

# **The Girl Who Played with Fire Study Guide**

**The Girl Who Played with Fire by Stieg Larsson**

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# Plot Summary

The Girl Who Played with Fire is the second volume in Stieg Larsson's trilogy. The book opens with Lisbeth Salander remembering being strapped down to her bed in St. Stefan's Children's Psychiatric Clinic. The thoughts of Lisbeth setting fire to a car with a man inside seem somewhat surreal although they turn out to be true.

Lisbeth has been traveling around the world after having stolen three billion kronor from a business tycoon. It is strange for Lisbeth to live in any other way than a life of poverty but she makes the most of it. While Lisbeth is in Grenada she takes a 16 year old lover. She also encounters an American couple who fight constantly. The husband is abusive to his wife. Lisbeth realizes that the man intends to kill his wife to inherit \$40 million. Lisbeth and her lover rescue the woman during a hurricane. The man turns up dead the next day.

Lisbeth returns to Stockholm after a year. She finds a new apartment and moves in. Lisbeth decides to give her old apartment to Mimmi, an old friend and lover. Mimmi gladly accepts.

Lisbeth realizes that she left without saying goodbye to anyone. This fact upset Armansky, Lisbeth's old boss. Armansky says he will not hire Lisbeth again. Lisbeth tries to convince Armansky that she no longer needs to work.

Blomkvist had continued to watch out for Lisbeth while she had been gone and is pleased to learn she has returned to Stockholm. Blomkvist has been working alongside Dag Svensson on an article and book that exposes many public officials in a sex trade scandal. Svensson's girlfriend, Mia, is working on another aspect of the case as fodder for her doctoral dissertation.

Things begin to change rapidly when Svensson and Mia end up murdered and Lisbeth's prints are on the murder weapon. It is also thought that Lisbeth murdered Nils Bjurman, her former guardian and the man who had raped and abused her while she had been under his care.

The entire story begins to tie into the sex trade scandal and a mysterious man named Zala. Gunner Björck, a member of Säpo, is exposed in Svensson's article and book. Björck agrees to give Blomkvist information on Zala, aka Alexander Zalachenko, if he is written out of the story and his involvement in the sex trade is not exposed. Later Björck realizes that he only has Blomkvist's word that he will not be exposed. Bjurman knew of Björck's involvement and there may be some record of it in Bjurman's papers. Björck calls Zala for help.

Lisbeth and Blomkvist are hot on the same trail. It is learned that Zala is Lisbeth's father and each wants to kill the other. Lisbeth is determined to ruin Zala once and for all. Zala ends up shooting Lisbeth and tells Niedermann, Lisbeth's half brother, to bury her. However, Lisbeth is not dead and makes one more attack on Zala.

Blomkvist arrives at the farmhouse where the showdown took place not long after Lisbeth collapses on the kitchen floor. Lisbeth, remarkably, is still alive. Blomkvist calls for an ambulance.



# Prologue, Part 1 - chapters 1-3

## Prologue, Part 1 - chapters 1-3 Summary

Prologue:

Lisbeth Salander is strapped to a bed. It is night. She marks off another day in her head. Some heavy piece of machinery begins to hum and causes the bed to vibrate. She expects a visitor although it is too late for him to call. Lisbeth has no choice but to lie in the bed and wait. The leather restraints are too tight and cannot be budged.

"She detested this helplessness. No matter how hard she tried to concentrate on something else—to pass the time and to distract her from the situation she was in—the fear came trickling out." Prologue, p. 5

Lisbeth decides to think about something else. She pictures a man in a car. Gasoline is poured on the car and it begins to burn.

Part 1 - Irregular Equations

December 16-20

Chapter 1: Thursday, December 16-Friday, December 17

Lisbeth is on the island of St. George. She sits under an awning beside the pool and notes as an American woman takes one of the chaises. The woman is attractive. Lisbeth stares at the woman. She and her husband are at the hotel while the husband conducts some sort of business. Lisbeth has heard the couple arguing over the last several days. The man is abusing his wife. Every night Lisbeth hears them and just before she kicks their door the fighting would stop.

"He called her a whore, which was an accusation that Salander would have taken measures to combat if it had been directed at her. It had not been, but nevertheless she thought for a long time about whether she ought to take some sort of action." Part 1, chap, 1, p. 13

Lisbeth thinks about her introduction to spherical astronomy when she found a copy of Popular Science at Leonardo Da Vinci airport. In order to understand the topic, Lisbeth had to learn more about the mysteries of mathematics. She began to buy books and read as much as possible.

Mikael Blomkvist visits Lisbeth's apartment in Stockholm and is not surprised to discover that she has yet to return. Blomkvist thinks about his discussions with Lisbeth and the events that have taken place during the last year. Blomkvist and Lisbeth had had an affair that lasted for six months. Lisbeth had ended it. Blomkvist was not



particularly devastated but had been puzzled when Lisbeth refused to see him again in any capacity.

Lisbeth enjoys the new shape she has achieved after receiving breast implants. She visits her new lover when she hears that a hurricane is on its way to St. George. Lisbeth wonders if she should leave St. George or Grenada before the hurricane hits. Meanwhile, Lisbeth decides to investigate her abusive neighbor, Richard Forbes. She speaks to Ella Carmichael about the man and learns that he is a doctor who specializes in educating talented children. Ella is surprised to hear about Forbes' abuse of his wife, Geraldine.

That night, as she walks on the beach with her 16 year old boyfriend George, Lisbeth spots Forbes and watches him as he surveys the beach and smokes a cigarette.

Chapter 2: Friday, December 17

Advokat Nils Bjurman sits and thinks about Lisbeth Salander. Bjurman had been named as Lisbeth's guardian when she had been declared incompetent. Bjurman had been immediately enthralled with Lisbeth and ignored all of his moral and legal responsibilities by abusing the young woman. In return, Lisbeth got her revenge.

"Salander had crushed him. He was never going to forget it. She had taken command and humiliated him. She had abused him in a way that had left indelible marks on his body. On an area the size of a book below his navel. She had handcuffed him to his bed, abused him, and tattooed him with I AM A SADISTIC PIG, A PERVERT, AND A RAPIST." Part 1, chap. 2, p. 33

Bjurman is kept from retaliating because Lisbeth had filmed the rape and had threatened to send it to the media. If Bjurman contacts Lisbeth ever again or if she should die in some accident, the video would be sent to the media. If Bjurman dares to touch Lisbeth ever again, she would kill him. Bjurman knows that she means it.

Blomkvist meets with Erika Berger, his colleague and lover. They discuss the new intern whom Blomkvist says is a girl of 17 with the mind of a 10 year old. Berger claims there is hero worship involved. Blomkvist wants the girl to go away.

Bjurman sits and thinks of ways to retaliate against Lisbeth. Holger Palmgren, Lisbeth's former guardian had kept meticulous notes on the girl and they were now in the possession of the Guardianship Agency. Palmgren had suffered a stroke which led to Bjurman's affiliation with Lisbeth.

"Palmgren's notebooks had provided Bjurman with the final key. On several occasions he had recorded very personal diary-type accounts of conversations that he had had with Salander. A crazy old man. In two of these conversations he had used the expression 'when 'All The Evil' happened.' Presumably Palmgren had borrowed the expression directly from Salander, but it was not clear what event it referred to." Part 1, chap. 2, p. 42



While searching the files at the Guardianship Agency, Bjurman notes that there are gaps in Lisbeth's history. Bjurman does learn that Lisbeth has a twin sister. Her father is unknown and her mother had been incapable of taking care of Lisbeth. The files contain references to a classified police report as well as a stay in St. Stefan's Children's Psychiatric Clinic.

Bjurman reads a name in the file that shocks him and he suddenly realizes that he has an improbable ally. A stranger approaches Bjurman's table.

Chapter 3: Friday, December 17-Saturday, December 18

Lisbeth follows Forbes. She realizes that each day he dresses in a suit and tie and does nothing but kill time. Lisbeth wonders why Forbes is in Grenada since the conference he is supposedly attending is clearly a ruse.

Lisbeth spends her free time studying mathematical equations.

Lisbeth learns that Forbes has had some trouble with the law. She also learns that Geraldine Forbes is worth \$40 million and that the couple has no heirs.

Lisbeth is warned that all those in the hotel are being asked to take shelter because of the hurricane. Lisbeth flees the hotel to go and warn George.

Later, Lisbeth realizes that Forbes intends to use the storm as a cover while he murders his wife. Lisbeth finds the couple on the beach. Forbes is trying to strangle Geraldine. Lisbeth hits Forbes and rescues Geraldine.

A pseudo-tornado arrives on the scene. Lisbeth and George flee.

The next morning Constable Ferguson arrives at Lisbeth's door to ask questions about Geraldine Forbes. It is known that Lisbeth and George saved the woman. Ferguson tells Lisbeth that Richard Forbes is dead. Geraldine is inconsolable.

