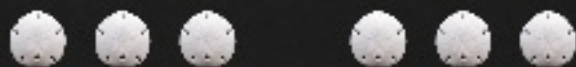


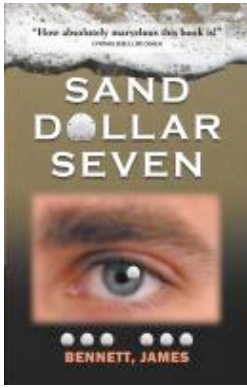
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CYNTHIA SEELY, LIFE COACH

SAND DOLLAR SEVEN



BENNETT, JAMES



Spellbinding poetry and visuals immerse the reader in a mindbending journey of two lonely people in search of each other and themselves in Sand Dollar Seven - a charmer fans are calling "a captivating, romantic mystery" and "a poetry masterpiece." SD7 is an epic-length tribute to the power of our mind to shape any future we desire. When the dream is strong enough - when it's real enough - it's never too late for a second chance.

Sand Dollar Seven

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**SAND
DOLLAR
SEVEN**

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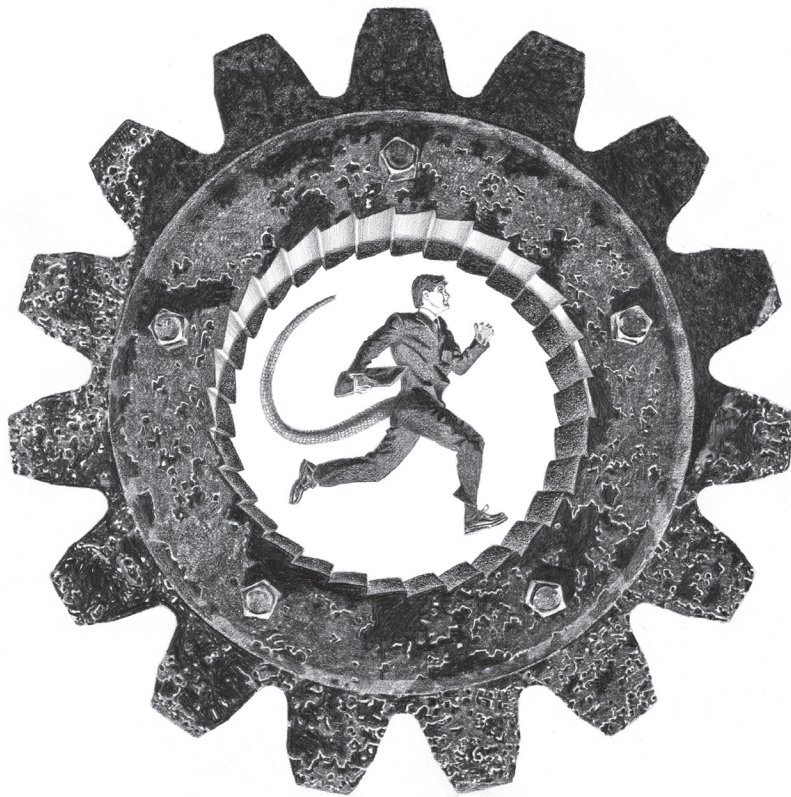
First Edition



