter of August, who has been detained. She calls August's mother to come and get him. She tells them that in order to calm him down they need to hand him a puzzle of some sort. At that point, Grane realizes that Frans' computer is gone. She immediately calls this in and is told that they are now to treat this as an attack on the Swedish Business Industry. It is now a federal investigation.

Meanwhile, the lead officer questions Mikael, who can only describe how the man moved, and the color of his clothing. Mikael knows that the only person most likely to have seen the killer's face was August, but getting anything out of the boy, Mikael guesses, will be impossible. Mikael witnesses the officer attempting to get anything out of the boy and it is obviously pointless as the autistic boy only began screaming. Mikael goes over to August and attempts to calm him down, but can do no better.

Mikael's phone rings. It is Berger who wants an article to run on Frans and the murder. Mikael agrees and stays to walk through the crime scene. On the kitchen table are some drawings. He thinks that Frans drew them. He takes a picture of them with his phone and sends them to his assistant, urging her to send them to Salander to see if she can make sense of them, or Frans' death.

The focus shifts to Salander who has gone to her local gym to work out. She finishes up and heads home, logging on to her computer as soon as she gets in. There is a message from Mikael about Frans' death and she gets to work right away. She begins



to see a pattern that, really, only she could see. Many of Balder's enemies could be loosely tied in to Salander's own father and the criminal organization that he is affiliated with. She hopes she is wrong.

Analysis

These two chapters close out Part One of the novel, and offer the reader some interesting questions unanswered. First, who exactly killed Balder (Frans) and had he been able to wipe his hard drive? Will August be able to calm down long enough to identify his father's killer?

It is interesting to note that the assassin cannot kill August, something that he'd been instructed to do. This suggests that the people that have been hired or are involved in the AI black market have some sort of code that they will abide by. The final word that Frans states: disabled, can either pertain to August, or his work. He was either telling the assassin that the program had been disabled and that they would not be able to access it, or he was telling the killer to spare his child, that he was disabled. Considering Frans' actions thus far, it seems likely that he was talking about his child.

The theme of Family is continued in these chapters as it is shown that Frans' last thoughts were for the safety of his son. Whereas, in contrast, Salander is nearly certain that her father is behind Frans' death and the theft of the scientist's computer.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the theme of Family in these two chapters.

Discussion Question 2

Why doesn't the assassin kill August?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Hanna not tell the police that Frans kidnapped August when they call her after the murder?

Vocabulary

abasement, credible, enhance, replete, nullify, harangue, tangible, harbinger, hasten, laceration, reprieve, tawdry, credulous



Part Two, Chapters 12-14

Summary

Chapter 12

This chapter focuses on Casales. Though she seldom works night shift, the death of the professor has her on call. She goes to the station and another officer, Bublanski, who works in the cybercrime division wastes no time finding her. He had come in on his day off because of the new developments regarding the unknown hacker.

The team has discovered that the unknown hacker has lead them to other, possibly more concerning, discoveries. They have uncovered a connection between the NSA, Solifon, and the hacking group that Casales has nicknamed the Spiders. Casales wonders aloud if this is why the NSA has not been making more of an effort to investigate the Spiders.

Chapter 13

Back at his apartment, Mikael is having a hard time trying to sleep. The Professor's death, the autistic child, August, and the incessant media coverage that was already peppering the air waves all swirled in unconnected patterns. He knows that he is missing some vital piece of the puzzle.

Giving up on sleep all together, he dresses and goes to the magazine's offices. The night shift workers swarm him, demanding to know answers because Mikael had been at the scene. A bit put out, Mikael brushes them all aside and goes to find his assistant, Zander, whom he knows is there as well. Zander has uncovered a name for Mikael, a Farah Sarif, who was a colleague and friend to Frans Balder. Mikael gets the address from Zander and leaves immediately.

The weather is not so bad, and the address is not too far from the magazine offices, so Mikael opts to walk. As he is standing on the street corner, waiting to cross, the scene strikes him as familiar. Then he realizes why...it's the exact streetlight and corner that had been on the sketch in Frans' home. Zander had also told Mikael that August had been returned to the custody of his mother and that the gun used to shoot Frans Balder had been recently bought.

Mikael arrives at Sarif's home. She looks as if she hasn't slept either and Mikael feels guilty asking her additional questions. She fixes some tea and tells Mikael that she and Frans developed a program that would evolve organically, a type of digital intelligence that combined the intelligence of a human mind with the rationality and precision of a computer. Mikael asks her if she still has the research, that it could pose a threat to her life if she does. She says that only Frans kept it, and always kept it close to him. She says that the level of paranoia was justified since their research was compromised by one of his assistants named, Eckerwald. They would never have known this except that



a female hacker offered to track down the leak for them. That was how Frans knew to go and get a job at Solifon, the company that the assistant sold the program to.

Farrah tells Mikael that when Frans found out what had happened, he went straight to the owner of the company, Nicolas Grant who immediately began an investigation. However, nothing came of it. As he leaves Sarif's home, Mikael reaches out to Lisbeth, certain that she was the female hacker involved with Frans.

Chapter 14

This chapter begins with Ove Levin ego surfing on the internet. He routinely does this in order to see who might be higher up on the food chain than himself, and then purposely decides not to hire them should it ever come to it. He is particularly upset that Mikael is in the public eye once more, making it even more difficult to fire the man. He believes that the story and the interviews, and the media attention, should all be levied on him, and the magazine, not Mikael. He reaches for his phone and makes a lunch date with a man named William Borg, another journalist, and Mikael's largest rival.

The focus shifts to Hanna Balder and August. Since returning home August has wanted to do nothing but draw. However, his drawings are haunted and make no sense to Hanna. In frustration she wads one of them up, then realizes that what she's just done might set August off. But, to her surprise, it doesn't. He just takes another sheet of paper and begins drawing again.

Remembering some advice that she'd received from one of the many doctors she'd had August to, she removes the source of his obsession, the crayons and paper, and makes him go to his room. August flails about and screams. It is clear that Hanna is at her wit's end once again. She briefly wonders if there's someone she can send August to for a little while, just so she can have a little peace.

Hanna finds a business card for a young psychologist named Einar Forsberg. A former school teacher, Forsberg works for a center for crisis cases. He reminds Hanna of this when she calls, but it is evident that he has feelings for her and he relents. He tells her that they can take August into their intensive program for a short while.

The focus shifts to Levin. He is at his lunch date with Borg. They decide that they will 'leak' some information about the case, discrediting Mikael with the media and the police force. This, they both agree, will put Mikael where he belongs.

Meanwhile, Mikael has left Sarif's home and is on his way back to the office, when it dawns on him. August is most likely the artist of the drawings, not Frans. If this is so, then August might be able to identify his father's killer. He knows it is a long shot, but he's willing to pursue it. He hails a taxi and heads for Hanna's home.

Hanna isn't home, however. She's put August in the car and they've arrived at the Oden Medical Center. She's shocked at the stark institutional feel of the place, but rationalizes that it is for August's own good. Plus, she says to herself, he won't be here that long.



She hands her son over, fills out the required paperwork and wearily returns home. She finds Mikael sitting on her doorstep. He explains who he is and she lets him in.