## **Prologue, Part 1 - chapters 1-3 Analysis**

The prologue details the 43rd day of Lisbeth Salander's imprisonment. It is not said where she is being kept or why although there are elements that suggest it might be a hospital of some sort. Lisbeth, a powerful woman, is going crazy from being so helpless. She decides to conjure an image in her head. The image relates to a fire she once set and how she deeply detested the man inside the car.

Bjurman tries to justify his actions and rage by declaring that Lisbeth is a whore. She had solicited sex at age 17, which placed her at the bottom of the social scale and made her worthless. Bjurman wants to retaliate against Lisbeth and thinks he is smart enough to do so. It is clear that Bjurman underestimates Lisbeth Salander. The stranger at the table is most likely the "improbable ally" to whom Bjurman refers in Lisbeth's file.



Blomkvist continues to seek out Lisbeth. At times Blomkvist is not sure why he does it but he feels compelled to do so. It was Lisbeth who had severed their relationship. However, Blomkvist is still Lisbeth's champion when it comes to the murder charges and other incidents that took place in the previous novel. Blomkvist is convinced that Lisbeth is innocent and continues to work to prove it.

Blomkvist and Berger have an open relationship. Berger is married. Their main bond started at Millennium, a magazine where they work. Blomkvist expresses concern over the new intern's behavior and does not want to get caught up with a 17 year-old, especially now that he is 45. Berger promises to handle the situation since she understands 17 year-old girls and hero worship.

Lisbeth clearly has no tolerance for the actions of Richard Forbes. While Lisbeth has a great deal to occupy her time, from the mathematical studies to the relationship with George, she watches Forbes and learns about his background. Lisbeth knows Forbes intends to kill his wife and that the whole conference in Grenada is nothing but a ruse. Lisbeth is right, of course, and follows Forbes several times to learn what he is about. When Lisbeth catches Forbes trying to kill Geraldine under the camouflage of the storm, she takes action. Geraldine is rescued and Forbes is left on the beach in a daze.

Lisbeth is not surprised when Ferguson tells her about Forbes' death. The reader can surmise that Lisbeth is the one who killed Forbes although it will most likely be documented as an accident due to an unsuspecting American tourist's inappropriate actions during a hurricane. Geraldine exhibits typical behavior for an abused woman in that she is devastated over her husband's death. Although Geraldine is the one with all of the money, it is clear that she had been under Richard's thumb during their marriage.





## Part 2 - Chapters 4-10

### Part 2 - Chapters 4-10 Summary

Part 2: From Russia with Love

January 10 - March 23

Chapter 4: Monday, January 10 - Tuesday, January 11

Lisbeth returns to Stockholm, exhausted. She thinks about the 3 billion kronor she has stolen and will use to treat herself. She has found an expensive apartment and for once decides that she does not want to live her former frugal lifestyle.

"All her life she had had to choose the cheapest option, and she was not yet used to the idea that she had more than three billion kronor, which she had stolen by means of an Internet coup combined with good old-fashioned fraud. After a few moments of getting cold and wet, she said to hell with the rule book and waved for a taxi." Part 2, Chap. 4, p. 63

Lisbeth inquires about a condo at the Nobel Estates but is refused because the condo would cost more than what was in her piggy bank. Lisbeth is angry over the man's treatment of her and decides to retaliate. It does not take long for Lisbeth to discover that the man is a tax evader. She sends documents to the tax collection agency to show the fraud.

Lisbeth returns to her old apartment and sorts through the mail. Almost all of it is junk mail save for some work related tax forms. She has received only three letters. One is from her mother's executor informing her of a small inheritance. One is from the nursing home where her mother had lived and died. The last is from Blomkvist. The latter is thrown into the trash, unopened.

Lisbeth goes shopping for items for the new apartment.

Berger and Blomkvist meet with Dag Svensson. Svensson has been working on covering the sex trade in Sweden and wants to publish an article and a book. Svensson's work is explosive. In his research he has uncovered and identified a judge, a prosecutor, five attorneys, three cops and three journalists who are involved in the prostitution ring. Berger and Blomkvist agree to publish Svensson's work.

Chapter 5: Wednesday, January 12 - Friday, January 14

Lisbeth goes to the nursing home to pick up her mother's belongings. Lisbeth thinks about her mother, Agneta. Agneta had spent the past fourteen years in a nursing home, suffering frequently from strokes. There is a part of Lisbeth that had hoped Agneta would recover and they could finally have a mother/daughter relationship. Lisbeth also



thinks about her twin sister Camilla. The girls are polar opposites. Lisbeth has no desire to see Camilla ever again.

"When they were twelve and 'All The Evil' happened, they had been sent to different foster homes. They had not seen each other since their seventeenth birthday, and that meeting had ended with Lisbeth getting a black eye and Camilla a fat lip. Lisbeth did not know where Camilla was living now, and she hadn't made any attempt to find out." Part 2, chap. 5, p. 81

Blomkvist and Berger discuss Svensson's book with Svensson and his girlfriend Mia. Mia explains that her doctoral dissertation deals more with the treatment and psychological and physical issues of the girls being sold into prostitution while Dag's work looks more at the financial aspect.

Lisbeth's new furniture arrives. She surveys the apartment and thinks she will like living there. Lisbeth also realizes that when she left Stockholm, she never said goodbye to any of her friends, even Blomkvist and Mimmi. In fact, she never said goodbye to George Bland in Grenada.

Lisbeth does her routine check of Bjurman's computer just to make sure he's toeing the line.

Chapter 6: Sunday, January 23 - Saturday, January 29

Lisbeth goes to her old employer's office at Milton Security. She wants to be able to hack into Dragan Armansky's computer any time she wants. There is nothing specific Lisbeth is looking for, she is just curious as to what Armansky has been doing since she left the company.

The four main shareholders in Millennium have a meeting. One of the people in attendance is Harriet Vanger, whose uncle owns 30% of the company.

Later that night, Blomkvist has sex with Vanger. There is an age difference but they like each other and get together when she is in town.

Lisbeth goes to see Mimmi. Mimmi had been worried that something bad had happened to Lisbeth. The women are excited to see each other. Lisbeth is eager to show off her new breasts. The pair makes love.

Chapter 7: Saturday, January 29 - Sunday, February 13

The large blond man goes to the Svavelsjö Motorcycle Club to meet with Carl-Magnus Lundin. The men discuss a drug deal. The men have conducted a lot of business together over the years. When the drug business is concluded, the blond man asks Lundin to kidnap Lisbeth and take her to a farmhouse so that the blond man's "employer" can have a quiet talk with her. The blond man pays Lundin 10,000 kronor.



Lisbeth goes back to her old apartment. There is no special bond with the apartment but Lisbeth does not want to sell it. She offers it to Mimmi free of charge just so someone will live in it. The only catch is that Mimmi has to receive Lisbeth's mail.

Lisbeth withdraws the money she inherited from her mother and donates it to a women's crisis center.

Berger thinks about her relationship with Blomkvist. Even though he is sleeping with Vanger, Berger is not upset.

"Berger was incredibly happy to be Blomkvist's friend and confidante. In certain ways he was a fool, and in others so insightful that he seemed like an oracle." Part 2, chap. 7, p. 112

Berger thinks about her relationship with her husband. He is the perfect man for her in every way but she is not in love with him like she is with Blomkvist.

The blond man goes to the cabin in the woods and is frustrated by its location. Bjurman greets him at the door.

Chapter 8: Monday, February 14 - Saturday, February 19

Lisbeth goes to visit Dragan Armansky at Milton Security. Armansky is not pleased to see Lisbeth. Lisbeth assures Armansky that she is not looking for work. Armansky tells Lisbeth that she has no courtesy or respect for her friends, she only cares about herself.

Armansky tells Lisbeth that Palmgren is still alive. It had been Lisbeth who found him after his major stroke. Lisbeth thought he was dead. Lisbeth leaves Milton Security and goes to visit Palmgren in the rehabilitation center.

Palmgren and Lisbeth have a nice reunion. Lisbeth notes how Palmgren has deteriorated, Palmgren notices that Lisbeth has grown up. Lisbeth is introduced as Palmgren's foster daughter. The doctor questions Lisbeth about her absence. Lisbeth gives an explanation and wants to be contacted about Palmgren's health. The doctor says Palmgren must give permission.

Lisbeth says:

"And you'll never get it from that stubborn devil. You see, he suffers from the delusion that he shouldn't burden me with his troubles and that he is still responsible for me, and not the other way around. This is how it is: for two years I thought he was dead. Yesterday I discovered that he was alive. If I'd known that he ... it's complicated to explain, but I'd like to know what sort of prognosis he has and whether he will recover." Part 2, chap. 8, p. 129

Mia picks up Svensson from the train station. They learn that a man named Zala is involved in the sex trade. People are afraid of Zala and no one will talk. One of the girls interviewed has been found dead.



Chapter 9: Sunday, March 6 - Friday, March 11

Lisbeth continues to visit Palmgren. They play chess.

Bjurman comes back to Stockholm from his cabin. Salander's bank statement is in the mail, and he sees a withdrawal. This means she's back in Stockholm. He calls the blond giant.

