

## READING EXERCISE

### The Adventures of Lola Badiola

#### CHAPTER 51 – RICHARD GERE

Lola arrived back at her apartment in Malasaña at 9pm. She had gone for a quick drink with Gonzalo following their meeting. They both needed to wind down after the discussion about finances.

Lola decided to keep the news of the civil lawsuit from her mother for the time being. The involvement of Perla Manchón would only add melodrama to the story. Lola needed to think clearly and independently.

As she inserted the key into the front door, she heard a familiar voice behind her.

“Hey!”

“Concha! What are you doing here?”

“It’s St. Valentine’s Day. And I’m your date.”

“What?”

“What do you fancy? Chinese? Indian? There’s a new Lebanese around the corner.”

Concha was in one of her irrepensible moods and Lola decided to go with the flow. Neither of them had partners in town, so it seemed like a good plan. Concha was not only a great teller of anecdotes and jokes, but she was also a patient listener. This would be an opportunity for Lola to externalize all her thoughts and ideas. It would help her clarify a way forward.

“Lebanese.”

“Perfect.”

The restaurant was packed with thirtysomethings who lived locally. The noise, colour and smells of the place were intoxicating. The two friends ordered a bottle of house wine and a selection of breads, sauces and meats from the menu.

Concha explained that she was feeling lonely. Eugenio, her husband, had been travelling for the previous two weeks making a documentary film for the World Wildlife Fund. He was scheduled to arrive back the following week.

“It’s amazing, I miss him so much when he’s abroad. But he’s so annoying when he’s home.”

The two women laughed.

“So, what’s happening with Mr. Red Bull?” she asked playfully.

“I haven’t seen him since the Paella party.”

Lola hadn't thought about Mr. Red Bull since their lunch together. She hadn't paused to contemplate the potential of the relationship. Her life had been completely consumed by the professional challenges.

"Hey!" said Concha changing the subject. "I saw your Mum yesterday."

"Oh."

"Does she have a new man in her life?"

"I don't think so. Why?"

"I was stuck in some traffic on Serrano, and I saw her walking into a restaurant with Richard Gere."

"Richard Gere?"

"Yeah, you know, tall, confident, silver hair. Old but extremely sexy."

Lola burst into laughter. "My Mum has a few companions, but I don't think any of them are serious."

Perla Manchón was a businesswoman and a socialite. When she wasn't overseeing the activities of Grupo Badiola as the Chairman of the Board, she was attending charity events, modern art exhibitions and fashion shows. If there was a party featured in *Hola* magazine, Perla would have an invitation for it, often accompanied by an eligible CEO, aristocrat or intellectual.

Lola wasn't concerned with either her mother or Mr. Red Bull at that moment. She had more pressing matters on her mind that she needed to talk about. She was no longer speaking to a therapist, so Concha was the next best thing.

"Listen Concha, I'm in a bit of trouble at the moment."

"Really? Tell me about it."

For the next two hours Lola and her best friend discussed everything that was happening in Lola's professional life - the article in *CyberStory* magazine, the interview with Interpol, the lawsuit from Telecom España, the rejection by Banco Santander and the office politics of Cayetano Tolosa.

Concha listened carefully, offering sympathy and advice, firing Lola up when she sounded depressed, spurring her on when she sounded unsure. It helped Lola release the pressure that had been building up for the previous two weeks. It helped her to put things into perspective. But it didn't solve any of the fundamental problems. How was she going to succeed at JBlock? How was she going to respond to the civil lawsuit from Telecom España? How was she going to protect the future of Grupo Badiola?

The two women were so engrossed in their conversation that they were unaware that the restaurant had emptied, and they were the last two customers. The waiter asked them if they would like some chupitos on the house, but they were already quite drunk, so they paid the bill and headed home.

"Why don't you sleep over at my place tonight?"

"I'd love to, but I've got a busy day tomorrow."

"Ok, well, come over this weekend. We can binge on "Friends". Just like the old days."

"Sure."

The two women walked arm in arm through the pedestrian streets of Malasaña. There were still plenty of people wandering from one bar to another, impervious to the cold, dry air of the February night. There was no better city in the world than Madrid to go out with friends or lovers. Lola was reminded of the important things in life and for a moment her troubles seemed very far away.

"So, you really think my Mum is dating Richard Gere?" she said to Concha with a smile.

"A Spanish version."

"Even better."

"Yeah, the only real difference was the eyes. Richard Gere's are black and infinite. This guy's were lighter - blue or green - and focused like a laser on the face of your mother."

## READING COMPREHENSION

1. Why does Lola decide not to tell her mother about the civil lawsuit?
2. Why does Lola decide to go for dinner with Concha?
3. Describe the restaurant.
4. Who is Eugenio and what is he doing?
5. Who is Mr. Red Bull and what is his relation to Lola?
6. Who is Perla Manchón and what is she like?
7. Who is Richard Gere and what does he look like?
8. What does Lola discuss with Concha and why is it helpful? Does it solve her fundamental problems?
9. What does Lola think about life in Madrid?
10. Who is the man who looks like Richard Gere and what is he doing with Perla Manchón?