Mikael learns from Hanna about August's almost frantic drawings. In particular there was a drawing of a checkerboard pattern that he would draw again and again. Mikael tells her that Frans' building had this on the outside. He asks where August is and Hanna, ashamed, admits that she's had August temporarily committed so that she can rest. Mikael thinks that this may have been a very smart move on her part because August will stay safe there. Mikael believes that August can most definitely identify his father's killer. Mikael leaves and calls Zander to see if Lisbeth had returned a message. She hadn't. Mikael speaks with Bublanski, another reporter, about what he'd discovered at Hanna's house. Unfortunately, as soon as Mikael hangs up, Bublanski tells everyone in the office the update.

Analysis

The theme of the Corrupting Influence of Power is offered throughout these three chapters. Initially, the focus is on the connection between the professor and Solifron, whose reach extends, they find, to the NSA, and the Spiders (the hacking consortium).

When Mikael goes to the magazine's offices, he is swarmed by everyone wanting to know details about the Professor's murder. None of them are focused on the fact that a man, a father, and a brilliant scientist has been murdered. They are all looking for the next big scoop, a story so sensational that it will bring money to the magazine and save the business. Here is a very blatant message about the corruptible influence of power in that it dehumanizes people and makes life a commodity to be used and discarded.

Then, the theme is continued with a look into the corruption in the magazine's offices, with Levin and his machinations to discredit Mikael. It makes Levin seethe with envy to see all of the attention that Mikael is receiving. In fact, his desire to see Mikael discredited and dishonored seem to run counter to his desire to save his magazine.

Once again, the weather is mentioned and used as a literary element indicating that the meeting with Sarif is going to be a good one. The reader learns that Sarif and Balder had created an artificial intelligence that had the sophistication of human thought, but the precision and logic of a computer. In essence, a better mind. The question that is posed, but not stated is whether or not this is a good development. The author suggests that it could be bad if it were handled and used by the wrong people.

The drawings become even more important in the last chapter in this section in that finally someone is realizing what they are. They are not the ramblings of a mentally disabled boy, but are drawings of the night his father died. August knows who killed his father.

What becomes apparent in these three chapters is that everyone involved has an ulterior motive, some good, some bad. This hints at the other theme of Good versus Evil. Quite clearly several characters are emerging to fight on the side of 'good', such as



Mikael, Hanna, Lisbeth, and Hanna, while others, such as the Spiders, Levin, and others, are not.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the theme of the Corrupting Influence of Power in these chapters.

Discussion Question 2

How has Hanna inadvertently protected her son?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Sarif's information about the program make Mikael very unsettled?

Vocabulary

blighted, lachrymose, tedium, headstrong, temper, enunciation, accolade, portfolio, obliterate, tentative, bombastic



Chapters 15-17

Summary

Chapter 15

The focus in this chapter is on Salander. She's restless as she's heard about Frans' death. He'd told her to stay out of his business, a request that she'd honored, but now that he is dead, Lisbeth figures, all bets are off.

In the interim time she had done a little reconnaissance. She manages to find out which assistant stole Frans' work and learns that he came into a great deal of money, seemingly overnight. The assistant's name is Wrangle, and he likes to frequent a nightclub where he meets women he's chatted with online, drugs them, then sexually assaults them. Lisbeth goes to the club and offers to play chess with him for drinks. She manages to beat him soundly, then lures him into a dark corner, with the promise of wild sexual exploits. However, when they are alone, Salander threatens him and he tells her everything.

He tells Lisbeth that he never knew what the man's name was, but that when he handed off the technology to the buyer, the man had come into the club dressed up like a homeless person, and acting like a junkie. But it hadn't fooled him because the man had a very expensive watch. The also told him that he used to be the best of the best of thieves but that he'd lost it all when he'd gotten hooked on drugs. Then, a woman, found him, taught him new skills, better skills, and turned his life around. But, he tells Lisbeth, it was clear that while the man was grateful to his benefactress, he also feared her. It was clear that the man would rather die than upset her. Realizing that she has all she is going to get from the man, Lisbeth leaves.

Bublanski goes to the Oden Institute to get August, based on Mikael's belief that the boy can identify his father's killer. However, the director of the institute doesn't want to relinquish the boy, let alone allow the officer to speak with August. Bublanski circumvents the director to speak to the owner, Edelman, who gives him permission.

Chapter 16

Grane finds herself frustrated because the Frans Balder murder investigation has stalled. Additionally, the SAPO team that has been assembled to look in to it are all friends and it is clear that they are shutting her out. She looks at a photograph on her desk, their only lead. It is a picture of a man's wrist, taken just outside of Balder's home by the surveillance camera. The wrist shows a very expensive watch and some tattoos. She'd tracked the watch, a rare one, back to a gift purchased by Solifon's law firm for a former client. She receives permission to legally request the name of the man they gave the watch to.



The focus shifts to Jan Holtser, whose daughter Olga, is coming to visit. She wants to be a doctor, something that Jan doesn't understand. A colleague of his, named Bogdanov, comes to visit. The reader is shown the expensive and rare watch that he is wearing, as well as the tattoos, and it is evident that this is Frans' killer. Both of them discuss their mutual benefactress, Kira (also nicknamed T). Bogdanov tells Holtser that Kira has learned that there is a boy that can identify Frans' killer. Bogdanov sighs and says that he knows which boy it is and that he will return to Stockholm to take care of the problem.

The focus shifts to Salander who is not having any luck decrypting the new NSA file she took. But, she has determined the identity of the buyer of Frans' tech. His profile indicates that he runs a computer security business, but it is just a front. He is a hired assassin to the rich and infamous. She receives an encoded message by proxy, from Mikael, who asks her to check on August as he fears that his presence at Oden may have been compromised. She immediately hacks into Oden's computers and learns that a false email had been sent requiring that August be taken out onto the street corner where he would be picked up by a family friend. Lisbeth drops everything and rushes out of the door.

Riding in a taxi, she realizes that she's not going to make it in time and she calls Mikael directly. He leaves. However, Lisbeth does just make it to Oden in time to see a man standing on the corner waiting for August. As Lisbeth jumps from the taxi, the man on the corner pulls his gun.

Chapter 17

It is clear to Lisbeth that the gunman hasn't seen her. Just as the man draws his pistol and fires, she is close enough to throw herself in front of the boy and pull him to the ground. They both take cover behind a nearby car. The man, Linden, that had walked August outside, is shot and killed. The shooter moves toward Lisbeth and August. Lisbeth takes advantage of a Volvo that has slowed down at the corner by opening up the back door and pulling herself and August inside. She yells at the driver to go quickly, which he does.

She takes a moment to assess her situation and discovers that August is fine, but she's been shot in the shoulder. The bullet has gone all the way through, but she is still losing a lot of blood. She knows that if she doesn't stop the bleeding soon, she will pass out. Quickly, she pulls out her phone and calls Mikael. He tells her to go to a hospital, but she refuses saying that she needs a safe house for August first.

Mikael goes back to the magazine's offices, and straight to Zander. They set up a more secure line for communicating, and then tells Berger what has happened. She knows of a safehouse, but isn't happy that Mikael has dragged the magazine into this. She's even more upset when she learns that Lisbeth is back in Mikael's life. She tells Mikael that she is going to also bring in a friend of hers from the police, Gabriella Grane, who owes her a favor.

Analysis

These chapters focus more, overall, on Lisbeth, who has been missing, for the most part, throughout the first section of the book. The reader also sees that despite her rough exterior she is actually a caring person, as evidence by her desire to put herself in harm's way for August. She also cared about Frans and is determined to find out who killed him and to take back his work. None of this comes with remuneration, so her statement in earlier books about only doing things that served her financial goals, is shown to be inaccurate at best.