Svensson has no luck in locating Björck. Blomkvist and Svensson are at the Millennium offices. Dag can't find Säpo. Blomkvist suggests writing a letter saying he's won a mobile phone and a chance to win 100,000 kronor. Hopefully, Björck will take the bait.

Lisbeth and Blomkvist end up in the same bar. Lisbeth has not seen Blomkvist and tries to remain unseen. Later that night Lisbeth hacks into Blomkvist's computer. One item she reads upsets Lisbeth. It is an email regarding Zala and the dead girl.

Chapter 10: Monday, March 14 - Sunday, March 20

Lisbeth buys a used car. She can afford almost anything she wants but does not want to draw attention to herself. She tells Mimmi that she can borrow the car with advance notice.

Lisbeth goes to a café and sees Bjurman.

"The sight of Bjurman aroused no dramatic feelings in Salander, not anger, nor hatred, nor fear. As far as she was concerned, the world would assuredly be a better place without him, but he was alive only because she had decided that he would be more useful to her that way." Part 2, chap. 10, p. 147

Lisbeth sees the giant blond man and follows him to a meeting with a man wearing a motorcycle club jacket.

Later Lisbeth does some research and learns that the ponytailed man is Carl-Magnus Lundin. The man Lundin with whom met is Sonny Nieminen. Both men have long police records.

Lisbeth also researches Zala and the name Zalachenko but comes up with little. Lisbeth is returning to her apartment when Lundin tries to attack. Lisbeth manages to get away. It is clear that Bjurman has hired someone to kill her.

## Part 2 - Chapters 4-10 Analysis

Lisbeth returns to Stockholm. It seems as if she has thought little about her life there since she left. The negative aspects have remained with her but Lisbeth has given little thought to her friends that have been left behind. After arriving in Stockholm, Lisbeth realizes that she never said goodbye to anyone, not even the important people in her life like Armansky, Blomkvist, and Mimmi. It is simply not in Lisbeth's make up to get



close to anyone on a deeply personal level. Lisbeth does not seem to be bothered by Armansky's anger and irritation toward her. Lisbeth is all about getting information from every possible source. She never expected to learn that Palmgren is still alive.

Palmgren may be the only person who has Lisbeth's devotion. It is clear that their relationship means a great deal to both. Lisbeth even asks Palmgren if he will help her with the incompetence hearing when the time comes. When Palmgren says he is too old and dumb, Lisbeth argues.

Palmgren worries that something has happened between Lisbeth and Bjurman.

"He felt a deep sense of remorse. How many times had he thought about calling his colleague Nils Bjurman—a fellow lawyer after all, if not a friend—to ask how Salander was doing, but then neglected to do so? And why had he not contested her declaration of incompetence while he still had the power? He knew why—he had wanted, selfishly, to keep his contact with her alive. He loved this damned difficult child like the daughter he never had, and he wanted to have an excuse to maintain the relationship. Besides, it was physically too difficult."

Lisbeth deals with her mother's effects. Although Lisbeth says she wants nothing to do with Camilla, it is likely that the sisters' paths will cross in the future.

Lisbeth discovers what Bjurman has been doing and is going to take control of the situation. As smart as Bjurman may be as an attorney, he is foolish and rash when it comes to Lisbeth. There is no way Bjurman can outsmart or out maneuver Lisbeth. The comeuppance that is bound to occur will be a surprise.

The first hit on Lisbeth is foiled, perhaps in part because Blomkvist shows up unexpectedly.

Svensson and Mia begin to hit road blocks with their work. It seems that Zala has great influence and enough power to intimidate others. Unfortunately, no one knows Zala's true identity yet.



## Part 3 - Chapters 11-15

### Part 3 - Chapters 11-15 Summary

Chapter 11: Wednesday, March 23 - Maundy Thursday, March 24

It is Easter week and most people are gone from Millennium's offices. Blomkvist works on Svensson's book. The book is good but Blomkvist knows that it needs to be watertight.

Blomkvist writes a letter to Lisbeth, to whom he refers as "Sally." Blomkvist says he still wants to be friends and that he misses her company. Blomkvist tells Lisbeth that he has her shoulder bag and keys. Lisbeth never responds.

Blomkvist wonders why someone would be after Lisbeth.

Blomkvist goes to have dinner with his sister, Annika. During dinner Svensson calls to say he wants to drop off some photos. Blomkvist offers to pick them up.

Lisbeth visits Svensson and Mia. She asks about their research regarding Alexander Zalachenko. Svensson is stunned. Until now he never knew Zala's full name.

When Blomkvist arrives at Svensson and Mia's house, he finds them dead. Blomkvist calls for the police and an ambulance. Blomkvist goes to police headquarters where he is questioned. Annika, an attorney, is present.

Chapter 12: Maundy Thursday, March 24

Blomkvist arrives at Berger's house in the early morning hours. He breaks the news about Svensson and Mia. A discussion follows at the Millennium offices. It seems clear that the couple was murdered due to their work on the sex trafficking scandal. Blomkvist and Berger decide to push back the book's publication and to start their own investigation.

Chapter 13: Maundy Thursday, March 24

Prosecutor Richard Ekström contacts Inspector Jan Bublanski to head up the investigation of the murders of Svensson and Mia. Working alongside Bublanski (aka Bubbles) will be Jerker Holmberg, Sonja Modig, Curt Andersson, and Hans Faste.

The gun is found at the crime scene. Bublanski learns that the gun is registered to Bjurman. Bjurman's prints are on the gun. Lisbeth's prints are also on the gun.

Blomkvist logs onto Svensson's computer at Millennium. Blomkvist deletes all files containing sensitive information. Blomkvist locks up important and confidential papers in his office.



Bublanski and Modig try to find Bjurman without success. Faste tells the team that Lisbeth Salander is under Bjurman's guardianship. She is known as being violent. Lisbeth's employer is listed as Milton Security.

Ekström tells Andersson and Faste to bring Lisbeth in as a suspect. Bublanski is ordered to interview Armansky while Modig searches for Bjurman.

Bublanski gets more information from Armansky, including the fact that Lisbeth is highly intelligent. He also learns that Lisbeth knows Blomkvist.

Chapter 14: Maundy Thursday, March 24

Modig finds Bjurman in his apartment. He is dead. Modig phones Ekström.

Bublanski contacts Andersson and Faste as they wait on the street outside Lisbeth's old apartment building. Bublanski gives the news about Bjurman's death and says that Lisbeth is the prime suspect in his murder. Bublanski also connects Lisbeth to the murders of Svensson and Mia.

Bublanski goes to Millennium to interview Blomkvist about Lisbeth. Blomkvist tells Bublanski that Lisbeth is talented and resourceful. Blomkvist also says that Lisbeth is the best researcher he's ever known.

Blomkvist is stunned when Bublanski tells him that Lisbeth is considered mentally unstable, is under guardianship, and has spent time in a psychiatric hospital as a teenager. Bublanski also says that Lisbeth is going to be charged with the murders of Svensson, Mia, and Bjurman.

Bublanski, Andersson, and Faste break into Lisbeth's old apartment. The only things they find belong to Miriam Wu. There is no sign of Lisbeth.

Chapter 15: Maundy Thursday, March 24

Ekström meets with Bublanski and Faste. Bublanski tells Ekström about Miriam Wu's presence in Lisbeth's old apartment. Faste says that the items found in the apartment lead him to believe that Miriam might be a prostitute. Ekström thinks there may be a link because Lisbeth's files indicate that she might have been a prostitute. However, there has never been an investigation and therefore, no proof.

Ekström brainstorms about possible reasons for Svensson and Mia's deaths and why Lisbeth might want to kill them. Bublanski says there is no evidence that backs up Ekström's theory.

Ekström reveals to the media that Lisbeth is the prime suspect in the murders. Ekström loves the media.

Bublanski and Modig investigate the scene at Bjurman's apartment. Bublanski says he is not convinced that Lisbeth is the killer. What is the motive?



Gunnar Samuelsson, a member of the forensics team, shows Bjurman's tattoo to Bublanski and Modig. Modig begins to wonder if this tattoo is linked to a motive.

Blomkvist thinks about Lisbeth's supposed involvement in the murders. He decides to withhold judgment.

## Part 3 - Chapters 11-15 Analysis

Blomkvist continues to show interest in Lisbeth although it is unclear if it is truly friendship-based or something more. Blomkvist often contradicts his devil-may-care nature when it comes to women although he seems to have no problem in getting one or many. Blomkvist's belief that Lisbeth is innocent stems from a different place although there is something about the murders that seems fabricated to Blomkvist. Blomkvist's convictions seem to convince others that might otherwise be skeptical or believe in Lisbeth's guilt.

Lisbeth also shows a new side to herself when it comes to Holger Palmgren. It is obvious that Lisbeth loves the old man and respects him on a personal and professional level. It is difficult to see Palmgren struggle with his infirmities as he was once a powerful and independent man. It takes a great deal of humility to allow Lisbeth to feed him and to reverse the role that is, for all intents and purposes, that of a father-daughter. Lisbeth restores some of Palmgren's dignity by asking for his help. Even though Palmgren says he is too old and dumb to help Lisbeth with her competency hearing, it is clear that he is flattered and more than capable of assisting Lisbeth in having the case thrown out.

