

## Read some extracts from “*The Dolphin Heptad*”

### *Extract from Chapter 2:*

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‘If you don’t tell us *right now*, we’ll pour water over you,’ said Anu, holding the glass of water she had grabbed from the bedside table over her brother’s head.

‘Pax, pax,’ pleaded Rohan and Nimal, laughing so hard they could not have got up even if the girls were not standing over them. Gina was seated on Nimal’s chest.

‘Ooof! Gina, please get off me,’ gasped Nimal. ‘You weigh as much as a baby ephalunt.’

Peace restored, they sat on the carpet, and the girls glared expectantly at the boys.

‘Right,’ said Rohan. ‘Now where shall I start? Hmmm – first a GK question – which is the largest island in the world?’

‘Easy peasy,’ said Gina immediately. ‘Australia – of course!’

‘Excellent,’ said Rohan. ‘Now, do you remember Mike Carpenter?’

‘Of course we do,’ said both girls indignantly.

‘As if we’d forget him, dumbos!’ said Anu. ‘He’s been in touch with us, too, and said that he’d met Uncle Jack and was hoping to get a job in a new conservation Uncle Jack was starting in Brisbane.’

‘Where’s Brisbane?’ asked Gina.

‘Eastern Australia – right on the coastline, north of Sydney,’ said Nimal. ‘Did you get another email from Mike a couple of weeks ago?’

‘Yes,’ said Anu, ‘but it was very brief – just asking how we were and saying he was very busy but would catch up soon. That’s it. Why? Is he okay?’

Concern sharpened her voice. Mike was one of them.

‘Yeah, he’s fine,’ said Rohan, ‘and tonight – or rather, early tomorrow morning – we’re *going to join him and Uncle Jack!*’

‘WHAT?’ screamed the girls. ‘You mean go to Australia? Tonight? Yippee!’

They did a crazy dance around the room, the boys joining in, and then collapsed back onto the carpet.

‘Where are we going to stay?’ asked Gina breathlessly. ‘Will we stay with Mike and Uncle Jack?’

‘That’s the plan,’ said Rohan, ‘and, on top of that, according to the APs, we’re not going there just to have a good time and live it up – we are going to learn about some creatures we don’t know much about.’

‘Which animals?’ asked Anu eagerly.

‘Sea creatures,’ said Nimal. ‘Uncle Jack’s starting a conservation for them and will include whales, sharks, seal lions, seals and porpoises, to name a few, *plus* – guess what?’ He paused, and the girls looked at him expectantly. ‘Dolphins!’ he concluded.

‘Whoopie!’ shrieked Gina. ‘Nimal, that book your parents gave us had tons of information about dolphins. They’re such happy creatures, with their smiley faces – they always seem to be laughing.’

‘That’s right,’ said Anu, ‘and when I read about them I wished that we could see them for real and learn more – and now my wish has come true. Wow, I can hardly believe it!’

‘Oh, one more thing the APs said,’ continued Rohan, ‘was that we were to help Uncle Jack, Mike and the others. This is kind of a “busman’s holiday” for us.’

‘What?’ said Gina, wrinkling her nose. ‘We’re not going by bus from here to Australia, are we?’

‘No, of course not,’ said Anu, smiling at her kindly. ‘It’s just a saying. When bus drivers take their holidays, sometimes they travel on a bus, so the only difference from their daily job is that they are not actually *driving* the bus.’

‘Oh, I get it – thanks, Anu,’ said Gina with a grin. ‘I thought it was a bit difficult to get to Australia by bus!’

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### *Extract from Chapter 3:*

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They got their chocolate cake and then pulled out books as there was nothing to see outside the window, other than clouds. The plane was not very full, and was carrying only 300 passengers, so there were lots of empty seats.

‘Ah – here are a couple of seats,’ said a male voice just behind Rohan.

Rohan glanced over his shoulder briefly as someone bumped heavily into his seat, and saw two men sit down right behind him and Anu. One was about five foot eleven inches tall, and very broad, while the other, though taller, was extremely skinny. They took no notice of the children, and did not even apologize for bumping Rohan’s seat.

‘So, Darrel,’ said the first man, lowering his voice, ‘what luck did you have when you talked to Jack about the Conservation?’

Rohan pricked up his ears. He could hear them quite clearly, and though he did not mean to eavesdrop, he wondered if they knew Jack. They sounded Australian.