There is the introduction of a new 'player' into the storyline. A mysterious and powerful woman is at the center of the Spider organization and has a habit of choosing her associates from the dregs of society, elevating them, cleaning them up, and making them completely committed to her.

The theme of Good Versus Evil is definitely thick in these chapters. First, there is the pitting of Mikael against Levin (who has already seen to it that Mikael is accused of hindering a murder investigation). Then, there is Lisbeth against the people/organization that killed Frans. Bogdanov, Frans' killer, is identified and it becomes a good versus evil moment when Lisbeth is nearly killed by him when he comes to kill August.

Symbols of interest occur in Chapter 16 with the mention of the 'rare' watch that Bogdanov wears. It not only helps identify him, but represents the 'worth' that his benefactress sees in him. Additionally, there is some symbolism in the fact that Lisbeth is shot. It's not that she is shot, but why and how she is shot. Until this novel, Lisbeth has suggested and vehemently argued that she had no empathy or sympathy for her fellow man. But, in contradiction to that is the fact that she just took a bullet for someone that she did not even know, for a friend who asked her to. This gunshot wound, then, represents her true nature, her shifting paradigms, and the fact that she's not as cold and heartless as she would like everyone to believe.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the symbolism of the 'rare' watch owned by Bogdanov.

Discussion Question 2

How does the woman leader for the Spiders create loyal associates?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the theme of Good Versus Evil in these chapters.



Vocabulary

plummet, cringe, laconic, tenacious, pliable, tenuous, acrid, respite, terse, poised, acuity, thwart, adamant, ponderous, tirade



Chapters 18-20

Summary

Chapter 18

In an early morning discussion with SAPO, Grane lets it be known that she is beyond upset at the breach that almost cost August his life. Then she becomes combative when the rest of the members suggest that Mikael was the one that was hindering the investigation and that anything he might suggest in way of evidence should be considered suspicious. Grane knows that this is just bad press against Mikael and not really the truth, which she points out. Grane withholds her knowledge of Salander being the hacker that had saved August, or that Mikael knew about the attempt on August's life before it was too late. She begins to observe her superior, Helena Kraft, and realizes that most likely Kraft is on someone's payroll, and it isn't SAPO's. Later, she calls Berger and tells her that she has a safe house that Mikael and she can use. She learns about Salander's injury and arranges for a doctor to visit them at the safe house. Berger contacts Mikael and tells him that she is now buying his conspiracy theory about the police station being compromised.

Chapter 19

Bublanski, at the police station, removes one of his officers from the case because he discovered that the officer had leaked sensitive information to SAPO about an ongoing investigation. The man whose car Mikael and Salander commandeered is interrogated by police. He tells them that he dropped them off in a large public square in the middle of town. The man tells them that all the little boy kept saying was the word, "Where?"

Chapter 20

Back at the police station Bublanski decides not to release Salander's name to the press because to do so might endanger August. He also reasons that she has good reason not to trust them, given all that has happened.

Mikael, with Zander's help, have discovered that Bogdanov had a man that worked for him who was directly connected to the underworld organization of Salander's father. Mikael begins to wonder about Salander's motives for helping them. Is she just after revenge again?

In a hotel room across town, Bogdanov and Holtser have been able to discover nothing from Frans' computer. It has been wiped clean and is useless. Holtser worries that August might identify him, but Bogdanov reminds him that he's autistic and no one would believe him. What Bogdanov is more interested in is where Frans might have stashed the files with the tech on it.



They are both very nervous as they are waiting for Kira to arrive. When they'd reported to her what had happened to August, and then had described the woman that saved August, Kira had come unglued, screaming, yelling, and swearing. They both know that when she is in this mood she is unpredictable. It could cost them their lives.

Back at the safe house, Salander gives August paper and pencils, but instead of drawing he's been doing sums. In particular, he's been writing prime numbers all over the page. Later, in the evening, he begins to sketch, however. He draws a picture of his ex-stepfather, Lasse beating him. Salandar looks at it and promises vehemently that it will never happen ever again. She can tell that he hears her, and that he believes her.

Analysis

In these chapters an interesting statement is made about the nature of good and evil. Nearly all of the 'good' characters in the story engage in some sort of criminal or shady activity. Whether it is hacking into something, taking something away, or withholding information, even the 'good' guys are often blurring the lines. Likewise, the villains are difficult to pin down. Kira, obviously, is being painted as the ultimate evil. But, so are Bogdanov and Holtser, though they don't want to have to kill a child. The author seems to be suggesting through the theme of Good versus Evil that very often the lines are blurred and no one is either all good, or all evil, but a blending of both.

The author also shows that sometimes a person will allow power or ambition to cloud perspective when making a decision. This is the case at SAPO when Grane observes her direct superior, Helena acting in ways that would seem to compromise the operation. Likewise, this same theme, Corruptive Influence of Power, is seen with Bublanski's interaction and work at the police station. This would seem to suggest that good intentions aren't worth much if all of the consequences of a group's actions aren't fully considered.

August speaking is HUGE. In the midst of all the horror and the danger, this autistic boy is reaching out and interacting with the world. The fact that August's first word is, "Where?" would seem to suggest many things: Where is my father? Where are we going? Where are the people who want to hurt me? He has a sense of himself in relation to others, which until now has never happened. Likewise, symbolically, August is Frans' son. It is as if, through his son, Frans is trying to connect with Salander and Mikael. Later chapters will see this symbolism developed fully.

The theme of Childhood Trauma is also revisited when August draws a picture from a time when his stepfather beat him horribly. Not only does the reader understand what August remembers and wants to avoid, but it also gives the reader some insight into Salander's childhood as well. Her response to the drawing and her promise to August all indicate that she was also the victim of abuse at the hands of her father.



Discussion Question 1

Discuss the theme of Childhood Trauma.

Discussion Question 2

What does it mean that August has begun to speak?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the theme of the Corruptive Influence of Power.

Vocabulary

tirade, bristle, decoy, erratic, obsolete, lavish, portent, hone, advocate, defunct, affably, rigor, apoplectic



Chapters 21-24

Summary

Chapter 21

Meanwhile, Needham, the computer security tech, has been told to cease his investigation into the NSA hacker. He doesn't and calls Casales when he is on his way to Stockholm. He says that he's found out who WASP is and he's going to confront her. He also tells Casales that he is more than certain that his investigation was being hampered by the NSA because continued investigation would link them to the criminal organization known as Spider.

August has continued to draw, sketch, and write prime numbers. In one of his drawings, he depicts Lasse with another man. This other man's name is Roger, Salander learns, because August actually writes the man's name under the image. Recalling what she's researched about autistic savants, she wonders if August could help her decrypt the NSA files. She slides the stack of papers over to him and he stares at them.

Mikael has left the safe house and has met up with Zander to continue working. After many hours, Mikael decides to go out to pick them up some food and heads to the closest bar that also had take out. On the way there he ends up walking with a very attractive woman who introduces herself as Rebecca Mattson. She tells him that she is a big fan and doesn't believe a thing that they are writing about him in the papers. They have dinner together, he orders for Zander, and then he asks her if she wants to come back to his apartment. She readily agrees. However, something has been nagging at him the entire time: she seems so familiar. It is when they are nearly back to his apartment when it dawns on him and he realizes who she reminds him of. He turns to tell her.

Chapter 22

Meanwhile, as Needham gets on the plane to fly to Stockholm he realizes something. All of the main 'players' for the Spider society have hacker tags that are all Marvel comic book characters; evil villains who are enemies of Wasp.

