

Chapter 20

Chapter 20 of *The Girl Who Played with Fire* continues to unravel the mystery surrounding Lisbeth Salander, focusing on her complex relationships with the people around her and the investigations into the murders. Miriam Wu spends an hour being interviewed by Modig, during which Bublanski silently observes the session. Afterward, Bublanski expresses his concerns about the handling of the case, particularly regarding Criminal Inspector Faste's approach with Miriam. He admits that assigning Faste to question her was a mistake and apologizes, with Miriam accepting his apology, which lightens the mood. Their conversation shifts to Lisbeth Salander, with Bublanski revealing his confusion over conflicting accounts of her character, including a troubling portrayal involving sex work and allegations of mental incapacity.

Miriam, fiercely protective of Lisbeth, defends her intelligence and capabilities, pointing out that Lisbeth's hobbies, such as complex mathematics, defy the negative stereotypes attributed to her by social services. The discussion then turns to their personal relationship, where Miriam clarifies that their interactions are based on mutual respect and consensual role-playing, not sadistic tendencies as implied by others. This conversation complicates the investigation, providing a deeper and more nuanced view of Salander's character that challenges the simple narrative of her being a mentally unstable criminal. Miriam's defense of Lisbeth paints a more complex portrait of their relationship, which had previously been oversimplified and misunderstood by those investigating her.

Later in the day, the investigative team meets to discuss the case, and Bublanski presents a new angle: he questions whether Lisbeth was acting alone in the murders or if she had an accomplice. This shift in strategy is met with resistance from Faste and Bohman, who continue to believe that Salander is solely responsible for the crimes. Despite their objections, Prosecutor Ekström agrees with Bublanski's approach and

assigns other officers to explore the possibility of additional suspects. The divide within the team shows the tensions and differing opinions on how to approach the case, revealing that even those within the investigation do not agree on the key details. This divergence in opinions is crucial, as it illustrates the complexity of the case and the difficulty in determining the truth.

The investigation is further complicated by internal tensions, especially when Modig confronts Bubanski about his emotional reaction to Faste's performance. Bubanski's frustration leads to an outburst, showing the strain the investigation is placing on the team. At the same time, Modig is informed that sensitive information from the investigation has been leaked to the media, creating even more pressure for the team. Although Bubanski reassures her that she is not the source of the leak, the accusation hangs over her, complicating her position in the team. The growing pressure and mistrust among the investigators only serve to heighten the stakes of the case, making it increasingly difficult for the team to stay focused on finding the truth.

Back at her apartment, Miriam is shocked to find that the police have thoroughly searched her personal space. The invasion of her privacy leaves her feeling disturbed and conflicted. She is torn between her loyalty to Lisbeth and the disturbing accusations that continue to surface against her. The mounting media scrutiny of Lisbeth and the constant encounters with journalists make Miriam's situation even more stressful. She struggles with the emotional turmoil of being caught between the public narrative and the personal bond she shares with Lisbeth. Ultimately, Miriam decides that she needs to seek Lisbeth out personally, hoping that a direct conversation with her will provide the clarity she needs. She resolves not to make any judgments until she hears from Lisbeth herself, despite the pressure and confusion surrounding her.

This chapter serves as a turning point in the investigation, with the characters grappling not only with the complexities of the case but also with their own internal conflicts. Bubanski's shift in strategy reveals that the investigation is far from straightforward, and new leads suggest that the truth is more complicated than

initially believed. Miriam's emotional journey adds another layer to the narrative, as she is forced to reconcile her feelings for Lisbeth with the mounting allegations against her. As the investigation continues to evolve, the tension between personal loyalty and professional duty grows, leaving the characters in a precarious position. The chapter ends with a sense of anticipation, as both the investigators and Miriam prepare for the next steps in uncovering the truth.