At this point in the story, Bublanski, fondly referred to as Officer Bubbles, becomes a major player. Bublanski will head up the investigation into the murders of Svensson and Johansson. While the crime may have been originally attributed to Bjurman, Lisbeth's fingerprints on the weapon are a telling sign. The reader may surmise that if Lisbeth really is the killer she would not have done something so foolish as to leave her fingerprints on the weapon.

Bublanski and Blomkvist delve deeper into Lisbeth's past and learn some shocking news including information about the stay at St. Stefan's. Through the conversation with Armansky, Bublanski realizes that Lisbeth is far more savvy and intelligent than anyone had known.

Lisbeth's disappearance concerns Blomkvist and makes her appear guilty of the murders.





## Part 3 - Chapters 16-20

### Part 3 - Chapters 16-20 Summary

Chapter 16: Good Friday, March 25 - Easter Sunday, March 26

The media catches on to Lisbeth's potential involvement in the murders. She is referred to in the press as a mass murderer. Blomkvist takes Lisbeth's handbag to Modig and turns it in. Blomkvist keeps Lisbeth's hammer, worried that it will incriminate Lisbeth and show that she could be dangerous. Blomkvist tells Modig that he intends to conduct his own investigation into the murders. Modig warns Blomkvist not to withhold information from the police that could hinder their investigation. Modig also tells Blomkvist that Svensson's laptop is missing.

Blomkvist looks to Eriksson to help identify possible suspects. Svensson's book identified 37 people, all of whom can be seen as suspects because of the possibility of being exposed.

Armansky contemplates Lisbeth's involvement in the murders. Armansky knows Lisbeth is capable of committing murder but decides that there must be a good explanation if she is guilty.

Chapter 17: Easter Sunday, March 27 - Tuesday, March 29

Blomkvist writes another letter to Lisbeth. Blomkvist says he thinks she is innocent and informs her that he is going to conduct his own investigation into the murders with the help of Sonny Bohman and Niklas Hedström. Blomkvist also informs Lisbeth that Annika has agreed to help her. Blomkvist knows that Lisbeth had monitored his computer. He hopes she still does so that she can follow the progress of the investigation.

In the letter Blomkvist also asks for information on the relationship between Bjurman, Svensson and Mia.

The police interview Dr. Peter Teleborian, a famous psychiatrist who works at St. Stefan's Children's Psychiatric Clinic. Teleborian says he is not surprised that Lisbeth has murdered someone and that she should not have been allowed to leave the clinic. Lisbeth never participated in her treatment. Teleborian refers to Lisbeth as an egomaniacal psychopath with violent tendencies.

Chapter 18: Tuesday, March 29 - Wednesday, March 30

Hedström is excited to be a part of the investigation into the murders. Hedström still holds a grudge against Lisbeth because she threatened to expose him for inappropriate behavior regarding a celebrity client at Milton Security. Hedström had sold naked photos of one of Milton's celebrity clients to the tabloids and Lisbeth found out and confronted him. Hedström looks at this opportunity to get back at her.



Hedström and Bohman meet with police. Bublanski holds a briefing on the case.

Holmberg gives a report that states the discovery of Lisbeth's fingerprints on various items including one of Mia's china cups, the gun used in the murder and the gun box found in Bjurman's apartment.

Lisbeth was seen in the area of Svensson and Mia's apartment on the night in question.

Police have uncovered the identity of Miriam "Mimmi" Wu, a lesbian who works at Domino Fashion, an erotic clothing store. It is surmised that Lisbeth and Wu are lovers. Police also connect Lisbeth to Evil Fingers. Faste refers to the group as hard-rocking lesbian Satanists.

Modig thinks that Lisbeth might have also killed Bjurman out of revenge for his victimization of her. Faste adds that he thinks Bjurman may have been involved in the sex trade along with Lisbeth and Wu.

Lisbeth leaves a message on Blomkvist's computer. The message simply reads "Zala." When Blomkvist replies and questions Lisbeth about Zala, Lisbeth replies, "You're the journalist. Find out." Part 3, chap, 18, p. 192.

Chapter 19: Wednesday, March 30 - Friday, April 1

Blomkvist refers to Svensson's files to learn more about Zala. Blomkvist doubts that Zala exists. Blomkvist decides to interview the pimps and johns mentioned in Svensson's article and book.

Gunnar Björck calls Svensson's old phone and informs Blomkvist that he is calling about winning the phone and kronor. Blomkvist gives his address to Björck and is excited that the man took the bait.

Lisbeth leaves another message on Blomkvist's computer saying that Ekström is leaking information to the press. Lisbeth tells Blomkvist to ask Ekström why he has not released the old police report. Blomkvist has no idea what it means but knows it is futile to try to get more information from Lisbeth. Blomkvist writes back to Lisbeth saying that he hopes she can trust him as a friend. Lisbeth agrees to think about it.

Wu has returned from visiting her parents in Paris. She is taken to the police station for questioning. Wu knows very little about Lisbeth's past.

Back at Millennium, Blomkvist interviews Björck. Björck is surprised to learn that he is mentioned in Svensson's article and book. In Blomkvist's mind, this clears Björck as a suspect. Björck admits to knowing Bjurman but he has not seen him recently. Blomkvist also asks Björck about Zala. Björck becomes terrified. He tells Blomkvist that he will reveal all he knows about Zala if he is not exposed in the sex trade scandal.

Chapter 20: Friday, April 1 - Sunday, April 3



Wu talks to Bublanski and Modig about Lisbeth. She confirms that Lisbeth is a highly intelligent, intensely private person. Bublanski and Modig discuss investigating other suspects despite the protestations of Faste and Nieminen. Hedström is unhappy with these events.

Despite the decision not to announce Wu's return to Stockholm, Hedström leaks the information to a journalist named Tony Scala. Hedström also tells Scala that Wu and Lisbeth are lovers and involved in S&M. Hedström tells Scala that he should portray the unidentified source as a female. Later, Modig is accused of being the source. Although Bublanski believes Modig is innocent, she is removed from Lisbeth's case.

Blomkvist continues to tell Bublanski that he believes Lisbeth is innocent.

Björck continues to worry about the fact that Blomkvist questioned him about Zala. Björck calls his former boss and learns that the boss had arranged for Bjurman to be appointed as Lisbeth's guardian after Palmgren had his stroke. The boss tells Björck not to worry, that soon Lisbeth will be recommitted to an asylum. This time she will not be released.

Björck worries about the 1991 police report that links him to Zala. More worrisome is the fact that Björck had given a copy of the report to Bjurman.

## Part 3 - Chapters 16-20 Analysis

Blomkvist has thrown himself into Lisbeth's case. He does not yet know that Hedström will most likely be a hindrance more than a help due to his grudge against Lisbeth. It remains to be seen if Hedström will compromise the investigation.

Blomkvist seems to have his finger on the pulse of all aspects of the investigations, including the one being conducted by police. Unlike most characters, Bublanski seems to have no ulterior motive in solving the case. He may become one of the few people that Blomkvist - and Lisbeth - can trust.

Lisbeth has her share of enemies, many of whom are working against her in this case. It has not been proven that Lisbeth has committed the murders or if she is innocent.

Lisbeth, in true Lisbeth style, seems to enjoy a good cat and mouse game. She does little to help herself and her communications with Blomkvist are often cryptic and not very helpful.

Modig is sure to be exonerated but this will take time away from Lisbeth's case and divide Bublanski's attentions.

Björck's connection to Zala remains mysterious. It is clear that the man is afraid. The former boss has yet to be identified but it seems he is a man of power. Still, Lisbeth has proven in the past that it is unwise to underestimate her.



## Part 4 - Chapters 21-26

### Part 4 - Chapters 21-26 Summary

Chapter 21: Maundy Thursday, March 24 - Monday, April 4

Lisbeth hides out in her new apartment for a week after the news breaks about Svensson and Mia's murders. Lisbeth is all over the news. Information about her past and her personal life is all the media seems to talk about.

"Despite her years of striving for anonymity, she had been transformed overnight into one of the most notorious and talked-about individuals in Sweden." Part 4, chap. 21, p. 313

Lisbeth pays close attention to the interview with Teleborian. Lisbeth notes that none of the reports mention that the unruly kids at the clinic are strapped to their beds and are introduced to sensory deprivation.

There is a flashback to Lisbeth's tenure at St. Stefan's and the horrible things she must endure. Lisbeth decides on her thirteenth birthday that she will no longer speak to the doctors. At age fifteen, Lisbeth is released from the clinic and enters the foster care system.

Lisbeth thinks about "All the Evil" and how it has changed her life. It makes no sense to Lisbeth why the 1991 police report is being covered up. It does reveal the details of "All The Evil" but also shows that she has violent tendencies.

Chapter 22: Tuesday, March 29 - Sunday, April 3

Lisbeth dons a disguise and breaks into Bjurman's apartment. Lisbeth finds the keys to Bjurman's summer cabin. She thinks there might be important files there.

