

DOLPHIN ISLAND



A Daring Rescue

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Island Girl

“Look, Abby! Dolphins!”

“Where?” Abby Feingold raced over to her stepmother, Rachel, who was standing with her bare feet in the surf. It was a beautiful, hot, sunny summer day in the Florida Keys. Abby and Rachel were on the beach looking out across the peaceful lagoon at the sea between their island and Key West.

Yes, *their* island. Abby still could hardly believe that her family owned an island now! It had happened a few months ago when Daddy and Rachel got married.

Rachel's great-aunt Susan had given them this island, which was called Barnaby Key, as a wedding gift. Great-Aunt Susan had lived there for many years, and Rachel had loved visiting when she was Abby's age. But for the past ten years, Great-Aunt Susan had lived with her son in Miami, and nobody had lived on the island.

"Where are the dolphins?" Abby squinted to see past the sunlight glinting off the waves. Then she gasped. "Oh, I see them now!"

She held her breath and watched the dolphins. There were four or five of them—it was hard to tell, since they never stayed still. They leaped out of the water one after the other, seeming to play tag.

"They're beautiful, aren't they?" Rachel said. "I love dolphins."

"Me too." Abby smiled up at her new stepmother. Daddy always said that Rachel was the best thing to happen to him since Abby was born. Abby had to agree. She

already couldn't imagine their family without her. Rachel was kind and smart and always smiling. Her father was from Jamaica, and Rachel had lived there until she was a little older than Abby was now. Rachel's voice still had a lilting accent that sounded like everything she said was a song.

Then Abby returned her gaze to the dolphins. She watched them jump and twist and play. One of the dolphins was a little smaller than the others. It leaped right over a bigger dolphin, then popped back up, seeming to laugh.

"I hope Daddy gets back in time to see the dolphins," Abby said, pushing aside a strand of wavy brown hair that the sea breeze had blown into her face.

"That would be nice," Rachel agreed. "I bet our guests would love seeing dolphins, too. Maybe we can add a dolphin-spotting boat trip to the schedule. What do you think?"

"That's a great idea." Abby took out her phone and



made a note of it. She'd received the phone for her eighth birthday, which had happened a few weeks after the wedding. Daddy said she was the most responsible just-turned-eight-year-old he knew, and that she deserved to have her own phone. Besides, living on an island, she might need it.

Next, Abby took a few photos of the dolphins. But they were pretty far away—when she looked at the photos, the dolphins looked like tiny gray dots.

“Oh well,” she said. She stuck the phone back in the pocket of her shorts. “Maybe they’ll come closer to the beach sometime.”

“Maybe,” Rachel agreed. “Anyway, I’m glad we saw them. I’ve always thought they were good luck. Maybe seeing them is a good sign for our brand-new resort!”

“I bet it is.” Abby smiled. It was hard to believe that their island resort was finally open for business! The three of them had moved in soon after the wedding. Daddy had given up his job as a landscaper, and Rachel

had told the school where she taught that she wouldn't be back in the fall.

The whole family had spent just about every second since then hard at work. They'd cleaned up and painted the rambling old main house and the six smaller guest bungalows. They'd raked seaweed and other debris off the narrow strip of white sand beach. And they'd cut back the jungle of vines and weeds growing over everything. Rachel and Abby had gone to Key West, a much bigger island that was about three miles away by boat, to pick out bed linens and other stuff to decorate the guest rooms. Daddy had spent hours planting beautiful tropical flowers and shrubs. Most of the plants had come from Key West and other nearby islands. A few had to be shipped in from the mainland, which was more than sixty miles away.

Now everything looked perfect. Abby knew their first group of guests was sure to love it!

Abby scanned the horizon, looking for the *Kismet*.

That was the name of the family's boat. They planned to use it to pick up guests from the Key West airport and to take them out fishing and scuba diving on the coral reefs.

Then she looked for the dolphins again. They were getting farther away. A second later, they disappeared around the rocky curve of shore at the far end of the beach.

Abby wished they could have stayed longer. But she reminded herself that she lived on an island now—not in their old apartment on the mainland, miles and miles from the beach. She would have plenty of chances to see dolphins and all kinds of other cool creatures.

Just then she saw movement out on the water. “There’s the *Kismet!*” she cried, pointing. “The boat is coming back!”