

READING EXERCISE

The Adventures of Lola Badiola

CHAPTER 1: THE EMAIL

Lola Badiola sat on the small balcony of her top floor apartment overlooking La Plaza del Dos de Mayo in the heart of the Malasaña district of Madrid.

It was 10 PM on a typical Thursday evening and there was the usual buzz of activity from below her. The terraces of the restaurants were already full, children were running around, and there were musicians playing folk music that echoed throughout the Plaza. After years of gentrification this was still a bohemian part of Madrid.

Lola looked down at her laptop and read an email that she had written two days earlier but hadn't yet sent. She was unsure about her grammar, vocabulary and expressions. She wasn't used to writing emails in English and she wanted this email to be perfect.

"Hey, Lola!"

She was distracted by the sound a familiar voice. She looked over the balcony and saw Concha, her best friend, waving from the street below. Then her telephone rang. She answered it.

"Are you coming out tonight?"

"I can't. I've got a big day tomorrow"

"Come on, there's a great band playing in the plaza." Concha's voice was insistent.

Lola looked across the plaza and then up into the clear night sky. Even with all the light pollution from Madrid she could see the moon, the stars and deep into the Milky Way. She wondered if there was a universe parallel to this one where she was downstairs drinking with Concha. A shooting star flashed across the sky.

"I'm sorry, Conchi, not tonight. I'll call you back tomorrow." She hung up.

Lola looked down at her laptop. She clicked the send button. The email was on its way. There was no turning back now. She was burning her boats.

After almost seven years working her way up to middle management at Spain's largest telecommunications company Lola had decided to quit. The next day she would walk into the office, speak to her director in private and resign.

The email she had just sent was an official acceptance of a job offer at another company. It was a start-up with currently no profits, no profile and less than a dozen employees. But it was a unique opportunity to work with an honest and brilliant entrepreneur using state-of-the-art technology. It was a company that she believed was going to change the world.

Lola felt a strange mixture of fear and excitement at the decision. She was about to embark on the biggest adventure of her career.

She closed her computer and got ready for bed. She needed a good night's sleep.

As she rolled around between the sheets, trying to calm herself down, one question repeated itself in her mind. "Will there be trouble tomorrow?"

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS:

1. What is the Malasaña district of Madrid like?
2. How long ago had Lola written the email? Why hadn't she sent it?
3. What excuse did Lola make for not joining her friend Concha for a drink?
4. What was the weather like that evening?
5. How long had Lola been working at Spain's top telecommunications company?
6. What level of seniority was she within the company?
7. What kind of company was she joining?
8. Why was she joining this company?
9. How did Lola feel about her decision?
10. What question kept going through her head as she tried to go to sleep?