‘None at all, John,’ said Darrel. ‘In fact, he was very stubborn and unwilling to co-operate or see our point of view. He said it was cruel to have a park for animals just so that people could come and shoot them. He also said that if we were thinking of starting up another organization for people to hunt dolphins and whales, he would fight us to the bitter end.’

A flight attendant came round with drinks and the men stopped talking for a few minutes. Rohan nudged Anu, who was engrossed in a book, and whispered to her in Hindi, saying, ‘Listen to the conversation behind us.’ Anu raised her eyebrows, but listened as the men continued their conversation.

‘But wasn’t he interested in the money you offered him? He could use it for a conservation somewhere else instead of bothering with all his fundraising nonsense,’ said John.

‘He isn’t concerned about the money at all. When I mentioned it he accused us of trying to bribe him. He also said that the purpose of fundraising was not only to raise money, but to create awareness of the cause,’ said Darrel bitterly.

‘That man will ruin us,’ growled John. ‘We’ll have to find other ways of dealing with him. Once we get back we’ll put our heads together and see what we come up with. I’m not going to let him chase us away from the area! Ever since he and his stupid group came to the Gold Coast with their brainwave of starting a conservation for sea creatures, we’ve had fewer people visiting the lodge.’ He paused and continued, ‘Here’s an idea – why don’t we rope in Alastair and Eugene to do some brainstorming? They’re used to dealing with “problem” folk.’

‘There’s something in that,’ assented Darrel cautiously, ‘but let’s be careful this time, John. We don’t want the cops on our case for assault and battery again – we just managed to get them off our backs the last time those two had a brainwave!’

‘Yeah, yeah, okay,’ grunted John. ‘Don’t be so cowardly, Darrel.’

The men discussed a few more matters, mainly about staffing, and then moved away, presumably returning to their own seats.

‘Don’t say anything just now,’ whispered Rohan in Hindi. ‘I’ll check where they’re seated first.’ He got up and said, in a normal tone of voice, ‘I’m just going to the bathroom.’

He moved towards the bathroom at the rear and spotted the men easily enough – they were seated about ten rows behind the kids, across the aisle from each other. Rohan took a quick mental picture of what they looked like, finished with the bathroom and returned to his seat.

‘Okay, we can talk safely,’ said Rohan to Anu. He tapped Nimal on the shoulder and said, ‘We’ve got news.’

Gina and Nimal leant over the seats and Rohan and Anu repeated softly, in Hindi, what they had heard.

‘They’re obviously talking about Uncle Jack’s new Conservation,’ said Rohan. ‘Though I don’t want to jump to conclusions just because I heard Uncle Jack’s name, everything adds up – the Gold Coast, conservation, sea creatures – and I’m sure there can’t be two people named Jack starting up new conservations in the same area.’

‘Horrible men, to actually have a hunting lodge,’ muttered Anu angrily. ‘I thought those places were dying out with all the awareness and the push towards conservation.’

‘Yeah, but unfortunately there are still places all over the world where people can hunt animals,’ said Nimal in a low voice. ‘Look at our own country.’

‘I don’t think we should discuss this any more at the moment,’ said Rohan. ‘There are too many people around and we don’t know who else understands Hindi. We’ll wait till we get a chance to talk to Uncle Jack.’

The others agreed. They were all upset, and though they tried to distract themselves from thinking about it too much, it was hard to focus on something else.

Fortunately, a comic movie was scheduled to start soon and Rohan suggested that they put on their headsets and watch it.

After the enjoyable movie and dinner, the youngsters fell asleep for a couple of hours until Rohan woke them.

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### **Extract from Chapter 4:**

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‘Look out for Mike,’ said Rohan. ‘We should be able to spot him easily – he’s so tall.’

‘There, there!’ squealed Gina, jumping down from the trolley, ‘I can see them both.’

Sure enough, Jack and Mike, waving madly, were right in front of the crowd waiting outside the gates to welcome family and friends.

‘Uncle Jack! Mike!’ shrieked Gina, running towards them and leaping up into Jack’s arms. The others were right behind her.

‘Hello, honey!’ said Jack giving her a big hug and a scratchy kiss through his beard.

‘Oh, Mike, it’s fantastic to see you,’ said Gina, turning to hug him, too. Mike swung her high above his head, grinning with pleasure. He was thrilled to see all of them again, and had missed them a great deal.

There were hugs all around, Gina was perched on Mike’s shoulders and they were all talking, nineteen to the dozen.

