

“The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet’s Nest” by Stieg Larsson.  
Knopf, 2010. \$27.95, 576 pages.

First, a warning. If you have not yet finished reading either “The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo” or “The Girl Who Played with Fire,” and you don’t wish to know certain crucial plot points, then stop reading now. If you have no issues with being spoiled for either of those books, then by all means, continue.

First introduced in “The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo,” the diminutive, tattooed, antisocial but brilliant computer hacker Lisbeth Salander is an improbable heroine. In “Dragon” Salander teamed up with journalist Mikael Blomkvist to solve the decades old mystery of a vanished teenage girl and in the process exposed a sadistic serial killer.

“The Girl Who Played with Fire” found Lisbeth on the run, accused of a triple murder and painted as a psychotic satanic killer by the press. As one of the few who believe her innocent, Blomkvist sets out to uncover why someone is so intent on locking Salander up forever. Gradually, it is revealed that Lisbeth, at the age of 13, was imprisoned in a psychiatric ward illegally in order to keep the identity of her father, an abusive Russian defector, a secret after her actions threatened to expose him and the group of government officials protecting him.

“The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet’s Nest” begins immediately where “The Girl Who Played with Fire” ended - with Lisbeth Salander on the edge of death after being shot in the head and buried alive by her father, and Mikael Blomkvist determined to not only prove her innocence, but also to expose the government group known as “The Section” that was responsible for the years of injustice perpetrated against Salander.

Even as she lies in the hospital recovering, Lisbeth still drives the story, using a smuggled handheld computer to navigate through the layers of conspiracy and uncover the truth about the secrets that destroyed her childhood. Working together, Salander, Blomkvist, and a handful of others discover a plot that reaches back for decades and to the highest levels of the Swedish government.

This final chapter in the “Millennium” trilogy is an immensely satisfying end to Lisbeth’s story, and while it is not one you’d want to pick up without having previously read the first two installments, it is well worth the time and effort it might take to get through the 2000 plus page narrative. These books are exciting and original, and Stieg Larsson is completely deserving of all the praise and critical acclaim that has been directed at these books from all over the globe.

It is unfortunate that we’ll never know what else Larsson had planned for Salander due to his tragic death in 2004, but even with just these three volumes it is easy to predict that Lisbeth Salander will be remembered as one of the most unusual and unforgettable literary creations for years to come.

Rebekah Scott is a reference librarian at May Memorial Public Library. Visit us on the web at [www.alamancelibraries.org](http://www.alamancelibraries.org).

