

READING EXERCISE

The Adventures of Lola Badiola

CHAPTER 48 – IN THE MOONLIGHT

"Let's escape together." said Park.

The Girl with the Almond eyes smiled back at him. "Not tonight. My auntie is watching. Next time."

Park leaned forward and took hold of her hand. It was small and delicate. The skin was as soft as the petal of a Lilly.

"I don't mean escape from your Auntie; I mean escape from everyone."

"I don't understand." she said replied.

"There's another world out there. A world of light and colour. It's beautiful."

"What are you talking about?" she said with genuine confusion.

"I'm talking about a place where we can buy a house, own a car, maybe two, a place where our children will never go hungry."

"Where is this place?"

"The West."

The Girl with the Almond Eyes snatched back her hand. She turned away from Park. The milky white skin of her face wrinkled into an expression of disgust.

"Listen to me." said Park lowering his voice to a passionate whisper. "This country is a lie. The Supreme Leader is a fake. We're all being cheated."

The Girl with the Almond eyes didn't react.

"They say that we are fighting a glorious battle against the evil of American capitalism. They say that only through self-reliance and a strong independent state, can true communism be achieved. They say that our three branches of government work in the interests of the people.

Lies. Lies. Lies.

We live a country run by a family of gangsters. We have the highest rates of corruption and lowest level of democracy in the world. The government and bureaucracy is wrapping itself up in red tape while more than 12 million of our fellow citizens suffer from a lack of basic human needs.

Park shifted closer to The Girl with the Almond Eyes and put his hand gently on her shoulder.

"I can take you away from all this. I can find a way out. We can escape together."

There was a scattering of people around the park, some were on their way home from work, others were doing exercise. In the distance there was the sound of the big diesel buses ferrying the final passengers to their destinations. Park waited patiently for his new love to react.

Slowly she turned to face him. She looked like a little girl who'd lost her parents at the fairground. She whispered something that Park couldn't hear. Then she whispered it again slightly louder. And then again. Each time increasing the volume. It was mantra expressed in a monotone.

By the fifth repetition Park understood what she was saying, and his blood ran cold. He suddenly realized that he had made a terrible misjudgment. He'd taken his eye off the ball and put his own life in mortal danger.

The words that the Girl with the Almond Eyes was repeating were: "Traitor. Traitor. Traitor..." By the tenth repetition she was shouting. By the fifteenth she was screaming. People in the park started to notice.

The girl's chaperone appeared from behind a tree and ran towards her in state of panic. She grabbed hold of her niece and shook her until she stopped screaming. They had a brief conversation and then the older woman looked at Park in disbelief.

Without a second's hesitation the chaperone ran to the nearest person in the park, got their attention and pointed at Park. Then she ran to the next nearest person and did the same. Each one of the people the chaperone spoke to, did exactly the same thing as her. In this way the news of Park's treachery spread like a virus.

Every North Korean knew that if you were aware of a crime you had to report it immediately otherwise you would suffer the same fate as the criminal. By a simple law of probability, the news would eventually reach the member of the secret police who was closest to the crime. No form of communication in a totalitarian state was faster and more efficient than word of mouth.

Park was frozen to the spot, like a deer in the headlights. It seemed like the whole of Pyongyang was pointing at him. In the distance he saw two suited men running in his direction. The news must have reached the secret police.

Park needed to deal with the immediate danger. But first, he pulled the Girl with the Almond Eyes towards him. Then he leaned forward and kissed her lips passionately. He felt her body relax in his arms and start to tremble. And for a very brief moment the world stopped, and a beam of moonlight shone from the heavens on the two young lovers.

Shouts in the distance brought Park back to the harsh reality of his current predicament. He placed The Girl with Almond Eyes gently back onto the bench.

"Goodbye Min Sung Moon," he said tenderly.

Then he ran as fast as he could in the direction of the taxi stand. He spotted the rider that had brought him to the park earlier that evening and jumped into the back of the carriage.

"Take me to the Shenzhen forest!" He shouted. "I have more government business to take care of. So, make it fast!"

"Yes sir." the rider replied. He headed off down the main road at full speed dodging in and out of the evening traffic with breathtaking skill. Park looked back and could see a group of people gathering around the taxi stand, trying to work out where he had disappeared to. He ducked down in the carriage so that no-one could see him.

As he lay on his side, he knew that there was only one course of action he could take, there was only one way to survive this situation. He had no choice but to assume the identity of his best friend Kim Lee Son.

And carry out his original plan of escape.

READING COMPREHENSION

1. What does Park suggest to the Girl with the Almond Eyes?
2. What is her initial reaction?
3. How does Park describe the government of North Korea?
4. What is the Girl's next reaction?
5. What does the Chaperone do?
6. What is the last thing that Park does to the Girl with the Almond eyes?
7. How does Park get away from the park?
8. How does Park intend to survive this situation?
9. Can you remember Kim's original plan of escape from North Korea?
10. Do you think that Park will ever see the Girl with Almond Eyes again?