

READING EXERCISE

The Adventures of Lola Badiola

CHAPTER 33: THE JOURNALIST

Lola turned away from the entrance of the Banco Santander complex in Boadilla del Monte. She walked slowly towards the taxi stand at the corner of the street. Her hopes of closing a deal with the biggest account in the market had disappeared. Her chance of proving herself to her colleagues at JBlock had gone.

Somebody must have spoken to Jesús Roma, the IT procurement manager at Santander. Somebody must have prohibited him from meeting with her. Somebody must have threatened him.

In Lola's mind, it was clear that Mario Ruiz De Velasco, the CEO of Telecom España, was behind this. He was cunning, ruthless, and relentless. He had an ego that was out of control. And now he was doing everything in his power to ruin her.

"Lola Badiola?"

A man walked briskly up to her with his business card in his hand.

"My name is Brad McDuff. I work for Cyberworld Magazine. Do you have a moment to talk?"

Lola took his card and looked at it. She was startled by his sudden appearance.

"Who are you?" asked Lola.

"I'm a freelance journalist. I've been commissioned to write an article for Cyberworld Magazine. Let's go for a coffee and I'll explain."

The journalist was American. He had an East Coast accent. His manner was informal and pushy. Lola took an instinctive dislike to him.

"No," she replied, "I need to get back to the office."

She handed back the business card and looked around for a taxi.

"You should talk to me," said the journalist persistently.

Lola became agitated by his attitude.

"Really. Why? What's the article about?"

"You."

"What?"

"I've been commissioned to write a profile on you. It's due for publication on Friday.... whether you talk to me or not."

Lola looked bewildered. Why on earth would Cyberworld be writing a profile on her? And how could they publish it without speaking to her first?

The journalist continued, as if he had read her mind.

"You are a person of interest, Lola. You were involved with Schwizer Lieben until they were hacked. You were involved with Telecom España until they were hacked. And I've just witnessed you attempting to enter Banco Santander, a company that is currently under multiple cybersecurity attacks from foreign infiltrators. You are the common factor in all these events. Is this just a coincidence? Or is there something else going on here?"

The journalist was well aware of the bombshell that he had just dropped in front of Lola. And he waited while the dust settled around her.

Underneath the surface, Lola was freaking out. Cyberworld was one of the most popular magazines in the IT sector. It was read by everyone who was anyone in the world of cybersecurity. The last thing she wanted was to see her picture in this publication, particularly if the editorial agenda was against her.

She took a deep but imperceptible breath, and calmed herself down. She was wise enough to know that the journalist was trying to get a reaction out of her - something emotional, controversial, and newsworthy. So, she did exactly what her father would have done.

She looked the journalist directly in the eye and said: "Thank you for your interest. If you wish to pursue this matter any further, you can speak to my lawyer."

A taxi pulled up at the stand and Lola got inside.

"Can you confirm or deny that you are being investigated by Interpol?" the journalist shouted through the window.

Lola ignored him as the electric taxi pulled away from the stand.

Lola sat silently in the vehicle as it circulated the M30 motorway. The trip back to the office gave her a moment to think deeply about her predicament. She realized that her enemies would attack her from every angle. They would use her colleagues, her clients, and even the news media against her. Their objective was to skin her alive.

This trip had taught her one very important lesson - she needed to be better protected.

She switched on her smartphone and looked up the name 'Gonzalo Garrido'. He was an old friend from high school, and the smartest person Lola had ever met. He had graduated from Harvard Law School, magna cum laude. After which he had joined Spain's most prestigious law firm, Unceta Monson. Within seven years, he had moved up the ranks from intern to junior associate to senior associate. Earlier that year he had become the youngest partner in the law firm's 150-year history. He

was now one of the most feared and admired defence lawyers in the corporate world. If someone could protect Lola from her nemesis, it was Gonzalo Garrido.

There was only one problem.

Gonzalo was still in love with her.

READING COMPREHENSION:

1. How does Lola feel after her conversation with Jesús Roma?
2. What is Mario Ruiz de Velasco like?
3. Who does the journalist work for?
4. Why does he want to interview her?
5. Why does Lola take an instinctive dislike to him?
6. How does Lola react to the “bombshell” that he drops in front of her?
7. What does Lola decide to do on her trip back to the office?
8. What do we know about Gonzalo Garrido so far?
9. Why does Lola want to contact Gonzalo?
10. What do you think will happen if Lola contacts Gonzalo?