‘I have a surprise for you in the car,’ said Jack, as they took a lift to the parking lot below. ‘Can you guess what it is?’

‘A dolphin in the back seat!’ said Nimal with a grin.

‘A baby seal,’ squeaked Gina, ‘a teeny, weeny one.’

‘Give us a hint, Uncle Jack,’ said Rohan.

‘Well – it’s two people whom you’ve heard of but haven’t met,’ said Jack.

‘I know,’ said Anu, her eyes gleaming, ‘your nieces from Canada! Right?’

‘Right on, mate! What a good guess!’ said Jack. ‘Yes, Amy and Michelle are waiting in the Land Rover for you. They wanted to give us time on our own before they joined us.’

‘When did they arrive?’ asked Rohan. ‘The APs didn’t say a word about them.’

‘Last night,’ said Jack, ‘and I asked your parents not to say anything as I wanted to surprise you.’

‘It’s a wonderful surprise,’ said Rohan, grinning broadly. ‘We’ve heard so much about them and now we’re actually going to meet them.’

‘They’ve heard lots about you, too,’ said Mike smiling. ‘Oh, don’t worry – I’ve only told them the good things – so far!’

The children were thrilled. They had heard a lot about Amy and Michelle and seen photographs of them, and now they would actually be spending a holiday together. What fun!

As the lift stopped and they got out, the children looked around eagerly. Two girls were walking towards them.

Mike put Gina down.

‘Here they are,’ said Jack. ‘I know you won’t need introductions. Oh, by the way, Michelle is usually called Mich.’

‘Hi! I’m Amy, and you must be Anu, right?’ said Amy, greeting Anu with a hug and a kiss. She turned to the others greeting each of them by name and giving them a hug and a kiss, too. Mich followed suit.

‘I feel as if I’ve known you for years,’ said Anu with a grin, feeling instinctively that they would get along well.

‘Yeah,’ said Nimal, looking admiringly at Amy’s beautiful dark brown hair which reached down to her waist, ‘and I’m sure you’ll lend me your hair when it gets c-c-c-cold.’

‘Sure thing,’ said Amy with a grin. ‘Uncle Jack’s already warned me about you, Nimal. He said you were the biggest tease I would ever come across. He said . . .’ she trailed off with a laugh.

Nimal, pretending to hide behind Mike, muttered, ‘And I thought Uncle Jack was a good guy and would only say *nice* things about me. I’m shattered, Uncle Jack.’

‘No worries – you’ll get over it, mate,’ said Jack with a laugh. ‘Now, into the vehicle – pronto! Time to get you home – it’s way past your bedtime.’

Gina and Mich eyed each other. Mich, also nine years old and a bit taller than Gina, had short, curly ash-blond hair and bright blue eyes which were currently rather sleepy. She was a little shy, but eager to make friends with this girl about whom she had heard so many good things. Gina liked Mich, too, but was quite exhausted by now and did not say a lot.

They reached the vehicle, Mike and the boys loaded the luggage into it and everyone clambered in, Mike and Nimal sitting up front with Jack.

‘Where do you live, Uncle Jack?’ asked Rohan, as they set off. ‘Dad said you were fairly close to the new Conservation.’

‘That’s right, Rohan,’ said Jack. ‘We live in the Gold Coast area, and will be home soon. The Conservation is a twenty-minute drive away from my place.’

The adults asked for news of friends at the Patiyak Wildlife Conservation in India, and thirty minutes flew by.

‘We’re nearly home,’ said Mike, as the Land Rover turned off the main highway and followed a two-lane road for a short distance.

‘Here we are,’ said Jack, turning into a driveway. ‘You’ll be asleep in no time at all.’

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## **Extract from Chapter 6:**

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They went back to the big pineapple structure and Mich wanted to go to the bathroom, so Amy accompanied her.

The Patels wandered around, admiring the scenery. As Amy and Mich were returning to join the Patels, a teenage boy accosted them.

‘Hi there, cutie,’ he said, leering at Amy. ‘I’m Don, and this is my mate, George. We’re here on our own – are you with your parents?’

Amy took an instant dislike to Don. ‘We’re with a group of friends,’ she said coldly, taking Mich’s hand and walking on.

‘Hold on, sweetie,’ said Don moving into her pathway and forcing her to stop. ‘What’s the rush? We’re here in our car, why don’t you join us? Who’re your friends anyway?’