CHAPTER ONE

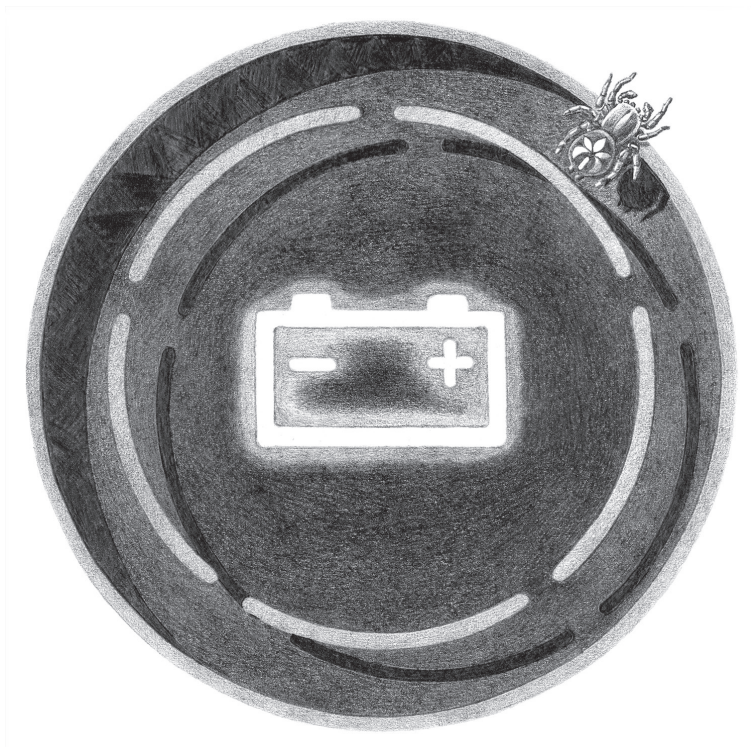


Awake I lie on the thirty-eighth floor
In an upscale box, amid dozens more
In a box even bigger that scrapes the sky.
After all these years I'm wondering why.
My sleepless eyes keep rolling around
The circular mobius lamp I found,
The first in a sculptor's limited run
I bought when I thought I was having fun.
The hole in its center chooses a view
Of the city I've grown accustomed to.
Now it's a one-sided, twisting knife,
Its blade reflecting my driven life,
A warning to leave this course I charted
Before I wind up where I started.



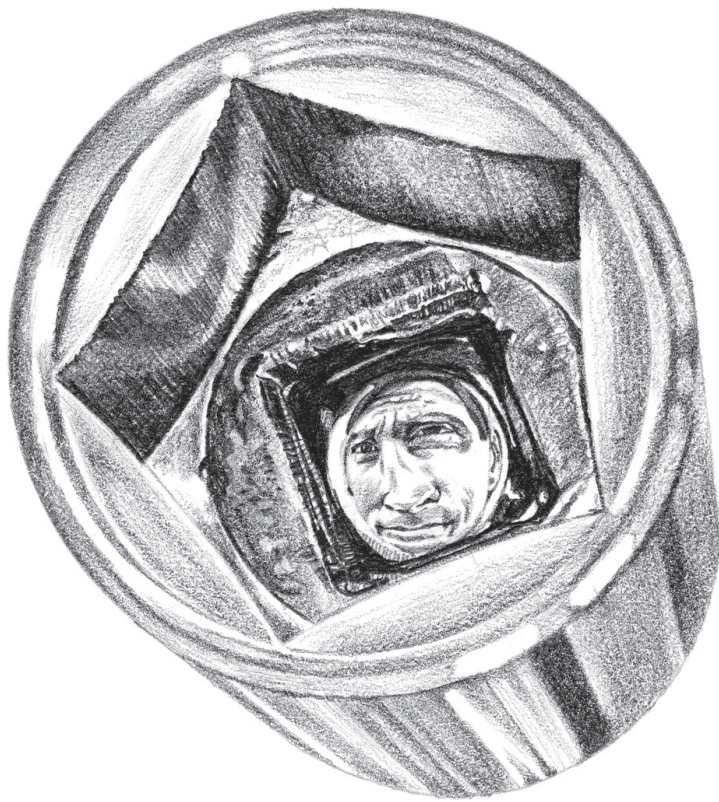
SAND DOLLAR SEVEN

Young I enlisted, a gear to become,
Ambitions as big as big-city hum.
I've run on the wheel, a rat in a suit
In a winnerless race, my heart destitute.
Alone and winded, I'm facing my age,
Seeking escape from this urban cage,
Recalling a day not long ago,
A far-away respite in warm, summer glow...



