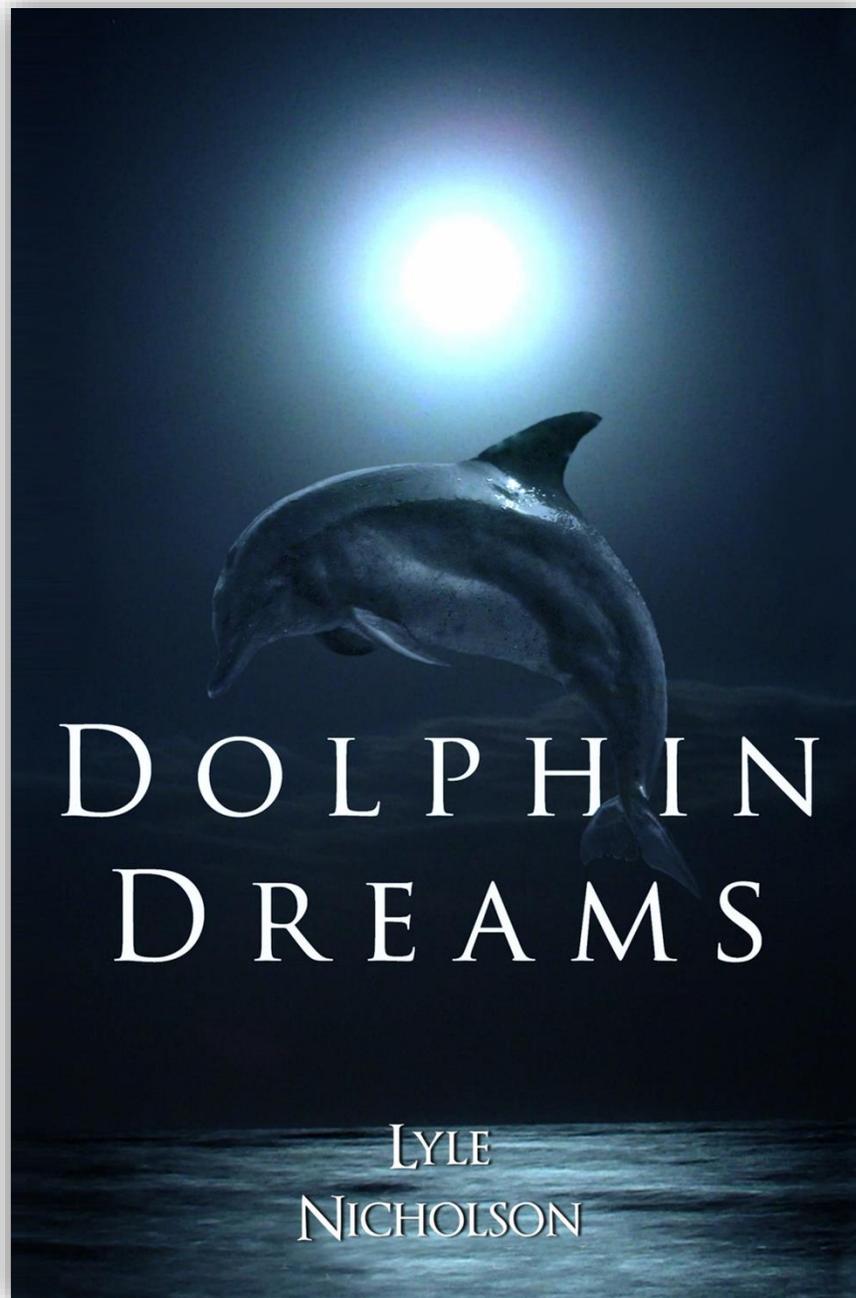


Chapters One - Three



DOLPHIN DREAMS
by Lyle Nicholson
CHAPTERS ONE & TWO

Print Book Availability: Amazon.com; Barnes and Noble.com
eBook Availability: Kindle, Nook, Smashwords, and Kobo

DOLPHIN DREAMS by Lyle Nicholson
Copyright © 2013 Lyle Nicholson

RED CULLIN PUBLISHING
Kelowna, BC
Canada

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise (except brief passages for purposes of review) without the prior permission of the author or publisher.

