

READING EXERCISE

The Adventures of Lola Badiola

CHAPTER 50 – PRETTY BOY

Cayetano Tolosa sat at his desk eating an apple. It was late evening, and JBlock was quiet. A small group of programmers were tapping away on their keyboards, completely oblivious to his existence.

He unbuttoned the top of his shirt and took out the small golden cross that was hanging at the end of his necklace. He was Catholic by birth but had long since given up practicing Christianity. He held the cold, smooth metal between his thumb and forefinger as he contemplated his next move.

At the other end of the room JJ Thomson and Diego de la Fuente were deep in discussion. The door to JJ's office was slightly open and Cayetano could hear the murmurs of the conversation within, but he was unable to understand anything that was being said.

He took a final bite of his apple and then walked over to the rubbish bin that was nearest to JJ's office. He stood there, hidden from their sight but close enough to hear the discussion.

"No trace of Pluto." said Diego "Nobody has heard of him. The guy is a ghost."

"So, who do we think he is?"

"There are only two options. An anonymous hacker working for a hostile government. Or an inside job."

There was a long pause.

"Ok." replied JJ quietly.

He walked over to the window of his office and looked down at Gran Via below. It was full of people coming and going. There were tourists discovering the centre of Madrid, groups of teenagers shouting and screaming, and young couples on the way to enjoy a romantic meal for Valentine's Day.

JJ turned back to Diego.

"I'm running out of money."

His voice betrayed a tone a vulnerability that Diego had never heard before.

"The cash burn of this business has almost doubled since I started paying everyone overtime. And I don't see revenue coming in any time soon. You know me, Diego, I'm always optimistic, but I'm not sure how we're gonna prevail. It was difficult enough to win the trust of clients before this crisis, but now it's almost impossible."

JJ sat down on his chair and leaned back with his hands behind his head.

"Do you remember that lunch we had at Gordon Ramsay's fish restaurant?"

"How could I forget?"

"Yeah. It was special."

The two of them were lost in thought for a moment. And then JJ continued.

"I said to you then that Lola was the key to getting our business off the ground."

"I remember."

"I said that she was our greatest strength, but also our greatest weakness."

"Yes."

There was another long pause.

Cayetano leaned closer to the open door to ensure that he could hear every word that was being said. He needed to know exactly what they thought about Lola. He needed to know exactly what they planned to do next.

He hadn't noticed that the keyboard typing around him had stopped. He hadn't noticed that all the programmers were now silently staring at him.

"What are you doing, Pretty Boy?" asked one of them.

Cayetano looked up in shock.

"My apple core." He said, regaining his composure. He showed them the remains of his fruit and then threw it into the nearest rubbish bin. Then he flashed them all a diamond white smile and walked back to his desk.

Little by little the noise of typing once again filled the office as the programmers got back to work.

Cayetano sat down, took out his iPhone and scrolled through his contact list.

Then he sent the following message:

"It's time."

READING COMPREHENSION

1. What is happening in the office that evening?
2. What religion is Cayetano Tolosa?
3. Who does Diego think that Pluto might be?
4. What is happening in the centre of Madrid that evening?
5. Why does JJ feel vulnerable?
6. What did JJ and Diego discuss at Gordon Ramsay's fish restaurant?
7. What information does Cayetano want to get by listening to the conversation?
8. Who is watching Cayetano?
9. What do you think he means when he says "It's time."
10. How do you think JJ can save the business?