

READING EXERCISE

The Adventures of Lola Badiola

CHAPTER 25: THE APARTMENT

Park arrived back at his apartment at 7:30 pm, he took off his shoes and went to the toilet. He lived in a modern apartment on the 22nd floor of a tower block in zone 7 of the Chunghwa district. As a D grade government employee, he had certain privileges over the general public.

He had a separate kitchen with a small fridge freezer, and an oven with two electric hobs. He didn't own any luxuries like a microwave, a dishwasher or a washing machine but he did have a television which was the envy of all of his neighbours.

Unlike most North Korean people, Park knew that he was poor. He knew that the standard of living in the North was significantly lower than in the South. He knew that the infrastructure of his country remained backward and most of his countrymen still worked in hard, time-consuming jobs in the agricultural sector.

Park also knew that the economies of many other East Asian nations had progressed dramatically over the last 30 years as a result of globalisation. They had successfully worked together through institutions such as the United Nations and the World Trade Organization to promote international cooperation. The Supreme Leader was convinced that these institutions would eventually fall apart during a Marxist revolution. But it never happened.

South Korea was now much richer than North Korea. It had higher levels of technology and productivity. The people seemed happier, they seemed have more fun. Park wondered what his life would be like if he had been born 150 kilometers south - the distance between the communist haven of Pyongyang and capitalist centre of Seoul.

Park looked at the analogue clock on his wall. It was 7.45pm. Chunghwa Park was a 15-minute walk from his apartment.

Who was the girl with the almond eyes? Why had she invited him to meet her? Was she a member of the secret police? It was quite normal for the government to spy of its own employees. There was even a department that spied on the spies of the employees.

Or was it possible that this invitation was genuine, that this mesmerizing woman actually wanted to go on a date with him?

Of the two possibilities, Park Jae Bong was more worried about her being a potential girlfriend than a potential spy. He was almost thirty years old. And still a virgin.

He walked into the bathroom, combed his hair and then slapped some Chinese aftershave on his sensitive skin.

Whether she was a spy or a potential girlfriend or both, he was determined to find out.

READING COMPREHENSION

1. Where does Park live?
2. Describe the apartment that Park lives in.
3. What does he have in his kitchen and what does he not have?
4. Compare North and South Korea.
5. How does Park know that he is poor?
6. What international organizations have successfully worked together to encourage globalisation?
7. How far is Pyongyang from Seoul?
8. What time is it and how long will it take Park to walk to the park?
9. Why is he nervous about meeting the girl with the almond eyes?
10. What does Park do before he goes out?