This book is a work of fiction. Any references to real people or real locales are used fictitiously. Other names, characters, places, and incidents are products of the author's imagination and any resemblance to actual events or locales or persons living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

Editor: Rachel Small
Front cover design: Jane Awde Goodwin
Book design and cover modifications: Ellie Searl, Publishista®

Second Edition 2014
ISBN: 978-0988154827

First Edition

Published by Iguana Books 2013

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication
Nicholson, Lyle, 1952-

Dolphin dreams / Lyle Nicholson.

Also issued in electronic format.

ISBN 978-1-927403-33-4

I. Title.

PS8627.I2395D64 2012 C813'.6 C2012-907817-4

DOLPHIN DREAMS

by Lyle Nicholson

CHAPTERS ONE & TWO

Print Book Availability: Amazon.com; Barnes and Noble.com

eBook Availability: Kindle, Nook, Smashwords, and Kobo

CHAPTER ONE

JOURNEY

BEFORE NIKLAS OKKONEN VISITED CANCUN, Mexico, he had never been in trouble with the police — had never even gotten a speeding or parking ticket. He lived the life of an honest citizen of Finland. Had Niklas Okkonen, the professor of wireless communications at Tampere University of Technology in Finland known what lay ahead of him, he might never have boarded the plane in Helsinki for the conference in Cancun.

Niklas was forty-two years old, a father of a sixteen-year-old daughter named Ansa, who “didn’t want to see him again, alive,” her words, and a recent divorcé. His wife, his college sweetheart, had fallen out of love with him as his dreams had faded. She now roared around town in a new Volvo with his old friend Vilpas Heikkien. Vilpas was the vice president of a prestigious software company and provided Niklas’s ex-wife with everything she could want. After all, what are good friends for?

After taking the train to Helsinki, Niklas had boarded a KLM flight to Amsterdam, then a flight to Mexico City, then a short flight to Cancun. Somewhere over the Atlantic Ocean, around three or four in the morning in some time zone, after the children had stopped crying on the plane and the man in 24D began snoring, having had enough to drink; Niklas began to look at his life. He ran it forward and backward, put it on pause and ran it in slow motion — no, it still did not make sense to him.

Born in a small village in Finland with loving parents, Niklas excelled at school and in sports. Ice hockey, Finland’s passion, was his passion until a knee injury sidelined his hopes of playing in his country’s national hockey league and becoming a Finnish export to the National Hockey League in North America. Eighteen years old, with his sporting hopes dashed, Niklas joined the Finnish Navy. Swimming had been his rehabilitation from his hockey injury, and when a doctor suggested he become a navy diver, Niklas had agreed. He became a

DOLPHIN DREAMS

by Lyle Nicholson

CHAPTERS ONE & TWO

Print Book Availability: Amazon.com; Barnes and Noble.com

eBook Availability: Kindle, Nook, Smashwords, and Kobo

demolition team diver, and all of his anger with the world dissipated when he attached large quantities of C-4 explosives to underwater structures and blew them up.

Niklas loved diving: the time underwater, his breath ascending upwards in bubbles, the underwater sounds, the silence. The silence was precious. Even at a young age, Niklas had had acute hearing. Sounds that others could not pick up were loud to him. They were like energy. They resounded and they pulsated. Underwater, the sounds and the energy were still there, but on mute.

In Finland's military, the standard term of service was twelve months, and Niklas stayed an extra year just to enjoy the diving — the blowing things up wasn't bad either. When he left the military, he started university. Energy fascinated him, and he decided to study electronic engineering. A bachelor of science was followed by a master's, which was capped by a doctorate, and Professor Niklas Okkonen then shared his brilliance in a position in Tampere University's engineering department.

