

READING EXERCISE

The Adventures of Lola Badiola

CHAPTER 23: THE MICKEY MOUSE WATCH

Park Jae Bong and Kim Lee Son had been friends since they were kids. They were opposite in character. Park was quiet and serious, old beyond his years. Kim was extrovert and funny, still just a kid at heart. They had studied together, lived together and now they worked together in the cybercrime division of the North Korean government.

They were the most successful hacking team in the history of the division, responsible for creating some of the world's most notorious viruses. As a result, they were always involved in the government's most critical projects. They even worked with the Russians and Iranians to disrupt the US elections.

They also knew more about the security systems within their own building than anyone else. This meant that when the office was quiet, they could override their own firewalls and surf the world wide web without any impediments. Park liked to follow international chess tournaments while Kim preferred hacking Netflix to watch cartoons.

The previous week they had successfully breached the defenses of Telecom España and caused the share price of the company to fall by more than 20%. In doing so the two hackers had discovered vulnerabilities in several large public companies in Spain. Their next target would be a Spanish bank.

As part of their preparation for an attack they always researched the target company in great depth. They learned about the culture of the company, how it was organized, where the vulnerabilities were hidden.

At that moment they were sitting together watching the Annual General Meeting of Banco Santander. It was one of the biggest lenders in Europe - from the smallest personal loans to the largest and most complex corporate debt instruments. It was also the most successful mortgage provider in the region and therefore had a treasure trove of priceless data.

Park Jae Bong listened carefully as Ana Botín, the head of Banco Santander, presented the results of the company and talked about their plans for the future. It was the first time he had listened to a woman chairing a company's Annual General Meeting. He admired the way she answered questions in a professional but conversational manner.

Park's train of thought was interrupted by his friend Kim.

"Hey Park, I've got something to show you."

"Not now Kim, I'm concentrating."

"Look!" said Kim.

Kim rolled up the sleeve of his shirt to reveal a watch. It was old and scratched but functioning perfectly. It had the unmistakable image of Mickey Mouse in the middle. His gloved hands were pointing at the numbers on the dial.

"Where did you get that from?" Park whispered.

"I got it from a street vendor in Shanghai."

Kim had just returned from an official trip to the People's Republic of China. He had been visiting the equivalent department in the Chinese government. They often exchanged information and coordinated attacks on Western targets.

"What the fuck!" whispered Park. "If you get caught with that.... you'll end up in prison."

Kim knew the risk he was running. He knew that Mickey Mouse was considered one of the greatest symbols of American decadence. He knew the supreme leader would disapprove. But he couldn't resist his favorite cartoon character.

Kim rolled his sleeve back down to cover the watch and winked at Park. "Dreams Come True," he said in his best American accent.

At that moment Kang, the divisional supervisor, appeared from around the corner. As always, he was pushing a trolley full of reports that he didn't understand. He stopped at the desks of Park and Kim and looked down at them condescendingly.

"Daily report."

"Here it is, sir," Park said as he handed over the document.

The supervisor then asked him the usual questions.

"Have you observed any anomalies?"

"No, sir."

"Have you crashed any systems?"

"No, sir."

"Have you concluded any infiltrations?"

"No sir."

"The quarterly meeting will start at 7pm this evening. Don't be late."

The supervisor put the report into a folder and moved on to the next cubicle.

As soon as his back was turned, Kim turned to Park and gave him another wink.

Park couldn't help smiling. He felt like a parent who simultaneously admires and disapproves of their facetious little child.

READING COMPREHENSION

1. What is Park Jae Bong like?
2. What is Kim Lee Song like?
3. Describe their relationship.
4. Describe what they do for a living.
5. What are they doing to prepare for their next hack?
6. What is Park's impression of Ana Botín?
7. What object does Kim show Park? Where and how did he acquire it?
8. What is Park's reaction when he sees the object?
9. What does the supervisor ask the two hackers?
10. How does the supervisor treat the hackers?