READING EXERCISE

The Adventures of Lola Badiola

CHAPTER 35: LOLA NEEDS A LAWYER

Lola arrived at Gonzalo's offices in Vallecas, in the south of Madrid. It was not the shiny, corporate skyscraper that she had imagined. Instead, it was a humble shopfront in one of the poorer districts of Madrid.

Gonzalo had quit Unceta Monson three months earlier to start his own boutique law firm with a couple of friends. He wanted to focus on startups, social impact businesses, and charities.

His firm had recently become the European representative of the Centre of Humane Technology. An organization that campaigned against the negative elements of social media such as trolling, spamming and behavior manipulation by big tech companies.

He had some space in his diary when Lola called, so, he suggested that she drive directly to his office.

He was waiting for her at the entrance as her taxi arrived. He was dressed informally, in a tight-fitting jumper, designer jeans, and Reebok trainers. He was in good shape, his skin was tanned, his hair was long, and the dark rings around his eyes had disappeared.

He opened the door to her taxi after it stopped.

"It's really good to see you again," he said with a smile, as he kissed her on both cheeks.

It was the kind of greeting you would expect from an old friend - warm, genuine, and completely platonic. Gonzalo exuded contentment; he was clearly in a good place in his life.

"Would you follow me!" he said as he led her into his office. He introduced her to his partners, and then took her to a meeting room at the back of the building. Everything smelt of fresh paint.

He offered her a coffee and motioned for her to sit down. Then, he took out his notebook and a fountain pen, and started asking her questions.

He treated her like just another potential client in need of legal advice. There was no mention of the past, no chat about mutual friends, no catching up on each other lives. He was interested in her predicament from a purely professional perspective.

Lola told him all about her career move; the moment she sent the email accepting the offer from JBlock, the day she resigned from Telecom España, the accusations made by Ruiz de Velasco, the interview with Interpol, the rejection by Banco Santander and finally the conversation with the journalist from Cyberworld.

"Would you mind telling me, once again, exactly what happened after you resigned?"

Lola recounted the meeting with Ruiz de Velasco, and how he had threatened her when she refused to reconsider her resignation.

"What happened next?"

"I spoke briefly to Luis Bruña, my direct manager. I gave him my company laptop, my mobile phone and my security pass. And then a guard escorted me out of the building."

"Did anybody else hear what you said to either Ruiz de Velasco or Bruña?"

"No."

"But everyone saw you being escorted out of the office by the security guard."

"Yes."

Gonzalo scribbled something down on his pad.

"Was there any confidential information on your company laptop?"

"It had everything on it - business plans, company accounts, client information."

"Did you download any of that information onto your personal computer?"

Lola paused. She wasn't quite sure how to respond. Gonzalo continued.

"It's quite common for employees to download confidential data from their company just before they quit. Did you do this?"

"Yes."

"How exactly did you download it?"

"I plugged a pen drive into my PC. Then I keyed in my password and downloaded all the files."

Gonzalo wrote another note onto his pad.

"Did Luis Bruña ask you to sign any documents before you left the company?"

"No."

"Have you received any written messages from Telecom España since you resigned?"

"No."

"Are you sure?" he asked patiently, "Have you checked all your email accounts?"

Lola started to doubt herself. The questions were becoming more and more uncomfortable.

"I'll double check," she said.

"Ok."

Gonzalo continued.

"Did you have a non-compete clause in your contract with Telecom España?"

"Yes."

Lola thought for a moment and then elaborated:

"In the event that I resigned from the company or was fired, I was prohibited from speaking to any of my clients on a professional basis for 90 days."

Gonzalo put down his notepad.

"So, when you approached Banco Santander earlier today you were in breach of that non-compete clause."

Lola looked up at the ceiling as she realized the mistake that she had made. In her desire to make an impact at JBlock she had neglected her obligations to Telecom España. She thought that she was being proactive, but in reality, she was being impatient and irresponsible.

"Yes," she eventually replied.

"Ok, here's my assessment of the situation," Gonzalo said intently, "Telecom España will say that you were fired, they will say that you stole confidential information, and they will say that you acted in breach of your contract. Then, they will claim that you were an "insider" helping a group of hackers to breach their systems. After that, they will try to connect this crime to JJ Thomson and your colleagues at JBlock. In doing so, they will discredit their most dangerous competitor and regain the trust of their investors."

Gonzalo smiled.

"It sounds to me like you need a lawyer, Lola."

READING COMPREHENSION:

1. Where was Gonzalo Garrido working now?
2. What are his offices like?
3. What manner of speaking is Gonzalo using during his meeting with Lola?
4. What kind of important data was on Lola's old work laptop? Does Lola still have the data?
5. What was the rule stipulated in the non-compete clause that Lola signed?
6. What big mistake did Lola make regarding the non-compete clause?
7. Why did she make such a big mistake?
8. What is Gonzalo's guess about what Telecom España will do next?
9. Why does Gonzalo say that Lola needs a lawyer?
10. What do you think will happen next?