Niklas could have taken a position at Nokia, the major wireless provider in Finland, risen up with the brightest stars of the industry, and made millions of dollars like his friends. But Niklas was fascinated with learning. Teaching became his passion, and his students loved him for it. They would fan the passion that Professor Niklas Okkonen instilled in them and join the myriad of companies that thrived in the Tampere University area, a mini-version of California's Silicon Valley with long winters and much vodka drinking.

Niklas met his wife to be, Kaarina in his first year of University. She told him her name meant "pure," and he was smitten from the first time she flashed her pure, blue eyes at him. Kaarina was small but sturdy, almost a Laplander in stature, with high cheekbones, a soft smile, and long, blonde hair. Compared to Niklas, a tall, dark, brooding Fin, she stood out like a diamond.

Their courtship was a whirlwind, fueled by passion and poetry and long-Finland-summer light that led to a stormy marriage that somehow lasted sixteen years, until the past autumn. Kaarina had continually asked Niklas to leave the university and take a position in development with one of the numerous software or wireless companies in the city. All the companies would double or triple his salary, and the yearly bonus would allow them a country house by the lake and trips away from the long Finland winter.

Niklas would not do it. Teaching was his first love, and his dream was to research how energy moved. Energy as sound, energy as light, energy as waves—all this fascinated him—and to harness this energy for companies for profit? Well, it didn't seem right to him. And his students, one year after another, always amazed him with the questions they asked.

Now he sat in seat 26E on the KLM flight from Amsterdam to Mexico City in economy in the middle of March. His daughter, who had once hung on his every word, now just hung up on him when she answered the phone. Niklas had taught Ansa how to scuba dive when she was twelve years old. They used to go on diving trips together, to the cold Baltic Sea, where their bubbles rose together to the surface, and twice to Egypt and

DOLPHIN DREAMS

by Lyle Nicholson

CHAPTERS ONE & TWO

Print Book Availability: Amazon.com; Barnes and Noble.com

eBook Availability: Kindle, Nook, Smashwords, and Kobo

the Red Sea, where they had floated for hours over the bright coral, using hand signs to point out what they saw. Now, no communication from his daughter — only silence.

His doubts about his life came at him like cars going the wrong way on a rush hour freeway. He had watched a program once about police pursuing cars on freeways in LA. The cars fleeing would always speed to the other side of the freeway to escape, hoping the police would crash in the oncoming traffic. Invariably, the ones fleeing would crash. Niklas wondered if perhaps he had gone against the world too much, felt too much, reasoned too much. He sat back, hit the recline button, and felt his seat ease back a merciless inch. He sighed, turned off his light, and tried to sleep.

DOLPHIN DREAMS

by Lyle Nicholson

CHAPTERS ONE & TWO

Print Book Availability: Amazon.com; Barnes and Noble.com

eBook Availability: Kindle, Nook, Smashwords, and Kobo

CHAPTER TWO

ARRIVAL

THE KLM FLIGHT ARRIVED IN Mexico City late, but it did not matter, as the Mexicana flight to Cancun was delayed due to mechanical failure. Niklas sat in limbo, jet lag, and his own body odor until they finally called the flight.

His plane arrived in Cancun at 5:45 p.m., and he followed the other passengers towards customs, then baggage. He had to pee. No doubt about it, his forty-two-year-old bladder was in distress. During the last hour of the flight, a very cute Mexicana flight attendant had offered him a Corona, and as he could never refuse a pretty lady, he drank it. A mere fifteen minutes after consuming the beer, the plane started its descent. The seat belt sign came on, the airplane began pitching as it bounced on the warm Atlantic sea air, and Niklas rode his ever-filling bladder all the way into Cancun.

After passing smiling customs officials, smiling baggage handlers, and all other smiling Mexicans who smiled much more than anyone from Finland, Niklas found the WC, el baño, in Spanish and reprieve. He relieved himself at the first porcelain fixture he could find, and then proceeded to wash his hands. There beside him, a small, brown, wrinkled man with smooth, gray hair was smiling at him and offering a paper towel. His perfect teeth and eyes gleamed.

