

Chapter 27

Chapter 27 begins with Blomkvist driving Berger's car along Nynäsvägen, seeking some peace in his cabin in Sandhamn. He arrives ahead of his scheduled meeting with Björck and, rather than rushing, takes some time to enjoy a cup of coffee and read the morning papers. Blomkvist is determined to uncover more about Zala, and his conversation with Björck offers him a chance to dig deeper. When they meet, Björck seems more confident than before, hinting at the sensitive nature of the information he's about to share. He offers details about Zala but insists on remaining anonymous in *Millennium's* publication. Blomkvist, understanding the significance of the request, agrees, knowing that the information could have serious repercussions for both of them.

After briefly discussing terms, Blomkvist makes it clear that he expects full disclosure from Björck in exchange for anonymity. Björck reluctantly agrees, stressing the need for complete confidentiality to protect himself. Blomkvist feels the ethical weight of this agreement, but with Svensson already documenting Björck's account, he decides that this is the right path to take. As they seal their deal, Blomkvist is aware that the stakes have been raised. The information Björck is about to share could lead them into dangerous territory, but Blomkvist understands the need to move forward with it for the sake of uncovering the truth.

Meanwhile, in Strängnäs, the police receive reports of two wounded men found near a cabin once owned by Nils Bjurman, the deceased lawyer. The police quickly start to see the connection to Lisbeth Salander, and the situation begins to unfold rapidly. Despite being in the middle of a meeting, Inspector Bublanski is immediately informed about the case. He knows the importance of this lead and understands how it might be pivotal in solving the larger case. The link to Bjurman adds a chilling layer to the investigation, raising suspicions that Salander may be involved.

The investigation continues to develop when the police identify one of the men as Kenneth Gustafsson, a criminal known as the Vagabond. They also find Sonny Nieminen at the scene, and both appear to be connected to a violent confrontation. The officers connect the dots, realizing that the two injured men are likely associated with a biker gang. The investigation now points to a clash between criminals, with more violence on the horizon. This discovery leads the police to further examine Salander's involvement, adding to the already complex nature of the case.

At the same time, Lisbeth has just escaped from the chaotic scene at Bjurman's cabin and is now riding a Harley-Davidson motorcycle. The speed and rush of adrenaline remind her of the thrill found on amusement park rides, giving her a brief sense of freedom. She continues to speed along, feeling empowered by the intensity of the ride. But after some time, she decides to abandon the motorcycle, opting to make her way toward Stockholm instead. Her decision to leave the bike behind is calculated, as she knows the importance of staying focused on her next move.

Blomkvist, meanwhile, is reflecting on what he has learned from Björck about Alexander Zalachenko, the former GRU agent who defected to Sweden during the Cold War. As Blomkvist pieces together Zalachenko's complex history, he realizes how significant this man's presence in Sweden has been, both politically and personally. The government's decision to allow Zalachenko to remain in Sweden has had lasting effects, which now extend into Salander's life. Blomkvist considers reaching out to Holger Palmgren for more insight into Zalachenko's past, knowing that Palmgren's knowledge could provide him with vital information about Salander's ties to this dangerous figure.

As the chapter builds toward its conclusion, the tension surrounding Zalachenko's existence in Sweden grows. Blomkvist is now faced with a more complex web than he anticipated, and his involvement in uncovering Zalachenko's past seems to only deepen the mystery. Björck, too, feels the weight of his decision to share this information, understanding the risks of becoming entangled with such a dangerous man. Both characters are now aware that their association with Zalachenko could lead

to devastating consequences, but they are also driven by the need for truth. The chapter ends with the two of them contemplating the dangers ahead, knowing that the revelations to come will shake everything they thought they understood about the situation.

