

READING EXERCISE

The Adventures of Lola Badiola

CHAPTER 5: J.J. THOMSON

J.J. Thomson's alarm went off at 6am but he was already awake. He was visualizing the forthcoming day - running through all the issues that he had to deal with as the founder of a technology startup. The new Commercial Director was starting that morning and he wanted everything to be ready for her.

He went to his kitchen and prepared a pint of detox juice using the vegetables in his pantry. Then he lay down on an exercise mat on the wooden floor of his attic apartment. He went through his daily stretching and breathing exercises followed by an ice-cold shower.

J.J. opened the sliding door of his living room and stepped out onto his terrace. He looked out across the roof tops of Barrio Salamanca in the centre of Madrid. It was cold and wet. The weather app on his phone indicated 5 degrees centigrade, 41 degrees Fahrenheit. According to the meteorologists the local forecast was a chilly start to the day, followed by sunshine.

Amongst the cars parked in the street below, was a graphite grey Toyota Prius. Inside the car was a man watching a film on his iPad. He looked up at J.J.'s apartment as the lights went on and made a note of the time.

J.J. Thomson was born in a small, conservative community near Seattle, Washington in 1984. He was a gifted child and his parents expected him to become a university professor or a doctor. But he had other plans. He was a rebel, a misfit, a round peg in a square hole. His heroes were Steve Jobs, Albert Einstein and Mahatma Ghandi. As soon as he was old enough, he left home and travelled the world, working in manual jobs to finance his nomadic lifestyle.

He eventually returned to Seattle when his mother was diagnosed with motor neuron disease. The family didn't have enough money for private healthcare, so he spent the next eighteen months caring for her until she passed away. This experience convinced him that the status quo needed to be challenged. There was too much concentration of wealth in society, too many neglected citizens, not enough compassion and solidarity. Like his heroes before him he vowed to be one of the crazy ones who changed the world for the better.

During the period caring for his mother he learned how to code in many different computer languages and created his first applications. Over the next five years he started more than a dozen technology companies. Most of them went nowhere, but two of them were outstanding successes. He sold them both to a tech giant giving him the financial freedom to live and work wherever he wanted. He chose Madrid, the city he had fallen in love with during his travels. This was where he planned to build his biggest and most ambitious project.

He left his apartment on Calle Hermosilla at 7:30 am and picked up an electric scooter on the corner of Velazquez. From there he headed South to Gran Via where he had rented out an entire floor of the

Adriática building. It was more space than he needed for his current operations , but he expected the business to grow rapidly over the next few months.

His first meeting of the day was with the new Commercial Director of the company. He was really looking forward to seeing her again. He had finally found someone who truly shared his core values, someone who could help him realize his vision. Her name was Lola Badiola.

He left the electric scooter on the pavement outside the entrance of the building and skipped inside. As the door closed behind him, a graphite grey Toyota Prius drove slowly past the building.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What was J.J. Thomson's morning routine?
2. What was the weather like?
3. Where J.J. grow up?
4. Who were his heroes?
5. Why did he return to Seattle after his travels?
6. How did he feel at the end of the 18 months at home?
7. How many companies has he founded?
8. How many have succeeded?
9. Where is his office? What is it like?
10. Who is the man in the graphite grey Toyota Prius?