Niklas took the towel and remembered that tipping was customary in Mexico. He had recently been to France and Spain, where a fifty-cent euro coin was standard. Niklas dug into his pockets, and his hand came out with a five-euro note. He was shocked to see it as it left his hand, and the little man offering the paper towel expressed his gratitude and deftly pocketed the note. A five-euro note was

DOLPHIN DREAMS

by Lyle Nicholson

CHAPTERS ONE & TWO

Print Book Availability: Amazon.com; Barnes and Noble.com

eBook Availability: Kindle, Nook, Smashwords, and Kobo

seven American dollars. Niklas had just paid a fortune to take a piss in Mexico. He towed his hands, walked out of the toilet in disgust, and found his baggage at the carousel.

The air outside the terminal was humid and warm. Night had descended, and Mexicans yelled to tourists to come to their cabs, their tours, their rental cars, or their buses.

Niklas dragged his one roller bag and found the hotel shuttle designated by his conference. Before boarding, he found a money exchange booth and exchanged some euros for pesos. He found 1 euro equaled .60 of a peso. The man who took his bag got two pesos — Niklas was not cheap, but he was not about to fund anyone's pension.

The shuttle bus drove through the Cancun night, passing armed checkpoints. The police were working to keep unwanted elements out of Cancun — basically anyone but tourists or those who worked for the tourists. Niklas sat in the backseat and finally reviewed his emails and texts on his phone. There was the usual university traffic, students wanting more time for papers and asking silly questions to answers they could look up, but there was also one from Kaarina, who was very upset. *I know what you did, and I've informed the police. Expect to be arrested on your return to Finland, you bastard!*

The note jarred Niklas out of his jet lag and lack of sleep. He knew what she talking about. Last Thursday, just two days before his flight to Cancun, he had parked in the car park at the market he usually shopped at. He got out of his 1999 Skoda wagon, which he called the pride of the Czech Republic, just in time to see Kaarina, Vilpas, and Ansa get out of Vilpas's brand new Volvo XC60 and head into the market.

Niklas almost cried out hi, almost waved, but he hung back. They walked away not noticing him. He walked up to the car to admire it, and there, with his head out the window, which was down half way, was his lovely ex-dog, a golden spitz named Kasen. Niklas placed his hand on the dog's head, and Kasen licked and nuzzled him lovingly.

His beautiful dog looked fat, downright tubby. He had always been lean, muscular, and full of energy and now looked sluggish and heavy. Inspired, Niklas marched, as one possessed, to the veterinary clinic by the market, purchased a bottle of Laktulos, a laxative for dogs, and then gave his beloved dog a dose. He knew that what he was doing was wrong, and he felt bad for the dog he loved so much, but he had never made a statement to his friend, his wife, or his daughter about how he felt, and it seemed to him that now was the time to make it.

He had heard from a mutual friend that Vilpas's brand new Volvo might be a write-off. His lovely dog Kasen had been a good boy, and was probably well relieved.

Niklas looked up from his BlackBerry. His battery was dying, so he decided to watch the buildings go by. Palm tree-lined avenues gave way to rows of hotels on white-sand beaches. They drove through an area of high-end shops selling designer wear, perfume, and jewelry. The shops disappeared in the

DOLPHIN DREAMS

by Lyle Nicholson

CHAPTERS ONE & TWO

Print Book Availability: Amazon.com; Barnes and Noble.com

eBook Availability: Kindle, Nook, Smashwords, and Kobo

dark as they came upon rows of restaurants interspersed with bars. Bubba Gump Shrimp, Argentina Steak House, and Hooters all screamed their margarita prices and happy hour times.

In the midst of the restaurants and bars, a large police station appeared — a reminder to the myriad of young revelers and drinkers, whom Niklas knew would be mostly underage and over stimulated Americans and Canadians. The police of Cancun would be watching.