Mikael begins to question Rebecca in order to get her to reveal something more about herself, so that he can confirm his suspicions. Seeming frustrated, Rebecca tells him that she's changed her mind about going to his place. She kisses him on the cheek and leaves. He waits for a few minutes, then tries to follow her, but it is as if she has disappeared into thin air. He calls Bublanski and tells him that there was a man that had been following him on the street (the entire time he was with Rebecca) and that this man was most likely the one that broke through Frans' security at his home.

Not ready to go back to his apartment yet, and still feeling the need to figure out Rebecca, he goes to visit Holger Palmgren, Salander's only friend and guardian when



she was younger. He confirms Mikael's suspicions. Rebecca is actually Camilla, Lisbeth's twin sister. Though she had grown her hair longer, and dyed it blonde, the facial characteristics had been the same. Palmgren tells Mikael that Camilla was her father's daughter. Talented, beautiful, and utterly ruthless and cold blooded. When they were in school she turned everyone against her sister and did nothing while she was bullied. Salander eventually learned how to fight and everyone left her alone. Palmgren says that he always figured that Camilla turned out as she did as a reaction against the weakness of the girls' mother and her inability to protect the girls from their father. Mikael's phone rings. He sees that it is from Zander, answers it, but there is no one on the end of the line. He hangs up, thinking that it must have been a misdial.

Chapter 23

Palmgren continues to tell Mikael the girls' story. When they were young, the girls had had to witness the brutal rape and constant battery of their mother. Camilla seemed to support her father's actions, stating that if their mother had any spine or self worth that she would have fought back. She justified the actions constantly, whereas Lisbeth was appalled. She set herself up to be opposed to anything her sister was for, and thus, this lifelong opposition of good twin versus bad twin was born. He shares that one time, when Zala had come home from a mission, he took their mother into the bedroom and abused her, forcing the girls to listen to it in the other room. Palmgren says that Lisbeth had shared that during this time that Camilla would smack her hand on the bed in time to the beatings that her father was giving her mother, as if she were enjoying it. Lisbeth had gone to her sister and plunged her nails into her arm.

At the safe house, August has stalled out on the NSA file. She takes the papers from him and realizes that, like her own younger self, August has been forced to grow up faster than he should have. She feels compassion for him, then suggests he go to bed. Before he leaves she tells him that tomorrow he must draw for her the face of the man that killed his father.

Chapter 24

Back at the magazine office, Zander has dropped by to work on the article. Frustrated and hungry, he gives up waiting for Mikael and he leaves the building. He sees a woman being attacked by a tall thin man on the corner, but then the man sees Zander and runs off. Zander goes over to the woman, a very beautiful blonde woman, who said that her ex had sent the man to beat her up. Zander insists on walking her home.

She compliments him and asks him about his work. He asks if she might like to stop for a drink before going home and she agrees. His phone rings, but he ignores it. They get to the bar, but then she seems to change her mind and asks if he won't just come up to her place and she'll fix him a drink there. He briefly thinks that it might be a bad idea, but quickly dismisses the thought.

Mikael visits Camilla's guardian who says that initially Camilla was a joy, a breath of fresh air, but then something changed. She became domineering, manipulative, stealing



from them, having sex with her husband, and beat up their other daughter. She was constantly cutting herself and others as she said it turned her on. Later that year, her husband had committed suicide and her daughter had to be committed to a psychiatric ward for a while. She'd once told her guardian that she was determined to take over her father's business.

Camilla had a friend growing up named Kajsa who later on when on to become a business woman and a bit of a legal whiz. When Kajsa last visited Camilla's guardian's home, she'd told her that she'd looked over Camilla's father's will and there was something very wrong with it. Later, Kajsa was found dead. Mikael receives a phone call from Needham. He's in Stockholm and needs to speak with Mikael right away, about Wasp.

Analysis

The reader learns more about the Marvel Comics symbolism. All of the hacker names chosen by the Spider group are those that oppose the hero named Wasp (Lisbeth's hacker name). This more than suggests that Camilla created Spider to directly impede or counteract anything that Lisbeth might be involved in. Literally, there is one good twin and one bad twin which demonstrates the theme of Good versus Evil in this novel.

The horrific childhood that both Lisbeth and Camilla suffered is shown to still be driving and motivating them in the present day. It is why Lisbeth distrusts all men (except for Palmgren and Mikael) and why anytime she sees a woman being mistreated she reacts severely to it. Likewise, Camilla coped with the abuse by using it to emulate her abuser, in a Munchausen type of way. She justified her father's treatment of their father, and in the present day emulates him in many ways. All of this demonstrates the theme of Childhood Trauma.

Lisbeth and Camilla are complete foils for one another, with Lisbeth having compassion for the weak and voiceless, whereas Camilla exploits and preys upon those very people. Lisbeth uses her hacking abilities to keep the peace, to promote stability, and to protect people. Camilla uses her hacking abilities to makes as much chaos as possible wherever she goes.

The interaction between Lisbeth and August indicates that many people have underestimated August's abilities. Lisbeth gives him a chance to try and she begins to understand that August is much more than anyone has ever considered. She also feels a sense of compassion and feels protective of him as in many respects, his different nature makes him as much an outsider as she is.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the theme of Childhood Trauma in this section.



Discussion Question 2

Compare Lisbeth to Camilla.

Discussion Question 3

What is becoming clear about August and his abilities?

Vocabulary

alacrity, ogle, deliberate, potent, demur, byline, ruse, transgress, heinous, callous, lithe, denounce, transient, livid



Part Three, Chapters 25-27

Summary

Chapter 25

Zander is in Camilla's apartment but he's feeling uncomfortable. He moves to leave, then she kisses him and all sense leaves him. As he becomes aroused, she maneuvers him to the bed and pushes him back onto it. Before he realizes what is going on she has handcuffed him to the bed and placed tape over his mouth. She places her face inches away from his and tells him, with a smile on her face, that she will cut him.

Meanwhile, Mikael can't shake the feeling that something is wrong with Zander. He calls another assistant from the magazine whom he knows lives close to Zander, and asks if he will go over to his apartment and see if he's there. The assistant does so, but Zander doesn't answer. Mikael goes to the magazine offices, but Zander is not there, either. He learns from someone at the magazine that a woman called saying that she was supposed to come and fix Zander's computer, but the magazine told her that Zander had his computer with him. Mikael calls Berger and tells her his concerns, then he calls Bublanski.

Back at the safe house, Salander is having trouble sleeping. Her shoulder wound is hurting quite a lot. She sees that August is awake and drawing at the front table, again. She leaves him to go and redress her wound, then falls asleep. Suddenly, she is wakened by a piercing scream.

Mikael fears the worst for Zander. He frantically calls Lisbeth to warn her that the safe house may no longer be safe and that they need to leave. There is no answer. He gets into a taxi and heads to his meeting with Needham, but before going, leaves his phone with Berger telling her to keep trying to get hold of Lisbeth.

Needham and Mikael meet. He tells Mikael that he is a data security expert for the NSA and that if he had his way about it, Salander would go to jail. However, he also believes that there are bigger problems at hand. There have been highly classified documents stolen by the hackers and would, if made public, expose many corruptions in the organization. Before he can elaborate, there is a call that comes in on Mikael's back up cell phone. With no explanation, he asks Needham if he can borrow his rental car. Needham agrees and comes with him.