‘They’re over there,’ said Amy, pointing to the Patels, who were not looking in their direction. Rohan and Nimal were seated on a bench watching Anu taking pictures of Gina posing in front of the big pineapple.

‘You mean you’re with that group?’ said Don insolently. ‘Surely not. They’re just scum. Leave your kid sister with them and you and I can cuddle up.’

Amy lost her temper. Quick-tempered at the best of times, when people made derogatory remarks about others, whether they were her friends or not, her temper flared.

‘You *moron!*’ she said angrily. ‘It’s people like you who give us a bad name for being discriminatory. Now, get out of our way before I yell for our friends to come and deal with you.’

Don sneered nastily and snapped, ‘Sure, call them and see what happens. I’m a karate champ. They won’t have the guts to come over.’

Mich burst into tears. ‘Rohan! Nimal!’ she yelled.

‘Trouble,’ snapped Rohan, hearing panic in the little girl’s voice.

He and Nimal raced over to where the Larkins were standing, their way still blocked by Don and George. Anu and Gina quickly followed the boys.

‘You okay, Amy?’ asked Rohan. He rapidly sized up Don and George.

‘No,’ said Amy through her teeth, ‘these two morons are blocking our way.’

‘Please step aside so that our friends can join us,’ said Rohan politely.

Don and George had taken stock of the boys, too. Rohan’s height and muscles were obviously not to be underestimated, and Nimal, standing beside Rohan with his hands clenched, looked an equally tough customer.

‘Who asked you to interfere?’ said Don belligerently. ‘We aren’t scared of \*#@%\$ like you – take a hike – you’re polluting the air around me!’

Before Rohan or Nimal could say a word, there was a loud *smack* as Amy, losing her cool completely, slapped Don across the face with all her strength, leaving an imprint of her hand on his face.

‘How *dare* you?’ she said, her voice trembling with anger. ‘You, you . . .’ She choked, tears of rage pouring down her cheeks.

‘You little \*!%,’ said Don viciously, raising his arm to hit her back.

‘Enough,’ growled Rohan angrily, stepping in front of Don and grabbing his arm. ‘You asked for it, dude,’ he continued, ‘and if you don’t get lost right now, you’ll be begging for trouble from us.’

Don felt the power in Rohan’s grip and knew that he was no match for the boy. He wrenched his arm away from Rohan and backed away from the children.

‘You’re garbage,’ he yelled, and spat at Rohan’s feet. Then, scared at the looks of fury on the boys’ faces, he and George made a run for their car.

Rohan and Nimal turned to give chase, but Anu swiftly grabbed them by their arms.

‘No!’ she said sharply, more to Rohan than to Nimal. ‘Cool it – you know it’s not worth mixing with them.’

The boys stared at her for a moment, both of them rigid with anger.

‘Okay, Anu – you’re right,’ said Rohan, trying to calm down, while Nimal punched the air in frustration. ‘You can let go of me now, sis,’ he continued with a forced grin as Anu still hung on.

‘Don’t cry, Mich,’ said Gina, hugging her, while tears of empathy ran down her face.

‘They’re a couple of jerks!’ said Rohan, putting his arm around Amy to give her a brief hug. ‘Please don’t cry, Amy – it’s not worth it. What happened?’

Amy told them, and then continued, ‘I’m so mad! I hate arrogant, chauvinistic guys like them.’ She tried to control her anger and her tears. ‘I’m sorry I nearly caused a fight,’ she said remorsefully, ‘but I couldn’t stand the way he behaved. I’m not sorry I slapped his face, though – he deserved it, and more!’

They walked slowly to the driveway, ignoring Don and George who were in a car, watching to see where they went. They wanted to give the group a fright by driving the car at them, but fortunately Ralph arrived just then and his bus blocked the car. The frustrated boys had no option but to drive off, which they did slowly, shaking their fists angrily.

‘Owyagoin’, maites?’ asked Ralph. Then he noticed their faces. ‘What’s up?’ he asked.

‘Just a problem with some troublemakers,’ growled Nimal, pointing at the car which was still in sight. ‘They’re lucky Anu stopped us going after them – they’d have been in *major* trouble then. If Rohan had less self-control not even Anu could have stopped him from teaching them a lesson!’

‘Huh – believe me, I’m having a tough time trying to stay cool, yaar,’ said Rohan, gritting his teeth.

Ralph ushered them into the bus and Amy told him what had happened. He was livid!

