

## READING EXERCISE

### The Adventures of Lola Badiola

#### CHAPTER 69 – THE AFTERMATH

The team from JBlock stood in a circle outside the glass and steel skyscraper of the Telecom España headquarters. The centre of attention was Park Jae Bong, the little North Korean hacker whose programming skills had allowed Lola to make her audacious, some might say outrageous, sales pitch to Mario Ruiz de Velasco.

JJ and Diego were fascinated by his tiny physique, his mighty skills and his personal story. They inundated Lola with questions that she couldn't really answer. Who was he? Where did he come from? How did she find him? She avoided answering directly until she had spoken to Eugenio. In fact, she felt responsible for returning Park to her friend as soon as possible.

"Shall we have a drink and celebrate?" suggested Diego.

"Great idea," replied JJ, "Where's the nearest bar?"

Lola shook her head.

"I'd love to guys, but Pluto and I have got some loose strings to tie up. We'll be at the offices in Gran Via at 9am tomorrow."

Diego and JJ protested in an exaggerated manner.

She gave them both a kiss and hug. Then she turned to Gonzalo to thank him. She realized what a difficult situation she had put him in. If the meeting hadn't gone exactly as planned, he could have lost his licence to practice law. Without him at the meeting, the lawyers from Unceta Menendez would have taken control and the outcome would have been very different.

She stepped forwards and embraced him, wrapping her arms tightly around his muscular back. He smelled like a fresh pine forest on a crisp winter's morning. She held onto him longer than was professional, longer than what is normal for a friendship. And he didn't resist her.

The other men in the group made small talk.

"Why don't you come over to my office tomorrow evening," said Gonzalo. "We can run through the details of the legal agreements. And then we can go out for dinner."

Lola looked up into his familiar eyes and smiled.

"I'd like that," she replied.

Then the two of them pulled away from their embrace and wished each other well. Gonzalo joined the JBlock team for a quick drink, while Lola led Park to an empty taxi stand.

Her mind replayed the events of the previous hour. She thought about what she had said, what she could have said better and how everyone reacted. She wondered what Ruiz de Velasco would do next. Would he just ride out the twelve-month agreement, would he try to break the contract, or would he find some devious way to exact his revenge on her. In any case, she was ready for a fight, and, in the form of Pluto, she had a nuclear weapon.

An empty taxi arrived, and Lola helped Park inside. As she joined him in the back seat, she noticed a graphite grey Toyota Prius parked directly opposite them. Inside of it was a man looking in their direction. As the cab pulled away from the taxi rank, Lola looked closely at the stationary car. Inside of it, making no attempt to conceal himself, was Guzman Zuzunegui.

Lola thought back to their late-night conversation. She still hadn't processed the suggestions of the Interpol agent. The first thing she planned to do that weekend was speak to her mother about the business of Grupo Badiola in South America. And this time she was going to get the whole truth.

It was a fifteen-minute ride to Concha's house. Sitting outside on the steps of the entrance was Eugenio. He got slowly to his feet as they arrived.

"How did it go?" he asked.

"Well." she replied.

Lola and Eugenio stood in the street staring at each other, waiting for the other one to speak first. In the end they both started talking at the same time.

"So, what's happening with..."

"Listen, I need to explain...."

They both stopped abruptly, and then Lola asked very quietly.

"Are you a spy?"

Eugenio burst into fake laughter as if it was a silly joke. "No! No! No!" he said. But his face blushed crimson red and he looked down at the pavement to avoid Lola's eyes.

She stood very still and waited for him to recover his composure.

"Well, actually, I don't call myself a spy." he said, "I'm a geopolitical consultant. I specialize in the extraction of dissidents, political prisoners and persons of interest from rogue nations."

"Wow!" Lola's eyes opened wide with astonishment. "So, the documentary film making is just a cover."

Eugenio looked around nervously. But there was nobody in the vicinity.

"It's the perfect cover." He replied with a satisfied smile. "I travel the world - Russia, China, Venezuela. I integrate our targets into the film crew and bring them back to friendly territory."

"Does Concha know?"

Once again Eugenio's face betrayed his embarrassment.

"She does now."

"Uh oh."

"Yeah. She's kicked me out of the house. It's gonna be a few hours before she lets me back in. Would you mind holding onto the little man for a couple of days until I sort things out with her. I can see that he trusts you."

Lola was delighted by the suggestion. The more time she spent with Park, the higher the probability of him settling into a working life at JBlock.

"Sure. No problem."

"Thanks. I'm gonna try the buzzer again."

"Ok, good luck with that."

Eugenio hugged Lola. He bowed at Park. And they parted company.

Lola decided to take the Korean for a walk through Malasaña on the way back to her apartment. She wanted him to start getting used to the sights, smells and sounds of the neighborhood. She wanted him to experience the very best that Madrid had to offer, like the seafood at La Sirena Verde the soups at Casa Fidel and the steaks at El Balón."

"So, Mr. Plu To where would you like to eat this evening. The world is your oyster."

"Burger King." he replied without hesitation.

"Burger King?"

Park nodded his head with the enthusiasm of a 10-year-old boy organizing his birthday party.

"Ok, Burger King it is then." said Lola with a shrug.

It was a short walk to the nearest branch. They waited in line for a couple of minutes. Then they ordered two Whopper meals. They sat opposite each other at one of the uncomfortable plastic tables taking huge bites out of the hamburgers.

Park was in ecstasy. A North Korean defector, sitting in a restaurant in Madrid, eating the American dream. He finished every morsel of the food, then spent a moment with his eyes closed allowing the serotonin to course through his blood system. Eventually he came back to the real world. He looked down at the paper covering his tray and ran his fingers backwards and forwards over the Burger King logo.

"Lola Badiola," he said in a quiet voice.

"Yes." replied Lola attentively.

"You said that you would help me."

"Yes."

"You said you get me whatever I wanted."

"Yes."

"I want you to find Kim Lee Sohn."

"Who?"

"I want you to bring Kim to the West."

"What?"

"I want you to help him escape from North Korea."

## READING COMPREHENSION

1. In what ways were JJ and Diego fascinated by Park?
2. Why was Lola so thankful to Gonzalo?
3. How did she show her appreciation to Gonzalo?
4. Why didn't Lola go for a drink?
5. Who was watching her from the other side of the road?
6. What has happened to Eugenio?
7. What does Eugenio tell Lola?
8. Why is Lola happy to look after Park?
9. Where does she take Park?
10. What does Park ask her to do?