The media continues to skewer Lisbeth. Lisbeth intends to investigate Scala after she has been proven innocent.

Paolo visits Berger and Blomkvist at Millennium. Paolo knows Lisbeth and is convinced she is innocent.

Chapter 23: Sunday, April 3 - Monday, April 4

Paolo offers his help to Blomkvist. Blomkvist suggests that Paolo should try to talk to Wu. Wu thinks Blomkvist is one of the people in the media who has been publishing trash about her and Lisbeth. Paolo might have a better chance of talking to Wu.

Björck is still upset by the recent turn of events. He wonders if Blomkvist will reveal his involvement in the sex trade. So far, Björck is the only person who knows that Svensson



and Bjurman had been searching for Zala. Björck wonders if their investigations led to their murders. Björck begins to wonder if he should call Zalachenko.

Lisbeth hacks into Blomkvist's computer and sees the connection between Björck and Bjurman. She knows they are connected but does not know how. Lisbeth tells Blomkvist to find the police report. Lisbeth also tells Blomkvist that she did not kill Svensson and Mia.

Once again Lisbeth dons her Irene Nesser disguise. She purchases electrical tape and rope. Afterward, she cases the Sändstrom's apartment.

Modig begins to wonder if Lisbeth is innocent in the murders of Svensson and Mia. However, Modig thinks that Lisbeth killed Bjurman. Modig learns that Svensson called Bjurman on the night he died.

Blomkvist decides to approach Björck for a copy of the police report. As a member of Säpo, it should not be hard for Björck to get a copy.

Chapter 24: Monday, April 4 - Tuesday, April 5

Sändstrom realizes that he may not be in the clear regarding exposure in the sex trade scandal. At first he had hoped that Svensson's death would prevent exposure but now Sändstrom realizes that his name is most likely mentioned in Svensson's notes. This evidence could cause Sändstrom to be seen as a suspect in the murders.

Lisbeth waits for Sändstrom to come home. Lisbeth hits Sändstrom with a Taser and then ties him up, putting electrical tape over his mouth. Lisbeth threatens to kill Sändstrom unless he tells her everything he knows about Zalachenko.

Sändstrom says that after he was confronted by Svensson he called the Ranta brothers, colleagues of Zala's, to tell them about Svensson. Lisbeth leaves Sändstrom alive but takes his gun.

Paolo stakes out Lisbeth's old apartment, now inhabited by Miriam Wu's.

Chapter 25:

Tuesday, April 5 - Wednesday, April 6

Paolo continues to watch the apartment. Paolo sees Wu on the street. Just as Paolo is preparing to get out of the car to speak to Wu, she is abducted by the blond giant. Wu tried to fight, to no avail. Blomkvist calls Paolo but Paolo's phone dies. Paolo follows the van.

Eriksson tells Blomkvist that Björck and Bjurman worked together in Säpo.

Paolo follows the van to a warehouse. Not long after, Paolo hears Wu scream. The blond giant threatens to cut up Wu with a chainsaw unless she tells him how to find



Lisbeth. Paolo rushes in and attacks the blond giant. Paolo is stunned that his superior boxing skills do not faze the big man. Wu joins in and together the pair manages to get away. The blond giant cannot believe he lost a fight.

Blomkvist arrives at the hospital to see Paolo. Wu is asleep. Paolo tells Blomkvist about Wu's abduction and the fight with the blond giant.

Chapter 26:

Wednesday, April 6

The police interview Paolo and Wu. The police decide that they must rethink the current path of the investigation. Blomkvist meets with Bublanski and Modig to discuss recent developments. Blomkvist mentions Zala and the fact that he is probably involved in the case.

"I think this story has something to do with a man called Zala. Dag Svensson did a lot of work on him in his last two weeks. All the relevant information is in his computer. Dag linked him to the murder of a prostitute named Irina Petrova in Södertälje. The autopsy recorded that she was very severely beaten. So severely that any one of three of the worst blows would have been fatal on its own. Her injuries sound very like the ones that Miriam Wu and Paolo Roberto have been subjected to. In both cases the instruments of this extraordinary violence could be the hands of a gigantic thug." Part 3, Chap 26, p. 390

The police go to the warehouse where Wu was taken only to find that it has been burned down. The police find bodies buried in the area. Bublanski sets his sights on finding the blond giant, ponytail man, and Zala.

Once again Hedström promptly leaks information to the press and Modig is blamed. Bublanski uncovers the fact that the media leak is coming from Hedström.

Lisbeth goes to Bjurman's cabin in the woods. She locates important papers and takes them.

The blond giant is worried. Things are not going according to plan. The blond giant thinks about the murders and the fact that he was with Bjurman when Svensson called the night of the murders. It was the giant that committed all three murders.

Lundin and Nieminen are waiting outside Bjurman's house. Lisbeth tells them to leave her alone. When they do not comply, Lisbeth maces and kicks Lundin, leaving him incapacitated. Lisbeth kicks Nieminen and also hits him with the Taser before shooting him in the foot. She rides away on Lundin's Harley. She has taken Lundin's gun.



## Part 4 - Chapters 21-26 Analysis

In the first part of this section Lisbeth is acting strangely. Hiding out in the new apartment will not prove Lisbeth's innocence. She seems to have little interest in helping herself. The exposure in the media seems to prompt Lisbeth to do something about her situation. It is unclear why Lisbeth does not help herself until this point. Lisbeth could easily get the information she has revealed to Blomkvist. The reader learns a great deal more about Lisbeth's time in St. Stefan's. Teleborian's true character is also revealed although he seems to have the public fooled while he continues to paint Lisbeth as a crazed sociopathic monster.

Although Lisbeth has alienated many people in her life, there are some who seem to be extremely loyal. Paolo is one of those people. Even after he is beaten in the fight with the blond giant, Paolo wants to help. Paolo considers Lisbeth to be a good friend.

Lisbeth begins to take matters into her own hands by searching Bjurman's cabin and by confronting Sändstrom. It remains to be seen if leaving Sändstrom alive is a good idea. Sändstrom's involvement in the sex trade scandal and potential exposure may cause him to do something rash. Lisbeth has surely considered this possibility.

It remains to be seen how Bublanski will handle Hedström's betrayal. Modig will be reassigned to the case.

The blond giant is proving to be a major component in the case. If Zala is brought into the picture, he may try to retaliate against Lisbeth.

Lundin and Nieminen prove to be less than competent. Lundin, in particular, seems to make many mistakes and cannot complete the jobs he has been given. It is sure that both men will pay the price for their less than successful run-in with Lisbeth.

The use of foreshadowing and flashback in this section is essential so that the reader will know Lisbeth and better understand how deep the corruption goes as well as possible outcomes.





## Part 4 - Chapters 27-32

### Part 4 - Chapters 27-32 Summary

Part 4: Terminator Mode March 24-April 8

Chapter 27: Wednesday, April 6

Blomkvist meets with Björck. Björck says he will give Blomkvist all the information he has on Zala if he is not named in the expose. Blomkvist immediately agrees, much to Björck's surprise. Blomkvist says, however, that if Björck is lying the agreement is null and void and Blomkvist will hang him out to dry.

The police arrive at Bjurman's cabin after receiving a report that shots had been fired. Police find Nieminen and Lundin. Police also find the papers left behind by Lisbeth. Nieminen and Lundin tell police that it is Lisbeth who had wounded them and had also stolen Lundin's Harley. Later, Lisbeth leaves the Harley at an amusement park.

The reader learns about Alexander Zalachenko. Zalachenko, aka Zala, was born in Russia in 1940. After his parents died he was raised in an orphanage operated by the Russian military. As a result, Zala received military training beginning at a young age. When Zala turned eighteen he joined the Glavnoye Razvedyvatelnoye Upravlenie or GRU which is the military intelligence agency. Zala was eventually sent to Cuba during the Bay of Pigs. In London he ordered the execution of a top KGB agent. Later, Zala defected to Sweden after a botched operation and sought asylum with Säpo in exchange for Russian military secrets. Björck confirms that he and Bjurman were Zala's top contacts in Säpo.

Björck says his job with Zala at Säpo was more about keeping the man under control.

"Zalachenko was a sly devil. He could be incredibly charming, but he could also be paranoid and crazy. He would go on drinking binges and then turn violent. More than once I had to go out at night and sort out some mess he'd gotten himself into." Part 4, chap. 27, p. 420

Blomkvist says he believes that Zala is responsible for the murders. Björck thinks this idea is ridiculous since Zala is more than sixty years old now and has had one of his feet amputated. When Blomkvist asks Björck for Zala's Swedish pseudonym, Björck refuses.

Modig visits Millennium and quizzes Eriksson about Svensson's research. Eriksson stonewalls Modig and wishes Blomkvist was around to deal with this mess.

Björck cannot see a way to get out of his problems without help. He calls Zala.

Chapter 28: Wednesday, April 6





Bublanski meets with Modig. More bodies have been found at the warehouse where Wu was taken. Recent developments determine that Lisbeth is probably innocent.

