

## READING EXERCISE

### The Adventures of Lola Badiola

#### CHAPTER 45 – THE HEALTH CHECK

Park spent most of morning speculating about the disappearance of Kim. It was Tuesday, the 12<sup>th</sup> of February, two days before the intended escape. One possible scenario was that the conditions were perfect, and they had expedited the plan. Another scenario was that Kim hadn't revealed the whole truth to Park in order to protect him. He hoped and prayed that one of these scenarios was real, but deep down he was very worried.

In any case, Park's priority at that moment was his own safety. He forced himself to concentrate on his current projects. He had made good progress in his attempt to re-enter the systems of Telecom España. He had found a vulnerability in the software that controlled the supply of electricity they received from Red Eléctrica, the company that constructed, maintained, and controlled the electrical network.

Red Eléctrica was one of the best protected organisations in Spain. Every capitalist government knew that the steady flow of energy into the system was essential for the functioning of society and therefore spared no expense in protecting the electricity grid from any form of attack. Park had tried many times to hack Red Eléctrica but had never succeeded. However, he had discovered a weakness at the point of crossover between Red Eléctrica and the internal power generators at Telecom España.

In the event of a terrorist attack, a nuclear war or an asteroid strike, it was essential that the military, government and civilians were still able to communicate. Therefore, all the big telecommunications companies in the world, like Telecom España, had an internal back-up system in case the grid failed.

Every week this back up system was tested. Telecom España would turn on its internal generators and switch over from the external grid. This process would only last a few minutes, to check that everything was functioning perfectly, before the system was switched back to the grid and the generators were turned off.

It was here that Park had discovered a weakness. He had placed an interrupter between the software that linked Red Eléctrica to the back-up generator at the headquarters of Telecom España. This meant that he could switch the supply of electricity between the two at any moment he wanted. If he switched the electricity from the grid to the backup generators and those generators were not turned on, he could temporarily remove all electrical power from the headquarters of the company. As yet, he wasn't sure how he could fully exploit this weakness, but it was good progress.

He was deep in thought when Kang appeared in the distance, pushing his aluminium trolley full of papers towards him, stopping at each cubicle along the way asking questions, collecting reports and delivering messages. Park needed to behave as if he knew nothing about Kim's plans, as if he had never been an intimate friend of Kim.

Kang arrived at Park's desk and went through the usual routine.

"Have you observed any anomalies?"

"No, sir."

"Have you crashed any systems?"

"No, sir."

"Have you concluded any infiltrations?"

"No sir."

Kang moved on to the next cubicle without any acknowledgement.

Park knew that he had to bring up the issue of Kim's disappearance. As far as he was concerned, it would appear unusual or even suspicious he didn't question the whereabouts of his colleague and friend. He cleared his throat.

"When will Kim be back?"

Kang stopped and slowly turned around. "What?"

"When will Kim be back? I need his assistance today."

Kang reversed the trolley to Park's desk. He took a chair from another workstation and placed it right next to Park's. Then he sat down and stared into Park's eyes.

"Kim won't be coming back today."

"Oh."

"As far as I know, Kim won't be coming back for the rest of his life."

Kang continued to stare at Park as if he were searching for the thoughts behind the façade.

Park's amygdala, the most ancient part of his brain, started sending signals to his adrenal glands to release cortisol into the bloodstream. This triggered an automatic fight-or-flight response throughout his body. He had to use all his powers of self-control to appear unemotional even though his heart was pounding, and his head was throbbing.

"I will need a new assistant then," he said in a monotone voice.

"Yes, I suppose you will." replied Kang.

The functionary stood up and straightened his jacket and tie. He took hold of his trolley and slowly pushed it down the hallway. Then he turned back to Park and said:

"By the way, you have a health check tomorrow at 9am. Go straight to the medical centre before you start work."

And with that, he walked away.

Park slumped in his chair. The veins on the side of his head were throbbing. Sweat ran freely from under his arms. As his supervisor disappeared into the distance, he summed up the situation in his head.

Firstly, his dear friend Kim was now in a concentration camp.

Secondly, he wasn't going to receive a health check at 9am the next morning.

He was going to receive an interrogation.

## READING COMPREHENSION

1. What scenarios does Park consider as an explanation for Kim's disappearance?
2. Who is Red Eléctrica? What do they do?
3. Why are their systems so well-protected?
4. Where has Park discovered a vulnerability between Red Eléctrica and Telecom España?
5. What exactly is Park able to control and how does he intend to exploit this vulnerability?
6. What does Park ask Kim as he moves on to the next cubicle?
7. What does Kim tell Park?
8. How does Park react to Kim's words?
9. What two conclusions does Park reach at the end of the chapter?