Chapter 26

The scream is coming from August, and Salander dashes down the hallway just as a man comes through the glass door. He has a revolver and takes a shot at August, but misses. Lisbeth pulls August to safety, then returns fire. She can hear more voices outside of the residence, so she and August get outside, with her computer in hand, and run. But, she also remembers the drawing that August had been doing. She can't leave



them behind. She dodges back inside, takes pictures of them on her phone and sends them to Berger. But, her backtracking has cost them. They are captured.

In the car, Needham explains that he just wants Wasp to explain 'how' she hacked the system, and then she could go free. This would allow him to make it even more impenetrable. Mikael doesn't respond as at this time he receives the forwarded pictures from Berger.

Back in Camilla's apartment, Zander is dead. She tortured him until he gave her the address of the safe house. She calls her men and tells them to go to the summer house and get Lisbeth and August and that Lisbeth, especially, is very dangerous.

Chapter 27

The police have also been routed to the safe house. When they arrive they find Holtser rocking on the floor, seemingly incoherent. All he keeps saying is: They were sisters. Two other men had been shot, but the woman and child they'd been told to protect are gone. A witness reports seeing the woman and child getting into a BMW SUV.

Mikael breathes a sigh of relief. Word has gotten to him that Lisbeth and August are fine. Meanwhile, Needham outlines what he intends to do. He wants to work with them to expose the 'rotten apples' in his organization who were quite obviously being controlled by outside interests. He believes that Frans had discovered this connection between Solifon and the NSA and that this is what had gotten him killed.

Analysis

Zander is a casualty of the war between the two sisters. He is captured and tortured, and in the end, killed for his involvement in all of it. Through the chapter where Camilla is torturing Zander, it is clear that she is without remorse or emotion, and that everything is clinical and examined as if it were a lab experiment, or a game.

August is able to warn Lisbeth about the men coming into the safe house. This is significant because it indicates that August is capable of interacting with his environment, to perceive threats, and to care about the safety of himself as well as Lisbeth. It is also apparent that many of his drawings are more than the mere doodlings of a disordered mind. Lisbeth understands this as well and is what motivates her to backtrack to retrieve them, or at least to photograph them.

The theme of Good versus Evil is still being demonstrated in these chapters as Camilla fully intended to kill her sister as well as August. However, she was foiled, and Lisbeth and August get away. The driver of the black BMW SUV is unknown at this time.

Lisbeth's shoulder wound is mentioned again, and in this instance is significant. The wound should be healing, she notes, but it is not. This is a direct suggestion toward her relationship with her sister, and her childhood trauma that never seems to quite heal.



Discussion Question 1

Discuss the symbolism of Lisbeth's shoulder wound.

Discussion Question 2

What continues to indicate that August is capable of more than what most thought?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the theme of Good Versus Evil in these section.

Vocabulary

deplete, aloof, exculpate, deplore, trepidation, execrable, lofty, candid, languidly, salacious, sallow, trajectory, fallow, inconsolable



Chapters 28-31

Summary

Chapter 28

Lisbeth and August go to Hanna Balder's home. Inside the apartment Lasse has been arguing with her and is in the middle of striking her when they hear the doorbell. Hanna rushes to open the door and is shocked to see August and someone she doesn't know with him. Lisbeth gives August a nudge and he allows his mother to hug him, then Lisbeth pushes past them and gets in Lasse's face. She tells him that he's going to be packing. He starts to resist and Lisbeth beats him quite handily. He looks at Hanna and tells her to tell Lisbeth that she wants him to stay. Hanna, finally finding her backbone, tells him that he needs to leave. She also tells him that if he ever returns he will be dealt with much worse than she had done this time. She can tell that he believes her.

Lisbeth turns and August is staring intently at her. She tells Hanna to pull herself together, and hands her cash, plane tickets, and some hotel vouchers. She tells Hanna to take August and disappear for a few months until things calm down. Lisbeth has also arranged for Dr. Edelman from the Oden Institute to fly out and work with August. Hanna says that she doesn't know how to thank her. Lisbeth doesn't know how to handle the moment and moves to leave. August speaks, saying, "No go. No go!" Lisbeth is touched, and she turns and tells him that he will be okay now. Then she leaves.

Mikael and Needham spend the morning together, and eventually Lisbeth contacts Mikael. She fills him in on everything but refuses to meet with Needham, not trusting him. Mikael relays this to Needham. Zander is still missing and Mikael fears the worst. Mikael asks Lisbeth why Camilla had exposed herself at all. Why risk it?

Lisbeth tells him that Camilla is very calculating and in her estimation she was holding all of the cards, and thus, it was safe to walk in the daylight. Suddenly, Mikael seems to have made some connections and he tells Lisbeth that he will speak to her again soon. He knows what Needham's game is now, but he determines that he will play dumb a little longer.

Chapter 29

Zander's blood is discovered at an unknown woman's apartment. Mikael tries to tell them that it is Camilla but no one will listen to him. He feels as if time is beginning to speed up. He determines that he needs to speak with Lisbeth.

Meanwhile, a woman named Farah Sharif has come forward to speak with Bublanski. She tells him that Frans had developed a program that would, literally, allow the owner to spy on the entire world. At first, she'd tried to talk him out of developing it, but he was idealistic and thought that some good could come of the program. Bublanski wonders if in his last few months Frans had changed his mind. A large file had been deleted from



Frans computer at the time of his death. Perhaps he'd changed his mind, or maybe it was a file that the killer copied, then deleted. Bublanski wants to think that a person has the propensity to change. He is a very religious man and he thinks about what his Rabbi had said the week prior about change.

Meanwhile, Salander is having a difficult time resting. She fears that her sister will try to get to her, again. Plus, she can't quit thinking about the equations at the bottom of August's drawings. She goes to the boxing gym to clear her head.

Chapter 30

Salander goes home and with her head cleared, she refocuses on August's equations. It dawns on her that he's perfected the equations that she had begun, equations that would enable her to crack the encryption around the NSA files. She gets to work. Eventually she is able to open and begin reading the files. She immediately sends them to Mikael. Just as she does so, her doorbell rings. It is Needham.

At first he is ready to arrest her, but then she starts hinting at information she's unlocked from the files. He realizes that she has cracked the code and has read the files, and most likely has sent them to Mikael. She gives him just enough information from the files so that he can begin building a case against the perpetrators within his organization. However, she holds on to the majority of it as insurance. Needham laughs.

Chapter 31

Levin, the new owner of the magazine, wakes up to find that his own magazine is responsible for investigating Solifon and its connection with the NSA who had contracted to have Frans murdered. Since he owned Solifon stock, and it was keeping the magazine afloat, he is immediately sick.

Grane knows that she is going to be leaving her job after a 30 page informative report landed anonymously on her desk. It chronicled the fact that a member of the NSA had gotten involved with the Spiders and the Russian Duma in order to steal tech from other countries. The thought, of course, was that the NSA would benefit from the tech. They knew that Frans was targeted to be killed and did nothing. Zander's body was found and it was evident that he'd been tortured.

Hanna Balder put her life back together and with Edelman, whom she was falling for, they were seeing drastic positive changes in August. She's kicked her drug habit and has accepted the responsibility for the situation she'd put them both in. It is clear that she and August will have a better life.

Needham returns to the NSA with enough ammunition to make waves. Still, he is very aware that he has now placed a target on his own back and is taking measures to safeguard himself from reprisal. He continues to liaison with Grane, who is moving to New York to work on human rights issues.