The blond giant is waiting at Lundin's place. He learns that Lundin has been arrested. The blond giant gets away before police arrive.

Blomkvist interviews Palmgren. Blomkvist is shocked to learn that Zala is Lisbeth's father. Blomkvist also learns about Camilla. Lisbeth's original surname was Sjölander. She changed it to Salander because Sala rhymes with Zala. Palmgren fills Blomkvist in on Lisbeth's childhood including the fact that Lisbeth set Zala's car on fire after he savagely beat her mother, Agneta. Agneta never fully recovered.

Lisbeth finally learns the truth about the reason Zala was never prosecuted for his crimes against Agneta - Zala worked for Säpo.

Lisbeth decides she is going after Zala. At the nursing home, Blomkvist makes the same decision.

Chapter 29: Wednesday, April 6 - Thursday, April 7

Lisbeth is furious. She learns that Mimmi is in the hospital, as is Paolo. Details are unclear but the media reports say that Lisbeth is a wanted fugitive. Ekström holds a press conference but says little.

Bublanski sends a message to Ekstrom. He demands that Modig be reinstated. Bublanski makes his demands to Ekström quite clear:

"The accusations against Salander are based on a single direct piece of evidence—her fingerprints on the murder weapon. Which, I remind you, is proof that she handled the weapon but no proof that she fired it, and even less that she fired it at the murder victims. We now know there are other players involved. The Södertälje police have found (so far) two bodies in shallow graves close to a warehouse owned by a cousin of Carl-Magnus Lundin. It should be obvious that Salander, however violent and whatever her psychological profile, had nothing to do with those deaths." Part 4, chap, 29. p. 423

Bublanski goes on to say that if these demands are not met he will leave the investigative team. Bublanski says he will not go quietly.

Armansky meets with his lawyer to find out how Lisbeth could best be represented in the case.

Blomkvist leaves information on his computer telling Lisbeth about the information he has uncovered. Blomkvist tells Lisbeth that they can solve the problem. Lisbeth writes a note to Blomkvist thanking him for his friendship.

Lisbeth learns the identity of the blond giant. He is a 35 year old German named Ronald Niedermann. The only address for Niedermann is a post office box. Lisbeth decides to track him down.



Blomkvist continues with his own detective work. He finds Lisbeth's new apartment. Blomkvist still has Lisbeth's keys.

#### Chapter 30: Thursday, April 7

Blomkvist arrives at Lisbeth's apartment and lets himself in. The security system goes off and Blomkvist quickly tries to guess what Lisbeth's password might be. He guesses correctly. Lisbeth knows that Blomkvist is in her apartment. She decides to trust him with her secrets.

Paolo looks into the blond giant's past. Paolo learns that the man's name is Ronald Niedermann, a man who suffers from congenital analgesia which means the man does not feel pain. Paolo shares the information with Eriksson who in turn tells Blomkvist.

Blomkvist finds the DVD of Bjurman raping Lisbeth.

Eriksson calls Blomkvist to say that she has found a connection between Niedermann and a man known as Karl Axel Bodin. Blomkvist decides to check it out.

Lisbeth sees a man approach the post office box. She follows him to a farmhouse. Bodin's name is on the mailbox. Lisbeth watches the farmhouse. Niedermann comes out first followed by Zala. Lisbeth approaches the house.

#### Chapter 31: Thursday, April 7

Lisbeth decides to hide in the barn. After dark, she decides to go inside. Niedermann grabs her. Lisbeth hits Niedermann with the Taser but gets no reaction. Zala comes into the room and says they have been watching her. Zala tells Lisbeth that he plans to kill her.

Lisbeth learns that Niedermann is her half brother and that he is involved in many of Zala's illegal activities including the sex trade.

Lisbeth suddenly realizes that she may be indirectly responsible for the deaths of Svensson and Mia.

Zala and Niedermann escort Lisbeth to a freshly dug grave. Lisbeth throws dirt in Niedermann's eyes. Zala shoots Lisbeth in the leg, shoulder and head and tells Niedermann to bury the body.

#### Chapter 32: Thursday, April 7

Lisbeth is not dead. She digs her way out of the grave. Meanwhile Blomkvist is searching frantically for the farmhouse.

Lisbeth gets to the chopping block and grabs an axe. She attacks Zala and locks him in the woodshed. Niedermann sees Lisbeth and wonders if she is a zombie. Lisbeth



shoots at Niedermann. She misses and Niedermann runs only to be found alongside the road by Blomkvist. Blomkvist ties up Niedermann and makes him get into a ditch.

Blomkvist finds the farmhouse where Lisbeth is on the floor. Blomkvist is sure that Lisbeth is dead. Lisbeth calls out Blomkvist's name. Blomkvist calls for an ambulance.

## Part 4 - Chapters 27-32 Analysis

Lisbeth shows more humanity in this section. She grieves over what happened to Mimmi. In her own way Lisbeth cares deeply for Mimmi as well as her friend Paolo. Lisbeth begins to realize that she must trust Blomkvist and that he is doing the right things to try to help her. This is one reason that Lisbeth allows Blomkvist to go through her apartment.

Lundin and Sonny lend some comic relief. The men, members of the fearsome Hell's Angels, must admit that they were beaten up by a girl and that said girl stole Lundin's motorcycle.

The action occurs very quickly in this section. Zala's past is revealed, allowing readers to fully understand how dangerous the man is and the things he might do to protect himself. It remains unclear if Björck made the right choice in calling Zala since he, too, may end up dead. Although Björck tells Blomkvist that Zala cannot be behind the murders, he knows it is not true. Zala may not be the one pulling the trigger but he is certainly capable of arranging for things to happen.

Blomkvist learns about Lisbeth's past as well. Blomkvist aches for his friend and the horrible things she has been forced to endure throughout her life.

Modig is undoubtedly frustrated by the lack of help from Eriksson. Eriksson, however, has no choice but to withhold information until Blomkvist gives the go-ahead.

Bublanski's stand against Ekström is impressive. Bublanski is fighting for what is right and Ekström knows that Bublanski will keep his word and leave the investigation. That would cause a great deal of problems for Ekström and make him look bad to the media. Ekström would never allow it.

Blomkvist is able to put things together very quickly, particularly after he learns that Karl Axel Bodin is actually Zala. Readers are shocked to learn that Niedermann is Lisbeth's half brother. Lisbeth is also shocked since she knew of no other siblings than Camilla.

The events at the farmhouse are so strange that they could actually occur. Here Larsson uses the old adage that truth is stranger than fiction and it works well for him. It is possible for Lisbeth to survive and attack Zala particularly if she is filled with adrenaline. The unflappable Zala is stunned at Lisbeth's appearance but not as much as Niedermann who flees at the first opportunity. For Niedermann, even being caught by Blomkvist must be a huge relief.



Blomkvist must attempt to make sense of the situation very quickly when he finds Lisbeth on the kitchen floor. It does not seem possible that someone who has been shot in the head could survive. There is no telling how long Lisbeth will live or how bad Zala is injured. Readers must wait for the rest of the story in the next volume of the trilogy, *The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet's Nest*.



# Characters

## Lisbeth Salander

Lisbeth Salander is the protagonist of Stieg Larsson's Millennium series which includes, *Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, *Girl Who Played with Fire*, and *Girl Who Kicked the Hornet's Nest*.

Lisbeth is considered to be an extraordinary woman who has survived myriad attacks and psychological traumas including being beaten, sexually abused, chased by police, accused of a triple murder, and being nearly murdered by her own father.

Lisbeth is the daughter of Anthony "Zala" Zalachenko aka Karl Axel Bodin. Zala is a cruel and heartless man. He fathered Lisbeth and her twin sister Camilla but never treated them as children. The only time Zala showed up in Lisbeth's early life was to have sex with her mother and beat her, which eventually caused her mother's untimely demise. At that time, Lisbeth was 12 years old. As a form of revenge, Lisbeth threw a Molotov cocktail into Zala's car. Lisbeth was sent to live at St. Stefan's Children's Psychiatric hospital by the Special Section of the Stockholm police, who also employed Zala as a problem solver, i.e., assassin.

Since Lisbeth's release, she has had two main objectives: kill Zala and protect women who have suffered abuses at the hands of others. Lisbeth is smart and agile, both mentally and physically. She trusts no one. Lisbeth is a world class hacker who uses her skills to further her objectives. In the story, she spends a great deal of time trying to avoid being killed while Blomkvist attempts to protect her and clear her name of the triple murders.

## Mikael Blomkvist

Mikael Blomkvist is an editor at Millennium. It is at Millennium that he met Erika Berger, who would become his colleague, ally, and lover despite the fact that she is married.

Blomkvist is a hard nosed journalist who spends his time following the case of Lisbeth Salander, who has been accused of killing journalists in Stockholm. Blomkvist knows in his gut that Lisbeth is innocent and that the murders were committed by someone else. Blomkvist also uncovers a great deal of information about Anthony "Zala" Zalachenko, aka Karl Axel Bodin, Lisbeth's evil hearted father, former Russian spy and assassin for the Special Section of the Stockholm police.