The van finally pulled up to the hotel, the Mayan Dreams Resort at the very end of the hotel zone. Niklas pulled his weary body out of the van and got a whiff of the ocean. He knew it was close. He tipped the driver four pesos and the person who picked up his bag four pesos, and he was about to tip the doorman when his tipping reflexes seized up. He clutched his hand in his pocket to fight the urge. In Finland and other Nordic countries, prices included tips, and people were paid well. Niklas had been warned that Mexico would be different. He felt as if his pockets had become a cash machine for people around him.

At the front desk, he was given a room, an upgrade, they said. The room, high on the fifth floor, would overlook the dolphin pools and provide a view of the ocean. Niklas thanked the front desk person and almost gave her a tip, then gave his bag to a bellman, whom he knew he would tip.

The bellman led Niklas out of the reception area — a large, wide-open space with waterfalls, screaming parrots, and a bar full of patrons drinking the all-inclusive liquor — down a long corridor and past the conference area. The conference was already in motion. Niklas was late. His plane should have arrived at 1:45 p.m., and he had planned to get to the hotel by 3:00 p.m. at the latest, have a short nap and quick swim, and be at the conference for cocktails at 6:30 p.m.

It was 6:45 p.m., and Niklas had not changed yet. He walked quickly past the conference guests in his jeans and T-shirt, hoping his business attire had traveled well.

They walked past the conference center, the restaurant, the pool, and over a bridge that separated two outdoor pools. At first Niklas thought the pools were for swimming, but then he saw something large with a fin and a tail move and splash. He saw it was a dolphin and stopped. Beside one of the pools, a young Mexican woman with the most wonderful legs he had ever seen was pushing a long pole, cleaning the pool. She smiled at him, and he smiled back. The dolphin also looked at him, and he thought he saw it smile too.

The bellman led Niklas to his room, showed him the television and bathroom, deposited his bag on the floor, took his tip, and closed the door with a smile. Niklas was still amazed at how much the Mexicans smiled. He walked out his balcony door and looked out over the ocean. A small convoy of clouds moved overhead, and a fighter squadron of frigate birds sailed in tight formation. The moon was just beginning to show itself, and it cast a glow over a palm tree that waved in the breeze.

DOLPHIN DREAMS

by Lyle Nicholson

CHAPTERS ONE & TWO

Print Book Availability: [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com); [Barnes and Noble.com](https://www.barnesandnoble.com)

eBook Availability: [Kindle](https://www.amazon.com/kindle-dbs), [Nook](https://www.nook.com/), [Smashwords](https://www.smashwords.com/), and [Kobo](https://www.kobo.com/)

Niklas looked down on the main pool below, where several dolphins moved lazily, circling the pool and nudging one another. Then they flipped over to expose their underbellies. The girl he had seen on the bridge was still there. She sat down beside the pool, and one by one, the dolphins came to her. She held their long noses in her hands and looked into their eyes.

Niklas had to break himself away from the scene. He could have stayed there, lost in the vision of the girl and the dolphins, but he had a conference to get to — one he was late for. He went back into his room and opened his bag only to find it soaking wet.

DOLPHIN DREAMS

by Lyle Nicholson

CHAPTERS ONE & TWO

Print Book Availability: Amazon.com; Barnes and Noble.com

eBook Availability: Kindle, Nook, Smashwords, and Kobo

CHAPTER THREE

RECEPTION

NIKLAS TOOK HIS WET CLOTHES out of the bag that had traveled from Helsinki, Finland, to Cancun, Mexico, and hung them up. Somewhere, probably on the long delay in Mexico City, his bag had lay on the tarmac and been soaked with rain. His suit jacket looked like a wet rag, and so did his dress pants. He had planned on wearing a casual jacket and shirt with no tie, but now he was faced with the jeans and T-shirt he was wearing.

Niklas remembered seeing a gift shop down in the lobby — it was his only hope. He called down and was told by a pleasant-sounding Mexican woman in melodic, Spanish-accented English that they had some lovely clothes for sale. What Niklas found when he got to the gift shop were Mexican beach wedding shirts called guayaberas: four pockets, long sleeves, linen, with embroidery running down the front. He shook his head in disbelief. He matched a navy shirt with a pair of off-white linen pants and went back to his room to change. He had no other choice.