Mikael should be happy and celebrating, but he's not. Lisbeth has disappeared again, Zander's death weighs on him, and even though the magazine is no longer in danger of folding, he feels as if he's somehow lost something important. An anonymous buyout of the magazine had come from a foreign corporation, whom Mikael knows and recognizes as Salander, but he keeps this to himself.

In a club where she is treated like a goddess, Lisbeth sits back with a drink and reads the article that Mikael has written about everything. Afterwards she seems to have made up her mind about something and leaves. Meanwhile, Mikael has left the celebration at the magazine early, just not feeling it. He opens his apartment and to his surprise, there is Lisbeth.

Analysis

The theme of Family is demonstrated in this chapter as the reader sees August and his mother rebuilding their life. In a stable family environment, August is blooming and it is suggested that he may be able to function normally, or close to normal, in the future.

The theme of Religion is mentioned, throughout the novel, through the character of Bublanski, who is Jewish by religion. However, his thoughts tend to run toward the bigger questions about ethics, morality, and the fluidity of right and wrong. As a policeman, this is something that he grapples with constantly and with this case, in particular, he questions a person's ability to affect real change. Meeting Mikael, working clandestinely with Salander, he realizes that people are doing this all of the time, and he realizes that, at least for him, his change is due to his faith, not only in his religious teachings, but in mankind's ability to choose right over wrong.

The theme of the Corruptive Influence of Power is rife in these last chapters as all of the loose threads of the narrative are drawn together. Not only is the NSA implicated, but so, too, are the Spider organization, as well as the Russian mob. All of these organizations used their position to infiltrate and entrench themselves, often making unholy alliances in order to achieve their end goals. This begs the question about the ends justifying the means. Needham represents the answer to that question: no. This is also seen in Levin's failure to use his position and clout to have Mikael discredited and quit the magazine. He also invested heavily in Solifon, so he was also corrupted through his association with them.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the theme of Corruptive Influence of Power.

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the return of Lisbeth to Mikael's apartment at the end.



Discussion Question 3

How did the NSA justify what they had been doing?

Vocabulary

trivial, ambiguous, opulent, longevity, immutable, exemplify, lucid, precipice, stolid, ambulatory, orthodox.



Characters

Lisbeth Salander

Lisbeth is a professional hacker who hacks into the NSA's databanks to find out information on her estranged families illegal organization, the Spiders. But instead of finding info on Spider she discovers instead that the NSA are in league with Spider, and a company operated as a shell, named Solifon. She accesses and copies the files.

Salander takes to an autistic boy who helps her solve the mathematical formula to open the NSA files and expose the NSA. She risks her life many times in order to save August's life, not only because he has a phenomenal mind, but because she identifies with him because they are both survivors of parental abuse. It is because of her protection that August feels compelled to speak for the first time.

In this fourth installment of the series, Salander is still attracted to Mikael and trusts him as much as she trusts Palmgren. These are the only two people in the world that she trusts. However, she did have a profound respect for Frans Balder, whose lectures she'd attended many years previously. She'd tried to warn him earlier, but he'd assured her that he was fine.

Mikael Blomkvist

Mikael is a journalist for the paper Millennium. However, the magazine is in financial trouble, as the reader learns early on, and it is suspected that the new owner, Levin, wants to get rid of Mikael. It is discovered later that Levin wanted Mikael out of Sweden so that he wouldn't poke around too much and discover the connection between the magazine, Solifon, and the NSA.

Mikael has an assistant named, Zander, who is instrumental in helping Mikael to track down safe houses, arrange for escape from life threatening situations, and for helping him do research for the various articles that Mikael is writing. Zander is killed by Camilla at the end of the book because he will not disclose the whereabouts of the safe house.

Mikael still has feelings for Salander, in a way that he has for no other woman in the novel. He has a casual relationship with Berger, who is his editor, and is married. It is an open relationship and Berger's husband knows about it. Mikael, however, doesn't view it as anything more than a physical relationship, and when Lisbeth resurfaces again, it is evident that she's the one he wants.

Mikael goes to great lengths to protect August and to assist Lisbeth in bringing down Frans' killers, as well as exposing the NSA, and Solifon. In doing so, he also manages to expose the new owner, Levin, and to solidify his place in the country as the top investigative journalist.



Frans Balder

Frans is a well-known scientist studying AI and quantum computing. He ends up learning things about the NSA and Spider organization that end up getting him killed. He goes to Sweden from America because he wants to rescue his son from his abusive living situation. Once Frans has his son they are kept on watch by the police to make sure that the death threats are going to pass. Spider, however, sends a hitman into the house and kills Frans.

August Balder

This character is Frans's autistic son, August. August is autistic, but is also a savant in math and art. However, at the beginning of the novel, this is not apparent because he is living in an abusive situation with his mother and stepfather.

Though he can't speak, he ends up sketching his father's killers and cracks the mathematical code that allows Salander to open the NSA files. August uses his savant gift with art to draw a picture of his father's killer. Once this is over Salander takes August and his mother to somewhere remote and gives them enough money to live on and care for August. Because of the attention and care that he receives, August is finally able to give and receive love, as well as speak in limited ways.

Erika Berger

Erika is the romantic partner of Mikael and the co-owner of the Millennium. When August and Salander are on the run Erika hides them and cares for them.

Gabriella Grane

She is a top analyst for SAPO, the Swedish Security police. She arranges for Salander and August to be taken to a safe house when they are on the run. At the end of the novel, because of her reluctance to look the other way on some evidence, she quits SAPO and moves to New York in America to work with Casales.

Camilla Salander

Camilla is the estranged sister of Lisbeth who often goes by her alias, Thanos, or Kira. She runs the criminal organization called Spider and is in league with the NSA. Camilla has Zander beaten for information and then the men kill Zander.



Edwin Needham

Needham is the character who helps develop the NSA top security filelock to protect the NSA's deepest secrets. However, it is hacked by a Russian, and though the NSA doesn't want to acknowledge that they've been hacked, Edwin knows they have infiltrated their files, and works behind the scenes to contain the damage while locating the hacker. In the end, he works with Mikael and agrees to keep Lisbeth's name out of the official report because, in essence, it was her hack that brought the corrupt activity to the surface.

Zander

Zander is Mikael's assistant for The Millennium. He is captured, interrogated, then killed by Camilla.

Zala Salander

This is Camilla and Lisbeth's father. He is an ex-Soviet spy who defected during the Cold War and became a black operative for the Spider. He is one of the masterminds of the entire organization. He severely beat and sexually abused both Camilla and Lisbeth, as well as their mother, when they were all living together. It is his abuse that created the horror that is Camilla, and the fighter, who is Lisbeth.

Bogdanov

Bogdanov is the assassin that killed Frans. He is eventually identified by the rare and expensive watch that he wears. He is also the man that bought Frans' software from Wrangle, Frans' assistant.

Wrangle

This is Frans Balder's assistant that stole his technology and offered to sell it over the darknet. This is also the man that Lisbeth meets in the nightclub and gathers information from him about the theft.



Symbols and Symbolism

Spider Web

This 'web' is a reference to the Internet and the cybercrimes that are committed by a group of highly advanced hackers that are called the Spiders. The Spiders not only 'weave' their own webs to snare the unwary, but they also manage to capture additional information and resources on the street with their 'rescue' of the indigent and downtrodden.