Working on Lisbeth's behalf, Blomkvist arranges for his sister to defend Lisbeth, despite the fact that the sister, Annika Giannini, is not a criminal defense attorney.

Blomkvist works closely with Inspectors Bublanski, Modig and Holmberg on the case with the hopes of freeing Lisbeth from the murder charges.



## Zala

Zala is the nickname of Alexander Zalachenko aka Karl Axel Bodin. Zala was born in Russia in 1940. After his parents died he was raised in an orphanage operated by the Russian military. As a result, Zala received military training beginning at a young age. When Zala turned eighteen he joined the Glavnoye Razvedyvatelnoye Upravlenie or GRU which is the military intelligence agency. Zala was eventually sent to Cuba during the Bay of Pigs. In London he ordered the execution of a top KGB agent. Later, Zala defected to Sweden after a botched operation and sought asylum with Säpo in exchange for Russian military secrets.

## Criminal Inspector Jan Bublanski

Criminal Inspector Jan Bublanski is a 52 year-old policeman who is acting as the head of the murder investigation of Dag Svensson, Mia Johansson, and Nils Bjurman.

## Erika Berger

Erika Berger is one of the owners and editors at Millennium. Berger is a talented woman. Although Berger is married, she is having an affair with Mikael Blomkvist.

## Prosecutor Richard Ekström

Prosecutor Richard Ekström is a 42 year-old prosecutor who is revered in his field. Prosecutor Ekström works hard to find information on the murders and Salander. Ekström is also a media hound.

## Sonja Modig

Sonja Modig is a 39 year-old policewoman who is part of the violent crimes division. Modig is on the team investigating the murders of Dag Svensson, Mia Johansson, and Nils Bjurman.

## Jerker Holmberg

Jerker Holmberg is a 55 year-old policeman who is considered to be the best criminal investigator on the force. Holmberg is on the team investigating the murders of Dag Svensson, Mia Johansson, and Nils Bjurman.



## **Ronald Niedermann**

Ronald Niedermann is Zala's son and right hand in his various illegal businesses. Niedermann is also Lisbeth Salander's half-brother.

## **Niklas Hedström**

Niklas Hedström is on the team investigating the murders of Dag Svensson, Mia Johansson, and Nils Bjurman. Hedström, who has a grudge against Lisbeth, is also the one who leaks confidential information to the media.

# Objects/Places

## Millennium

Millennium is the name of the magazine developed by Mikael Blomkvist and Erika Berger. It is a cutting edge, hard journalism magazine, the type that provides important news backed with exhaustive research. Blomkvist and Berger, who are intimately involved, work together to create Team Lisbeth, a group of people at the magazine who strive to prove that Lisbeth Salander is innocent in the murders of journalists in Stockholm. Berger and Blomkvist use their intuition, experience and extensive research skills to follow and unravel Lisbeth's story.

Millennium is also a publishing house. It is Millennium that will publish Svensson's article and book on sex trafficking in Sweden. The article and book will expose many public figures, many of whom are corrupt officials including police and attorneys. It is this expose that is at the root of several murders.

Millennium is also the name of Stieg Larsson's trilogy, which includes *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, *The Girl Who Played with Fire*, and *The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet's Nest*.

## Sapo/SSA

There are many references made to Säpo which stands for the Swedish Security Service. Several of the characters work at Säpo such as Nils Bjurman and Gunner Björck. The two men were transferred into a newly created division inside Säpo known as the "Section." The creation of the "Special Section" came about after a meeting with the upper echelon of the "Firm," as the Security Police were called, which included the head of Budget and the assistant head Secretariat. Gullberg was its first director. The department went through many name changes, from "the Special Section" to "Special Analysis" to its final official name as "the Section for Special Analysis" or the SSA.

It was the SSA that granted political asylum to Alexander Zalachenko when he arrived from Russia. Zala promised to trade Russian secrets in exchange for asylum. While at SSA Zala became a problem-solver which is another name for an assassin. Björck claims that he and Bjurman were Zala's top contacts in the SSA which equated to babysitting Zala who is a dangerous and unpredictable man. Bjurman and Björck were involved in the sex trade and also knew many secrets about the organization which the SSA would like to keep private.

## Stockholm

Stockholm is the capital city of Sweden. The city and surrounding areas are where the majority of the story takes place.





## **Lundagatan**

Lundagatan is the location of Lisbeth's apartment. It is turned over to Miriam Wu after Lisbeth returns from Grenada.

## **Grenada**

St. George in Grenada is one of the locations visited by Lisbeth on her round-the-world tour. There Lisbeth meets up with George Bland. It is also the location of the murder of Richard Forbes.

## **Björneborgsvägen**

Björneborgsvägen is the name of the street where Dag Svensson and Mia Johansson lived. The couple was murdered in their apartment.

## **Farmhouse**

The farmhouse, supposedly belonging to Karl Axel Bodin, is the place where the showdown between Lisbeth and Zala takes place. It is where Blomkvist finds Lisbeth after she has been shot in the head.

## **Stalingrad, Russia**

Stalingrad, Russia is the place where Alexander Zalachenko, aka Zala, aka Karl Axel Bodin, was born..

## **Lisbeth's Power-Book**

Lisbeth's Power-Book is a vital piece of equipment. It is what Lisbeth uses to hack into the computers of others including Blomkvist.

## **Palm Tungsten PDA**

Lisbeth is never without her Palm Tungsten PDA. It is used as a phone as well as a backup internet connection in lieu of the Power-Book.

## **St. Stefan's Children's Psychiatric Clinic**

St. Stefan's Children's Psychiatric Clinic is the hospital where Lisbeth lived for three years during her teens.



# Themes

## Relationships

Relationships are a main theme in the book, especially those involving Blomkvist.

Mikael Blomkvist and Erika Berger are in an odd relationship. It is particularly odd because Berger is married. Berger says she has an insatiable lust for Blomkvist although she goes home at night to her husband, Greger.

Blomkvist does not mind that Berger is married and seems to be satisfied with the nature of their relationship, which consists of regular trysts and occasional overnight stays. Greger does not object to the relationship and actually seems to like Blomkvist. Greger's only rule is that Berger must call home when she intends to spend the night with Blomkvist so that he will not worry.

Blomkvist also develops strange relationships with Lisbeth and Harriet Vanger. The relationship with Lisbeth had been romantic in nature at one time but seems to be turning into friendship. Blomkvist's relationship with Vanger seems to be based on nothing more than mutual pleasure.

Lisbeth seems to be confused about the nature of her relationships and, at times, her sexual preferences. Lisbeth thought she was in love with Mimmi but later realizes that it was affection accompanied by lust and great sex. Lisbeth does not know how she feels about Blomkvist.

One of the most positive relationships in the book is between Lisbeth and her former guardian, Holger Palmgren, for whom Lisbeth has a great deal of fondness and respect. The exact opposite can be said of the relationship between Lisbeth and Zala who are fighting to see who can be the first to die.

## Revenge

Revenge is one of the main themes in the book. Zalachenko did not have any concept of the lengths to which Lisbeth would go when it came to getting revenge on him for his evil ways. Lisbeth's need for revenge began with Zalachenko's treatment of Lisbeth when she was a child. Lisbeth also sought revenge for the torment Zalachenko inflicted on her mother, Agneta.

Being placed in St. Stefan's increased Lisbeth's need for revenge. This need transferred to Teleborian for his mistreatment of Lisbeth including the lies, falsified reports, and the hundreds of days the man caused Lisbeth to be put into restraints. As time went on, Teleborian became more reprehensible and Lisbeth's need for revenge against the doctor strengthened.



Lisbeth's desire to get revenge on Zalachenko became an obsession as she was forced to go on the run. It increased to new heights after the triple murder for which Lisbeth was blamed.

Lisbeth's only hope to act out her plans for revenge lies in Blomkvist and his quest to set her free.

## Conspiracy

Conspiracy is one of the main themes in the book. When Lisbeth was 12 she was put into a mental institution after trying to kill Zalachenko. That was the beginning of the conspiracy to remove Lisbeth from the picture since it was obvious she was a major threat to Zalachenko and the Section. It was not considered that Lisbeth might be released from the institution one day. From that day, the Section, headed by Gullberg, would attempt to remove Lisbeth as a problem, going so far as to frame her for a triple murder in Stockholm. The murders were actually committed by Lisbeth's brother, Ronald Niedermann.

Zalachenko and the others make a grave error when they underestimate Lisbeth. Lisbeth has world-class hacker and research skills which far surpass those of the Section. The Section also comes up against a formidable foe in Blomkvist.

Additionally, the Section was created as a law enforcement division inside the police force. The Section could employ any means necessary to handle internal problems, even if it meant murder. The actions of the Section also created a need for a major conspiracy to cover the tracks of the members of the team.

These conspiracies were so well crafted that even Prosecutor Ekström could not uncover them. It will be up to Lisbeth, Blomkvist, Bublanski and others to uncover the wrongdoing of the Section and to bring those actions to light.