Walking into the reception that was now in full swing, Niklas decided to put on a brave face and tell people that he had decided to “go native.” Within seconds of entering the reception, before he could even get a drink, he spotted the three conference delegates he had hoped to avoid. Pekka, Rafu, and Otto stood in a ring, with their wives just outside their circle. They were already well on their way to becoming intoxicated, and their dialogue kept switching between Finnish and English. Niklas had attended university with all of them, and the three of them had left Finland for America, settling at wireless companies that paid millions. Their wives were American, blonde, and younger, with sculpted boobs, faces inflated with Botox, and enough jewelry showing to start their own stores.

DOLPHIN DREAMS

by Lyle Nicholson

CHAPTERS ONE & TWO

Print Book Availability: Amazon.com; Barnes and Noble.com

eBook Availability: Kindle, Nook, Smashwords, and Kobo

“Hi, Niklas Okkonen. Hell, is that you?” Pekka called out loudly. Numerous conference delegates turned their heads. Pekka swayed forward, grabbed Niklas around the shoulder, and herded him into their group. He was a big man with a large face that sloped into a forehead sprouting wispy blond hair that was unfortunately leaving his head quickly.

Rafu and Otto both gave him bear hugs and then turned and introduced Niklas to their wives. There was a Sandra, a Carol, and a Laura, who all briefly feigned interest in Niklas and then got back to their conversation about shopping in Cancun and spa treatments that the men had so rudely interrupted.

“So, Niklas, you’re a star speaker at the conference, I see. Still forging ahead with new technology you’re not getting paid for?” Otto said as he swigged his beer and looked at Pekka and Rafu, who both smiled. They often made fun of their intelligent friend who had never been interested in money. Otto and Rafu looked like ex-hockey players: blond, fit, and still good-looks in their mid-forties.

Niklas shrugged. “Yeah, I discovered some new encryption techniques I thought you wireless tycoons might want to make more billions on.” Niklas felt trapped. He was only a short distance from the bar, and there was no line at the moment, but he might as well have been across the room. This pack of wolves would not release him — he was a lamb caught for their sport.

Rafu laughed loudly, spilling some of his beer. “Ha, Niklas, you were always the class clown. You and your visions of sound and waves and new technology, I don’t understand why you aren’t in America with us getting rich. Otto and Pekka just bought new houses, and they’re almost as big as mine.” He laughed loudly again and spilled more beer. His wife glared at him. Rafu straightened up and composed himself.

Niklas managed a weak smile while looking furtively around for an escape. “Gentlemen, I love teaching, the icy cold of Finland, and discovering new technology, but. . .” He was about to launch into a discussion of his passion, which he knew would help the three lose interest in him, when Malcolm Turnbull sauntered by. Malcolm was the conference organizer, the one who had invited Niklas, and he seemed to Niklas like an oasis in the madness of his old friends.

“Niklas, thank God you made it.” Malcolm grabbed Niklas by the hand and pumped it several times. “My God, boy, you haven’t a drink in your hand. We must remedy that.” Malcolm was English, very English: Oxford education, upper-class upbringing, and a love of queen and country. Malcolm was only in his mid-forties, but his clothes, a navy, double-breasted blazer, white shirt, school tie, and gray wool pants with patent leather shoes, were a throwback to the 1950s. Appearance-wise, Malcolm looked all of thirty. He was tall and had carefully groomed dark hair and eyebrows. Niklas thought Malcolm could be gay, or the subject of the best tutor and mother in England.

DOLPHIN DREAMS

by Lyle Nicholson

CHAPTERS ONE & TWO

Print Book Availability: Amazon.com; Barnes and Noble.com

eBook Availability: Kindle, Nook, Smashwords, and Kobo

Malcolm apologized to the other men. “I must have a word with Niklas,” he said, hustling him away and to the bar. Niklas ordered a double vodka, with ice and lime, and took a long gulp to equalize the bullshit he had just consumed.

