

READING EXERCISE

The Adventures of Lola Badiola

CHAPTER 43 – THE TEAM MEETING

There was a collective feeling of fear and excitement in the team meeting that evening. Lola imagined that this must be what it felt like in the situation room of the White House after a terrorist attack. On the one hand the team was facing an imminent crisis, on the other hand they were trained to deal with this eventuality. It was, in fact, the reason they existed.

JJ stood up and waited for everyone to stop speaking.

“Ok, let me summarize the current situation. Last night between the hours of 2 am and 6 am Central European Time a hacker entered our system to play our recruitment game. As you know the game is designed to attract talent to our company. In fact, all of the programmers who currently work here reached Level 7 of the game.

Last night the intruder reached level 9. This is unprecedented. He was able to break through not only our conventional firewalls but also some of our proprietary software. In doing so he highlighted weaknesses in our coding that we are now addressing.

This hacker was not interested in a job at JBlock. He was not interested in stealing any data from us. In fact, we are not entirely sure why he played our game. We can only suppose it is because he enjoyed the challenge. But we need to find out who he is and what his motivation is.

He left us two clues. The first is the way that he hacks. He has a distinct style. On the surface it appears random and pointless however deeper down there is a penetrating logic.

The second clue is his name, Pluto. This could be a reference to the dwarf planet in our solar system, it could be related to the ancient God of the underworld or it could be something to do with Mickey Mouse’s little friend.

Finding Pluto is our number one priority. So, from now on we are in crisis mode. That means we work around the clock until this problem is solved. I don’t mind if you come into the office, you work remotely or become a digital nomad, as long as you are searching for Pluto.

Does everyone understand? Good. Does anyone have any questions?”

There were mummings around the room, but nobody put up their hand to speak. The programmers knew exactly what they had to do. They understood the power and the skill of the adversary they were confronting.

JJ was about to terminate the meeting when Cayetano raised his hand, like the cool schoolboy sitting at the back of the classroom.

“Yes, I have a question.”

“Go ahead.”

“Do you think that this is an inside job?”

The murmuring stopped and the room fell silent. Cayetano was asking if JJ suspected somebody in the room was responsible for the attack. It was a deeply uncomfortable moment. He continued.

“Most attacks are orchestrated by current or ex-employees, right? That’s what it said in the Cyberworld article.”

He leaned forward in his chair and looked across at Lola. Then he smiled innocently and said:

“What do you think Lola? Is this an inside job?”

Lola felt the eyes of everyone in the meeting room turn towards her. She understood the implication of Cayetano’s words. But before she could respond, JJ stepped in to release the tension.

“Let me explain something to you Cayetano. Every great hacker has an individual style that is instantly recognizable. For example, Jorgen is the Raphael of our team, his work is precise, detailed and colorful. Soo Hwan is Velazquez, his work is bold, full of contrast and imaginative. And over there is Johan, he’s Monet. If this were an inside job, we would know about it, we would recognize the style and signature of the hacker.

Pluto is something completely different. He is an abstract expressionist, a Jackson Pollack.”

JJ stood up and walked around the room until he was standing behind Cayetano. He placed his hands on the salesman’s shoulders.

“Let me explain something else to you Cayetano. I recruited everyone sitting in this room for three reasons. Firstly, I believe that they are the best people for the job. Secondly, I believe that they share my vision and my values. And finally, I believe that they are trustworthy. If you think that I have misjudged anyone, please tell me know.”

Cayetano sat silently in his chair. JJ patted him on the shoulder. And then returned to the top of the conference table.

“Now, more than ever, we need to speak openly and directly. Now, more than ever, we need to trust each other. Now, more than ever, we need to come together as a team.”

He clapped his hands, like a football manager who has just finished his half-time speech.

“Ok, let’s go!”

And everyone followed him out of the room.

READING COMPREHENSION

1. How did everybody feel in the team meeting that evening?
2. What happened the previous night between 2 am and 6 am?
3. What is the first clue that the hacker left in their system?
4. What is the second clue that the hacker left in the system?
5. What actions does JJ Thompson take to protect his company?
6. What question does Cayetano Tolosa ask? Why does he ask this question?
7. Why is JJ Thompson sure that this is not an inside job?
8. What analogy does he use to describe the work of his computer programmers?
9. What analogy does he use to describe the work of Pluto?
10. How does JJ motivate his team at the end of the meeting?