# Style

## Point of View

The point of view used in *The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet's Nest* by Stieg Larsson is third person omniscient. This point of view works well in the story since there are several components and underlying factors that would not be revealed otherwise. While the first person point of view might have been interesting when coming from the characters, particularly Lisbeth Salander in her time of confusion and/or extreme focus regarding her father, the third person point of view conveys the entire story and not just the subjective opinions of the characters. It also permits the reader to take part in the journey and development of each character in the story.

The point of view used in the story allows the reader to grasp the depth of each character and his/her role in the story. For example, using a point of view of Lisbeth only may help the reader to understand her plight yet could not possibly reflect the point of view held by an objective source such as Bublanski. Likewise, seeing the story from the twisted mind of Zalachenko would prove to be fascinating considering his history yet it could not possibly reflect the opinions and experiences of Lisbeth or Blomkvist.

## Setting

There are various settings used in *The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet's Nest* by Stieg Larsson. They include references to the special unit inside the Security Police known as the "Section." The creation of the "Special Section" came about after a meeting with the upper echelon of the "Firm," as the Security Police were called, which included the head of Budget and the assistant head Secretariat. Gullberg was its first director. The department went through many name changes, from "the Special Section" to "Special Analysis" to its final official name of "the Section for Special Analysis" or the SSA.

Millennium is the name of the magazine developed by Mikael Blomkvist and Erika Berger. It is a cutting edge, hard journalism magazine, the type that provides important news backed with exhaustive research. Blomkvist and Berger, who are intimately involved, work together to create Team Lisbeth, a group of people at the magazine who strive to prove that Lisbeth Lisbeth is innocent in the murders of journalists in Stockholm.

The farmhouse is the place that Lisbeth and Zalachenko have a major showdown. Lisbeth was shot and Zalachenko is struck in the head with an axe.

Stockholm is the capital city of Sweden. It is where parts of the story take place, including the three murders with which Lisbeth is charged.



## Language and Meaning

The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet's Nest by Stieg Larsson is a work of fiction that has been translated from its original Swedish. Stieg Larsson died before any of the Millennium trilogy had been published and therefore did not create the English translation of the work. The work was translated from the Swedish by Reg Keeland. It was originally published in Sweden as *Luftslottet Som Sprängdes* by Norstedts, Stockholm, in 2007; the first translation was published in Great Britain in 2009 by MacLehose Press with the agreement of Norstedts Agency.

For the reader, there are some parts of the translation that might be difficult or confusing since some of the language is stilted. The names of the characters and places may also present a challenge because they are Swedish and therefore may be difficult to pronounce or memorize. The same can be said of the variations in spellings and the similarities in words and names.

Overall, the language is straightforward and easily read.

## Structure

The Girl Who Played with Fire by Stieg Larsson is a work of fiction. It is 502 pages in length, broken down into 4 parts and 32 chapters.

The shortest part is 59 pages in length; the longest part is 206 pages in length; the average length of the parts is 126 pages.

The shortest chapter is 1 page in length; the longest chapter is 25 pages in length; the average length of the chapters is 18 pages.

The story is written in chronological order with some flashbacks and references to the previous book in the Millennium series, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*.

Each chapter is dated.

Part 1 - Irregular Equations

December 16-20

Chapter 1: Thursday, December 16-Friday, December 17

Chapter 2: Friday, December 17

Chapter 3: Friday, December 17-Saturday, December 18

Part 2: From Russia with Love

January 10 - March 23



Chapter 4: Monday, January 10 - Tuesday, January 11

Chapter 5: Wednesday, January 12 - Friday, January 14

Chapter 6: Sunday, January 23 - Saturday, January 29

Chapter 7: Saturday, January 29 - Sunday, February 13

Chapter 8: Monday, February 14 - Saturday, February 19

Chapter 9: Sunday, March 6 - Friday, March 11

Chapter 10: Monday, March 14 - Sunday, March 20

Part 3: Absurd Equations

March 23-April 3

Chapter 11: Wednesday, March 23 - Maundy Thursday, March 24

Chapter 12: Maundy Thursday, March 24

Chapter 13: Maundy Thursday, March 24

Chapter 14: Maundy Thursday, March 24

Chapter 15: Maundy Thursday, March 24

Chapter 16: Good Friday, March 25 - Easter Sunday, March 27

Chapter 17: Easter Sunday, March 27 - Tuesday, March 29

Chapter 18: Tuesday, March 29 - Wednesday, March 30

Chapter 19: Wednesday, March 30 - Friday, April 1

Chapter 20: Friday, April 1 - Sunday, April 3

Part 4: Terminator Mode

March 24-April 8

Chapter 21: Maundy Thursday, March 24 - Monday, April 4

Chapter 22: Tuesday, March 29 - Sunday, April 3

Chapter 23: Sunday, April 3 - Monday, April 4

Chapter 24: Monday, April 4 - Tuesday, April 5



Chapter 25: Tuesday, April 5 - Wednesday, April 6

Chapter 26: Wednesday, April 6

Chapter 27: Wednesday, April 6

Chapter 28: Wednesday, April 6

Chapter 29: Wednesday, April 6 - Thursday, April 7

Chapter 30: Thursday, April 7

Chapter 31: Thursday, April 7

Chapter 32: Thursday, April 7



## Quotes

"She detested this helplessness. No matter how hard she tried to concentrate on something else—to pass the time and to distract her from the situation she was in—the fear came trickling out." Prologue, p. 5

"At the time, a year ago, he had thought of the scoop with colossal satisfaction—as vengeance and as rehabilitation. But the satisfaction had soon ebbed." Part 1, chap. 1, p. 13

"She had known that she had a photographic memory since before she reached puberty, and because of it she was very different from her classmates. She had never revealed this to anyone—except to Blomkvist in a moment of weakness." Part 1, chap. 1, p. 27

"The theme of the May issue is the sex trade. The point we have to make is that trafficking is a crime against human rights and that these criminals must be exposed and treated like war criminals or death squads or torturers anywhere in the world." Part 2, chap. 4, p. 79

"The sight of Bjurman aroused no dramatic feelings in Salander, not anger, nor hatred, nor fear. As far as she was concerned, the world would assuredly be a better place without him, but he was alive only because she had decided that he would be more useful to her that way." Part 2, chap. 10, p. 145

"So there had to be an explanation, no matter how obscure it might appear to anyone who did not know her." Part 3, chap. 16, p. 249

"If Salander was in some way involved in the murders, there had to be entirely different grounds from those the police were suggesting—someone else may have held the gun or something had happened that was beyond her control." Part 3, chap. 18, p. 264

"From day one we've been focusing all our energies on finding Lisbeth Salander. She is definitely a top suspect—this is based on evidence—but our picture of her is meeting resistance from everyone who knows her." Part 3, chap. 20, p. 292

"Despite her years of striving for anonymity, she had been transformed overnight into one of the most notorious and talked-about individuals in Sweden." Part 4, chap. 21, p. 313

"He vacillated between panic and intoxication. Apparently the police were not looking for him. Maybe—if he was lucky—he would get away scot-free. But if he was not lucky, his working life would be over." Part 4, chap. 24, p. 360

"The dropped revolver had been at first a source of criticism until Zala realized its implications. They were astonished when the police began a search for Salander. His mistake had turned into an incredible stroke of luck." Part 4, chap. 26, p. 398



"She had done her best to kill Zalachenko in 1991. Now, after all these years, he had struck back." Part 4, chap. 30, p. 466



## Topics for Discussion

The Millennium trilogy, including the books *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, *The Girl Who Played with Fire* and *The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet's Nest*, were published posthumously. Why do you think Larsson never published any of the books? Do you think that Larsson would have had as much success with the books if they had been published while he was still alive? Explain. How does one receive posthumous publication? Who is in charge of Larsson's works?

Discuss Lisbeth Salander's history. How did Lisbeth end up in St. Stefan's Children's Psychiatric Clinic? Was there one specific event that caused Lisbeth to be admitted? Who was responsible for the admission? Does Lisbeth know what really happened? What might have happened if Lisbeth had not been released from the clinic?

Why do you think Blomkvist is so obsessed with Lisbeth Salander? Is it merely a good story or does Blomkvist have some personal investment in the story? How do Blomkvist's colleagues feel about the story? Who is the most helpful when it comes to tracking Lisbeth and performing research?

Discuss the character Zalachenko. What do you think made Zalachenko hate Lisbeth so much? Did Zalachenko feel the same about Camilla? What was Zalachenko's relationship with Lisbeth's mother, Agneta? What might have happened if Zalachenko had been a part of Lisbeth's life since birth? Do you think Lisbeth is like Zalachenko in any way? Explain.

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Examine the formation and existence of the Special Section (SSA). What caused the police to create such a section? What was its purpose? Who was in charge? Why was Zalachenko recruited? How did the SSA change since its inception? How will the news of Zala's involvement affect the SSA? Do you think the SSA will continue? Explain.

Discuss the relationship between Zala, Bjurman and Björck. Which is the most dangerous? Who was responsible for the initial corruption? Who decided that Björck and Bjurman would act as Zala's babysitters? What did Zala offer in return for asylum?