

READING EXERCISE

The Adventures of Lola Badiola

CHAPTER 65 – THE SETUP

The boardroom was comfortably cold, kept at a steady temperature by the silent air-conditioning system. There was a faint smell of tobacco mixed with pot pourri from the pots of petals on the sideboards. All the ambient noise was absorbed by the padded walls and carpeted floor.

The central feature of the room was a long thin maple wood table. It could seat about twenty-five people. At the end of it was a group of men working on a deal. None of them noticed that Lola and her team had entered, they were completely focused on some small but significant element of the contract.

At the centre of the table was Mario Ruiz de Velasco, impeccably dressed in a tailored made suit, high collar shirt and a Windsor knotted tie. His silver hair was lustrous and shiny, his skin was tanned and smooth, his body language exuded confidence and invincibility. Either side of him were his lawyers, senior partners from Unceta Menéndez, Spain's most prestigious law firm, guarding their master like two German Shepherds. To the left of this group was Luis Bruña, looking thin and sallow, like the life had been sucked out of him by a Death Eater, and to the right was Cayetano Tolosa scrolling through his mobile phone.

Sitting opposite them was JJ Thomson, wearing one of his ACDC T-shirts, skintight jeans and Air Jordan basketball boots, he clearly hadn't read the dress code for the party. Next to him was a wise old man who had flown in from Silicon Valley especially for this meeting. It was JJ's legal counsel and business mentor, a man that had assisted the entrepreneur in all of his previous contract negotiations.

Lola stood at the entrance of the boardroom observing the face-off in front of her - five men on one side of the table, two on the other. It seemed distinctly unbalanced, symbolic of their relative power in the cybersecurity market. It was clear that they had yet to reach an agreement and therefore Lola and her team had arrived in time. Now, she had to put her plan into action.

"Good afternoon." she said in a loud commanding voice.

All seven men stopped what they were doing and looked in her direction. What they saw was a tall, dark-haired woman, silhouetted in boardroom's panoramic window, staring down at them with a hungry look in her eyes. Standing behind her were three shadowy figures of varying shapes and sizes. For the men in the midst of an intense and protracted negotiation it was a strange and confusing sight.

Luis Bruña put down the document he was reading, Cayetano Tolosa stopped scrolling through his smartphone, and Mario Ruiz de Velasco slowly took off his reading glasses. They all sat in silence trying to figure out what was going on.

"Lola? What are you doing here?"

It was JJ Thomson who asked the question that was on everyone's mind.

"We have new information about JBlock that materially affects the value of the company." She replied.

Her words were met with silence. The contract negotiation was so advanced that it seemed impossible that anything could derail it. All of the terms and conditions had been agreed, all the major clauses had been written and the lawyers were simply proofreading the final document before it was printed and signed.

"What new information?" asked JJ slowly, still unable to believe what he was witnessing.

Before Lola could answer a group of five security guards burst into the boardroom followed by the two receptionists from the 21st floor and José from the ground floor. The guards had their batons drawn and they were ready for a riot.

"You need to come with us!" said the biggest and ugliest of them.

"Wait!" said Lola. "You need to hear what we have to say."

The guards ignored her plea and moved in to grab the intruders, one guard for each of Lola, Gonzalo and Park, two guards for Diego. They started to push the intruders aggressively towards the entrance of the boardroom, encouraged by the three receptionists.

While this commotion was happening, nobody noticed that the wise old man sitting next to JJ Thomson had gotten to his feet. In a deep and powerful voice, he shouted:

"Hold on! Hold on!"

The man had such a commanding presence that everyone in the room stopped and looked at him. He continued:

"If there is new information that affects the value of the company, I, for one, would like to hear it. In fact, it is my duty as legal counsel to the vendor to hear it." Then he looked at the two stony faced lawyers sitting opposite him and said. "And it is your duty to the purchaser to do the same."

Everyone now looked towards Mario Ruiz de Velasco who commanded the room like a King amongst consorts. His poker face had not indicated even the faintest sign of any emotion either positive or negative during the whole altercation. He looked in the direction of the security guards and simply nodded his head. One by one they released Lola and her team and reluctantly left the boardroom, followed shortly afterwards by the receptionists.

"Please take a seat," said Ruiz de Velasco calmly, motioning for the four newcomers to sit opposite him, as if they had been genuinely invited to the meeting. "Would you like something to drink? Water? Coffee?" he looked at Lola with a charming smile and alluded back to their previous meeting "A whisky perhaps?"

"No thank you," said Lola as she took her seat next to JJ. The others sat either side of them. The face-off between the two companies was now more balanced, six to five in JBlock's favour.

“First of all, let me introduce you to my team.” Said Lola. “This is Mr. De la Fuente, technology manager. This Mr. Garrido, legal counsel. And this is Mr. Plu To, my personal assistant.”

JJ Thomson leaned forwards and looked across at Park in complete disbelief. He turned to Lola who nodded her head almost imperceptibly. He turned to Diego who did the same. Then he sat back in his chair and started to consider the game changing consequences of having the greatest hacker in the world on his side.

“Mr. Plu To will be taking some notes today,” said Lola “Do you have a WiFi password?”

Luis Bruña slid a piece of paper across the table with the relevant information on it. Park opened up the laptop, signed into the network and started to hack Telecom España.

READING COMPREHENSION

1. Describe the boardroom.
2. Describe the team from Telecom España.
3. Who are the lawyers representing TE?
4. Who is the lawyer representing JBlock?
5. How do they react when Lola arrives?
6. What stage have the negotiations reached?
7. Why don't the security guards force them out of the meeting room?
8. What private joke does Ruiz de Velasco make with Lola?
9. How does JJ react when he realizes Pluto is part of the team?
10. What does Lola request at the end of the meeting?