“I say, Niklas you do look rather local in your getup,” Malcolm said, holding a gin and tonic in his hand and looking Niklas over. “I do like it, but I couldn’t carry off the look. You do it quite well. I believe you’re the envy of all the stuffed shirts at the convention.” Malcolm mildly elbowed Niklas’s arm.

“Ah, yes, well, I saw it in the gift shop and thought what the hell? When in Rome. Or, when in Mexico. It’s very comfortable, but I’ll probably wear my business attire later this week,” Niklas said before taking another long drink of the vodka. He looked down at his garb and smiled at Malcolm.

“Nonsense, my good man, wear these or something similar all week, if you like. You look great, and our Mexican conference participants just told me how pleased they were to see you. My God, man, you have your finger on the pulse of these people . . . eh . . . what?” Malcolm nudged Niklas’s elbow again, which was now beginning to annoy him slightly. Niklas scanned the room again, trying to look for other participants he could latch on to without being too conspicuous. Anyone who mingles at conferences knows that leaving one conversation for the next must be done with finesse.

Niklas saw another professor from MIT and was about to politely say his good-byes when Malcolm grabbed his arm and said, “Dear man, we do need to speak about the little bit of bother you have yourself in.”

Malcolm had Niklas’s attention. He could feel the hair on the back of his neck and his pulse rise ever so slightly. The English term “little bit of bother” had been used to describe Luftwaffe attacks on London and the sinking of the Titanic.

Malcolm directed Niklas to the edge of the ever-growing conference crowd. Five hundred delegates were registered, and most of them had arrived at the reception. “There seems to be a bit of noise about a certain car you did something to back in Finland,” Malcolm began. “I’m sure this thing will blow over as they usually do. However, just to give you the heads-up, old man, a certain YouTube video featuring you arrived just before you did. You may have already seen it, but if you haven’t, you may want to do so.” Malcolm looked around the room as if he were providing Niklas state-secret-classified information.

Niklas took yet another long sip of his drink. His lips hit ice, and he almost lost some of that ice down his shirt. He composed himself, swallowing hard. “A YouTube video of me? How odd. No, I haven’t seen it. Been traveling all day. Is it something serious?”

“No, no old man, seems you are feeding a dog in a car park. There’ve been some allegations of the dog doing its business in the car and destroying it. I’m sure you were having a bit of fun, perhaps what

DOLPHIN DREAMS

by Lyle Nicholson

CHAPTERS ONE & TWO

Print Book Availability: Amazon.com; Barnes and Noble.com

eBook Availability: Kindle, Nook, Smashwords, and Kobo

the Fins do for pranks during your cold winters, but thought I'd let you know. This YouTube stuff can be quite strange . . . don't you think?" Malcolm dropped the question on Niklas like a grand inquisitor as he stared into his eyes, looking for an answer.

Niklas laughed it off and looked around the room. "YouTube . . . yeah, YouTube can be silly. Once I've seen the video, I'll let you know what it's really about . . ." Niklas smiled weakly at Malcolm, rustled the ice in his otherwise empty glass, and headed in the direction of the bar.

Out of Malcolm's sight, Niklas ducked out of the conference room and walked towards the lobby. He had seen a business center there. His BlackBerry was still powering up in his room. There was no one in the center when he arrived. He punched in the YouTube address and searched "dog and car park." There he was, a full and complete picture of him feeding his dog through the window of Vilpas's Volvo. The mall security must have caught it — not only caught it, but zoomed in on it. Niklas looked happy, almost blissful, and the bottle of dog laxative was clearly visible.

Someone in mall security must have known Niklas, as the video was titled "Professor exacts revenge on former friend and ex-wife, using his ex-dog as a weapon." The video had been on the morning news in Finland. Some dog owners wanted Niklas's head, the police of the town were seeking him for questioning, and his old friend Vilpas was quoted as saying there would be a lawsuit for damages.

Niklas then opened his email. Over three hundred messages appeared. Some were from people who supported him and his actions and others were from those who condemned his actions and the use of the dog to make his statement. There was also one from his lawyer: "You need to contact me soon" was all it said.