‘I’m sorry, maites,’ Ralph apologized. ‘I hope you won’t let this spoil your trip.’

‘We’ll be okay,’ said Amy, and the others nodded slowly.

‘Goodonya,’ said Ralph. ‘Now, let me check up on the rest of the folk in this bus, and I’ll be right back.’

He went off, returning shortly with ice creams for all of them, and though they told him they were fine, they were very appreciative of his kindness and generosity.

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## *Extract from Chapter 7:*

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He was a great storyteller, and the JEACs listened in fascination.

‘Dolphins have been around for 30 to 40 million years, compared to our one million or so, and are mentally, emotionally and socially very highly developed. They have an exuberant joy in being alive and are always smiling and dancing. It’s been shown, scientifically, that they have a larger brain than humans and have greatly evolved emotions. They’re compassionate, humorous and live in perfect harmony within large social groups.

‘Particularly fascinating were all the stories I heard about the way in which these marvellous creatures reached out to humans – not only helping them when in trouble, like saving drowning people, but also seeking them out to play with. There are countless such stories, but I will tell you only one for now – repeated to me by a friend – about a woman in “Monkey Mia”, a place here in Australia.

‘One full moon night this woman couldn’t sleep so she went out on the deck and found a dolphin splashing around. She took some fresh fish from her cooler and offered it to the dolphin, who took it, smiling as usual, right from her hand. And now, over 60,000 people go there every year; they stand in shallow water to feed, stroke and play with over a dozen dolphins who have chosen to reach out to humans.

‘We also learned that it was not fair to keep dolphins in captivity, no matter how much they loved us and we loved them. They were not free to be themselves when confined in man-made pools, and often died earlier than they would in their natural habitat.

‘So I decided that I would try and encourage people to learn more about dolphin conservation by *inviting* dolphins to interact with us rather than forcing them to do so. Our Conservation has a bay that is perfect for my dream! The seabed slopes gently down from the beach and reaches a depth of twelve metres within the bay. Two “arms” of land enclose the bay with a twenty-metre gap between the tips. The arms are quite wide, and we’ve built a high fence right along the arms on both sides, to prevent anyone falling into the sea which is much deeper just outside the bay. We’ve also built tiered seats, back to back, one set facing the bay and the other facing the open sea, so that people can watch the dolphins play in the bay, and then watch them diving and playing in the open sea. The dolphins will not be controlled or restrained in any way, and will be free to come and go as they choose.

‘And those are just the basics of what we are attempting to accomplish,’ concluded Jack.

‘Awesome!’ said Nimal passionately. ‘What an absolutely superfantabulous idea, Uncle Jack.’

‘Gee whizz! It fits in with all I’ve read about dolphins and human psychology,’ said Amy.

The youngsters were thrilled with the concept and eager to hear more. They peppered Jack and Mike with questions.

‘But how will you find dolphins that want to come and interact with humans in your bay?’ asked Rohan. ‘And if you plan to have shows, won’t you need to “invite” the dolphins to come into the bay at certain times, and how will they know?’

‘They are the most intelligent creatures in the world,’ said Mike. ‘After one of Jack’s fundraising campaigns, where he talked about his idea to a large group of conservationists, he was approached by a team who have been “communing” with a dolphin heptad.’

‘What’s a “heptad”?’ asked Gina and Mich.

‘It means a *group of seven*,’ explained Jack. ‘These people have been interacting with the heptad – on a daily basis – for five years – and can communicate with them beautifully. They have been asked, on numerous occasions, to bring their heptad into various conservations, but have refused because they didn’t want their friends to be placed in captivity.’

‘However, they loved Jack’s idea, felt it would work beautifully, and for the past five weeks they’ve been at our Conservation,’ said Mike.

‘The dolphins come into the bay to play with them every day, at 10:30 in the morning, one in the afternoon, and five in the evening,’ continued Jack. ‘It’s fascinating and heart-warming to hear the dolphins whistle and click as they communicate with each other and the group of humans. Those folk can ask them to do almost *anything*!’

‘All I need, to make me feel at peace with the world after a rough day, is to see their smiling faces and watch them play,’ said Mike. ‘They’re so much more *humane* than humans, if you know what I mean, and you can *feel* them reaching out to comfort you and cheer you up.’

There were lots more questions, mainly about the dolphins, and then it was bedtime.

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And..... Read the book and take part in their adventures!