Marvel Comics

Throughout the novel there are references to various comic book characters. Thanos, for example, is one of the ultimate villains in the Marvel Comic world. These references reinforce the theme of Good versus Evil, as it is very easy to delineate between those who are on the side of right, and those who are on the side of wrong.

Additionally, Lisbeth's tag is Wasp, which is a superhero that she read about when she was a kid. She sees herself as a champion for other abused women, taking every chance she can to make sure that other women, like her mother, are never abused at the hands of a man.

Art

Art is used as a vehicle for communication, mostly on the part of the autistic child, August. It is through his sketches and drawings that he is able to tell others who killed his father.

Art is also what finally enables August to begin reaching out to the world, instead of remaining in the isolated world of the autistic mind.

Taking August's Hand

Frans reaches down and takes August's hand when a car nearly sideswipes them both as they are waiting on a corner. Because of this action, August is suddenly very aware of a world that, until then, had been closed off to him. The author is suggesting that Frans not only has that ability with his son (who may very well represent the huddled low tech masses) but in the field of Artificial Intelligence.



Weather

The author uses the weather to indicate the type of situation that a character might be walking in to. It is also used as foreshadowing. If the weather is bad, then the situation will be quite stormy for the character, and likewise if it is sunny then the character is in a good place mentally and physically.

Rare Watch

Bogdanov wears a rare watch that was given to him by a law firm used by Solifron. It is used to identify him by the police, and by Lisbeth. It also represents, to Bogdanov, the worth and esteem that his employers have for him, which means a lot to him because he was literally pulled out of the gutter by them.

Lisbeth's Gunshot Wound

When Lisbeth throws herself in front of August to keep him from being shot it tells the reader many things. First, it suggests that her claims of having no empathy for her fellow man are untrue. Secondly, it also shows that she will become involved in other people's issues even if there is no money in it for her. This indicates that she has a deeper capacity for emotional growth, something that she is beginning to exhibit.

Solifon

This is the company that purchased and funded the theft of Frans' work. They are really a front for an organized crime syndicate of hackers called the Spiders.

Twins

In this novel, Lisbeth and Camilla are paternal twins. However, they are complete opposites. Camilla is ruthless and sadistic, whereas Lisbeth has compassion and a drive to protect. A dual nature is shown, also, in the various agencies, sworn to uphold the law and protect citizens, but in some aspects, do just the opposite. There is also the dual organizations of the Hacker's Alliance and Spider.

Chess

In Chapter 15 Salander plays chess with Wrange at the nightclub. The moves that she makes are much like the moves that she makes while investigating Frans' death and the involvement of the NSA with Solifon. All of her moves, like those she makes on the chess board, are calculated and designed to trap the other player into making mistakes. This is exactly what she eventually does to outwit her sister.



Settings

The Millennium

This is the magazine's main offices in Sweden. It is also where Mikael Blomkvist works.

The Pub

Mikael agrees to meet an unidentified informant at the local pub to discuss a possible big investigative story. The pub is not usually very crowded, but it is friendly enough.

Stockholm, Sweden

Most of the action takes place in and around Stockholm. The police station, Zander's apartment, Mikael's apartment, Frans' home, are all in Stockholm, as are the Millennium Magazine offices.

Hanna Balder's Home

This is where the reader first sees August, and is often repeated in the sketches created by August. It is a terrible place where both Hanna and August are being terrorized by Lasse.

Frans Balder's Home

This is the home where Frans brings August when he takes him from his mother, Hanna. This is also where Frans disables his computer software, as well as loses his life. August is in this home when the assassin comes to kill his father and is how he knows the identity of his father's killer.



Themes and Motifs

The Corrupting Influence of Power

The corruptive influence of power is depicted in many ways throughout the novel. The NSA uses its power and might to spy on everyone throughout the known world, and also condones collaboration with larger tech companies in order to obtain advanced tech, or to sell it to the highest bidder.

Additionally, Camilla personifies what goes wrong when power is used to serve only one's own interests. In Camilla's case she not only terrorized her sister when they were growing up, but she also terrorized the foster family she was placed with when she was taken from her family.

Additionally, Bublanski finds that there is a leak in his department and that he can no longer trust anyone there until he has discovered who the mole is. This is a direct correlation to the ability of power to corrupt as one of the police officers is found, eventually, to be guilty of telling SAPO about their ongoing investigation (he'd taken a bribe).

Lastly, there is the belief by those with power that they are untouchable and that the laws in force don't apply to them. This is evident in the way that Camilla deals with those that work for her, as well as how she views most other people. They are commodities to be used and discarded. Likewise, Needham with the NSA is very much like this too.

Religion

Religion is touched upon throughout the novel, but most notably in the last part of the book, mainly coming through the character of Bublanski, who is Jewish. He's been having a crisis of conscience for a while, and this case in particular has caused him to question many things.

One of the problems that is focused upon is the issues surrounding organized religion and that even in these organizations corruption is possible. This is very evident, too, in the psychologist at the Oden institute who loves to tell people that he's a Christian, but then he pockets most of the money earmarked for the residents, short changing their treatments in order to keep the center open.

Bublanski is confused, mainly, about the propensity for human beings to choose good over evil. He worries that man might be intrinsically prone to disaster, despite what his Rabbi has been trying to tell him. He sees so much crime and graft around him that it is difficult for him to believe in the goodness of humankind.

However, later on in the novel, what resolves this internal dilemma for him is the fact that he witnesses the possibility of change for someone. He sees that even supposedly



'bad' people can make true changes, and that there are people out there that do the right thing every day without recognition or acknowledgement. When he realizes that Salander has placed herself in jeopardy many times for the sake of a friend, with no regard for her own safety, he is convinced that mankind is redeemable after all.

Childhood Trauma

The theme of Childhood Trauma, like in the other books in this series, is featured prominently. From the onset it is clear that August has been severely traumatized from his time living with his mother and her new husband, Lasse. When August draws a picture depicting a specific instance of abuse, Lisbeth, also a survivor of childhood abuse, vows that he will never have to suffer like that again.

Additionally, when Mikael meets with Palmgren he is told about Camilla and Lisbeth's abuse at the hands of their father. He chronicles a cycle of rape, incest, and abuse at the hands of Zala, a former KGB operative who upon his return from various missions would spend his free time abusing his family. Camilla had convinced herself that it necessary, but Lisbeth internalized it as degrading and sought to learn how to protect herself. Camilla had become in thought and deed like her father. This reaction and internalization of their abuse in different ways shaped each girl into the woman they would become, and set the stage for them to become mortal enemies.

August's childhood trauma is explored in depth a little later on in the novel to include a family friend, a friend of Lasse's, who also took part in the abuse. The reader is left to guess at the extent of the abuse, but from Lisbeth's reaction, it was horrific. The reader is never told, but it is subtly suggested that August's autism and stunted development was due in large part to the abuse and neglect that he suffered as a younger child.

The author seems to be suggesting that childhood abuse and trauma are significant factors in developing the temperament and life goals of the individual suffering the abuse. They will either do what they can to make sure they never suffer again, or those around them (like Lisbeth), or they become abusers themselves (like Camilla).

Good Versus Evil

Throughout the novel there are several organizations and individuals that demonstrate and act as a vehicle for the theme of Good versus Evil. The first instance is that of the NSA versus the Hacker's Republic, which is Lisbeth's organization that she belongs to. They discover the extent of the NSAs invasion of privacy into world affairs, including governments, as well as individuals. It is because of her hacking into the NSA files that Needham begins a deeper probe and discovers the corrupt activities operating under official NSA protocols.

