

# CHAPTER 20

Miriam Wu spent an hour interviewing with Modig, where Bublanski arrived mid-session, observing silently. After the formal interview ended, Bublanski expressed concerns over Criminal Inspector Faste's performance, admitting he regretted assigning him to speak with Miriam. The atmosphere softened when Miriam accepted his apology. They delved into discussing Lisbeth Salander, who perplexed Bublanski due to conflicting accounts and documentation suggesting she had been labeled mentally retarded and had a past involving sex work.

Miriam vehemently disagreed with the negative portrayal of Lisbeth, asserting her intelligence and capabilities, emphasizing that Lisbeth engaged in complex mathematical hobbies rather than the sordid life suggested by social services. They then discussed Lisbeth's sexuality, where Miriam clarified their relationship, rejecting the label of sadistic tendencies in their private encounters as merely playful role-playing games. This revelation of their dynamic suggested a deeper, more complex relationship than previously assumed.

A meeting later that afternoon led to a division in the investigation strategy, highlighting Bublanski's inclination to reconsider Lisbeth's role in the murders, suggesting potential accomplices instead of viewing her as the sole suspect. The suggestion met with resistance from Faste and Bohman, who favored the simpler approach that implicated Lisbeth alone. The prosecutor, Ekström, supported this pivot in strategy and designated members to explore alternative suspects.

Modig confronted Bublanski about frustration directed at Faste, which escalated to an emotional outburst, revealing tensions among the team's dynamics. Following this, she received disturbing news regarding leaks of investigation details to the media, further complicating their efforts. Bublanski reassured her, maintaining that she was not the source, but the accusation loomed heavily, threatening her position.

Miriam, returning home, discovered her apartment had been meticulously searched by the police, with personal items left disheveled. Torn between loyalty and distrust, she wrestled with reconciling her perception of Lisbeth with the emerging allegations of murder. Amidst mounting media scrutiny and unwelcome journalist encounters, her emotional turmoil deepened, concluding with a promise to herself to seek out Lisbeth for clarity before making any judgments. Her sense of confusion and anger culminated in frustration as she faced the implications of Lisbeth's troubles—and her own unsettled feelings—when confronted by the press.