

CHAPTER 9

Dr. Sivarnandan observed Lisbeth Salander's weekly visits to Holger Palmgren, where their dynamic seemed more like playful squabbling than caregiver and patient. Salander's involvement in Palmgren's rehabilitation took an official turn when she created a nonprofit foundation to fund his care, which included a significant donation of 2.5 million kronor for his rehabilitation. The arrangement seemed ethically sound to Dr. Sivarnandan, who soon hired Johanna Karolina Oskarsson as Palmgren's assistant. This decision led to noticeable improvements in Palmgren's condition, though it remained unclear how much of this was due to the training or Salander's influence during her visits.

During one of Palmgren's chess matches, Salander displayed an uncanny ability to grasp the nuances of the game, which amused Palmgren. They found joy in their interactions, suggesting a powerful bond had formed. Meanwhile, Nils Bjurman returned to a pile of mail, among which was a statement revealing withdrawals from Salander's account, suggesting her return to Sweden. He contacted a giant figure involved in his dark dealings but was abruptly dismissed.

In a different narrative thread, Salander enjoyed a massage from Mimmi, another tender indication of her personal life and the closeness she shared with her. Receiving a present from Mimmi, she opened a beautiful cigarette case meant to encourage her to stop smoking. Their lighthearted banter, full of underlying tension regarding their relationship, was punctuated by an impromptu kiss that surprised both women.

Meanwhile, at the Millennium offices, publisher Mikael Blomkvist and Svensson discussed a missing contact from Säpo, with Svensson revealing an outrageous plan involving a fake lottery win to track him down. Their conversation shifted when Blomkvist noticed Salander in the bar where they unwittingly converged, triggering a mix of emotions within her.

Later, as Salander returned home, she began investigating the files on Blomkvist's computer, uncovering not only his ongoing projects but also a troubling mention of a figure named Zala associated with her previous life. The name resurfaced as a menacing shadow in her thoughts, linked to violence and threats within a dark underworld. Meanwhile, Svensson reflected on his work and growing anxiety about the dangers surrounding the investigation into Zala, hinting at the unraveling webs of intrigue and violence they were entangled in.