The classic good versus evil in this novel occurs with the twins, Lisbeth and Camilla. Both are identical twins, but one is a blonde, and the other is a brunette. While Camilla sports the blonde hair, which traditionally would have suggested wholesomeness and



kindness, she is, in effect the most evil of those in the novel. Secondly, the author suggests that not all that 'glitters' is golden. Likewise, Lisbeth is brunette, and dark in nature, and yet, is the heroine of the novel. Things are never what they seem, and what seems initially good, is evil, and vice versa.

From the beginning it seems that Camilla's Spider group has been developed specifically to frustrate and hunt down Lisbeth, whose hacker name is Wasp. This is a direct reference to the Marvel Comic book character, Wasp, who is a superhero. Conversely, all of the hackers working for the Spider organization have taken hacker tags that correspond with all known comic book enemies to the Wasp.

Good versus Evil also occurs in the police force as Bublanski has to confront his own version of good and evil, especially when he comes to a crossroads and can't determine whether people are inherently good or evil, and why what he does even matters when there is such evil in the world. In the end, his answer is that people have the ability to be either good or evil, but more importantly, they have the ability to change. No one is ever locked into a role.

Family

The theme of Family is very strong in this novel. The first instance of this is with Frans quitting his job and going to remove his son from his ex-wife's home. Living with Frans, August begins to blossom and Frans begins to see that his son is very gifted. Frans regrets not having been in his son's life more over the years and a slight suggestion is made about quantity mattering more than quality when it comes to time spent with one's children. In the end, Frans' last thought was for the safety of his son.

The reader also learns of the horrible family life that both Lisbeth and Camilla suffered at the hands of their tyrannical and hostile father, Zala. It is his constant abuse and continuous rape of their mother that set both girls on their own life courses. Each girl became what they had to become in order to survive their circumstances. However, from speaking with Camilla's guardian, it was clear that Camilla's choice of life directions was to follow in her father's footsteps.

The author indicates that one should weigh very carefully who one lets into one's family, such as the family that adopted Camilla. Seeming an angel on the outside, she was the opposite and destroyed the family that gave her shelter. The father committed suicide because he was disgraced when he had sex with Camilla. The older daughter nearly committed suicide and had to be committed into a psych ward in order to prevent it. The mother was left with a broken family whose only crime was to take in a child that needed a home.

Styles

Point of View

The book is told in third person, with each chapter shifting focus back and forth between multiple characters. At first, Lisbeth is only mentioned in passing in the beginning of the novel, However the last part of the book features her thoughts and insights more than other characters.

Language and Meaning

This is the first book in the series to be written by someone other than Larsson, so the voice and tone are a bit different from the others. Compared to the other novels, Lagercrantz's language tends to be choppy, fragmented, and he 'head hops' to distraction, often leaving the reader suspended in the middle of some intensely action packed scene to focus on another character's whereabouts or backstory.

The world of the professional spy, hacker, and scientist are all fair game and as such include slang and jargon endemic to their worlds. The reader may need to look up and identify computer slang and lingo. The scientific language may also present a difficulty as the topics include physics, artificial intelligence, and mathematics.

Structure

The novel takes place over the span of five days in winter, in Sweden. There are three sections which introduce many and varied storylines. By the end of Part three the diverse storylines are tied together into a coherent entity. Dramatic irony is used heavily as a plot device, and in many respects, Lagercrantz's plotlines are tighter and more fast paced than Larsson's ever were. There are 31 chapters, averaging 10-15 pages each.



Quotes

But August never uttered a word. If he raised his head from the puzzle it was to look straight past him towards the window overlooking the sea and the sunshine reflected on the water, and eventually Balder just left him alone."

-- Narrator (chapter 1 paragraph 41)

Importance: This is the state that August is in when Frans goes and takes him from his abusive stepfather and mother.

Other fathers could be reported to the social services and the police. But Zala had forces behind him which were above all that.

-- Lisbeth (chapter 9 paragraph 8)

Importance: This quote demonstrates the theme of Childhood Trauma, and in particular reminds the reader of Lisbeth's tragic childhood and of the father who was the perpetrator of the abuse.

Ha, no, that it's always the wrong people who have the guilty conscience. Those who are really responsible for suffering in the world couldn't care less. It's the ones fighting for good who are consumed by remorse."

-- Mikael (chapter 10 paragraph 27)

Importance: Mikael is speaking about Lisbeth, though he doesn't say so out loud. This is also in reference to what he's experienced as an investigative journalist.

We live in a twisted world where everything, both big and small, is subject to surveillance, and where anything worth money will always be exploited."

-- Needham (chapter 25 paragraph 71)

Importance: This is a comment that Needham makes to Mikael when it is discovered that most likely Lisbeth has read the file. This is also when the full picture of the involvement between the NSA, Solifon, and the Russian mob comes out.

What matters is not that we believe in God. God is not small-minded. What matters is for us to understand that life is serious and rich. We should appreciate it and also try to make the world a better place. Whoever finds a balance between the two is close to God."

-- Bublanski (chapter 29 paragraph 5)

Importance: This is where Bublanski is making up his mind about religion and if it will give him the answers he is looking for in regards to the ability of mankind to be inherently good, or born evil.

Sometimes the best ideas occur to you while your mind is occupied with something completely different."



-- Lisbeth (chapter 11 paragraph 41)

Importance: Lisbeth likes to distract herself by going to the boxing gym near her apartment. This allows her mind to clear itself and often she finds that she has the solution to her problem afterwards.

It's always the wrong people who have the guilty conscience. Those who are really responsible for suffering in the world couldn't care less. It's the ones fighting for good who are consumed by remorse."

-- Mikael (chapter 17 paragraph 8)

Importance: He muses about this after he's received word that Lisbeth has surfaced again and people are accusing her of being on the wrong side.

A star stays alive as a result of two opposing actions, the fusion at its core forcing it outwards and the gravitational pull keeping it together. She saw it as a balancing act, a tug of war from which a victor eventually emerges, once the fuel for the reactions runs out and the explosions weaken. When gravity gains the upper hand, the celestial body shrinks like a punctured balloon and becomes smaller and smaller. In this way, a star can vanish into nothing. Salander liked black holes. She felt an affinity to them.

-- Lisbeth (chapter 15 paragraph 23)

Importance: This shows the reader Lisbeth's mindset and how she seeks oblivion and anonymity to some extent.

You do know what the campaign against you is all about, don't you? Your uncompromising attitude makes people feel pathetic. Your very existence reminds them just how much they've sold out.

-- Erika Berger (chapter 7 paragraph 7)

Importance: Erika warns Mikael about the campaign against him by Levin to get him reassigned to the London desk.

It's called technological singularity, the state at which computer intelligence will have overtaken our own."

-- Farah Sharif (chapter 29 paragraph 67)

Importance: This is when Mikael interviews her in connection to Frans' murder. She says that she warned him about the development of the program. In the end, her warnings went unheeded, and Frans was killed.

He was undoubtedly intelligent and well informed, but too right-wing for Grane's tastes. It was rare to find a well-educated Swede who was also a wholehearted supporter of the American Republican Party—he even expressed some sympathy for the Tea Party movement.

-- Grane (chapter 21 paragraph 83)



Importance: She reflects on having met Frans once, long ago.

No parent should have to decide. After all, no-one could anticipate what was best for the child.”

-- Hanna (chapter 14 paragraph 6)

Importance: Hanna, August's mother, is trying to justify her decision to place him into the institution.