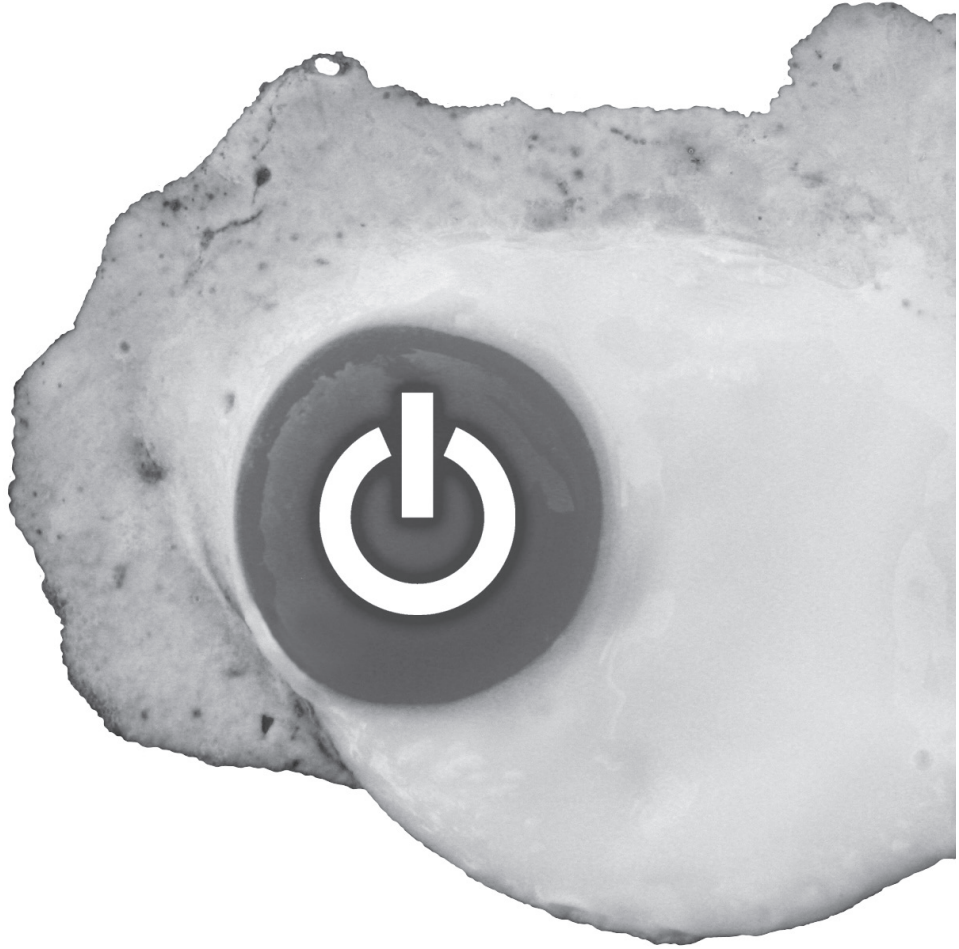
SAND DOLLAR SEVEN

My car went dead and I pulled off the road
Near a coastal town where I called to be towed.
"It'll take all morning," the mechanic drawled.
"There's one in before you. Plugs are fouled."
"Any rental car places?" He kept on working.
"No rentals here," he answered, arm jerking.
I walked to the doorway, opened my phone,
Postponed my meeting and scornfully moaned.

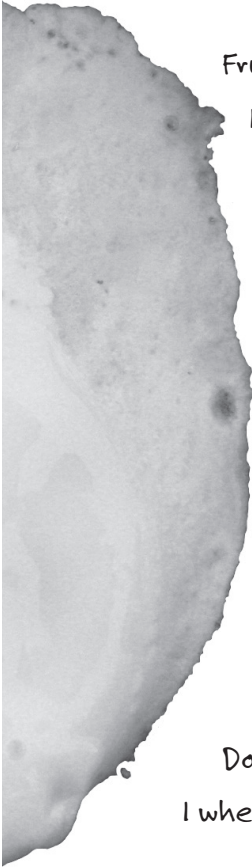


SAND DOLLAR SEVEN

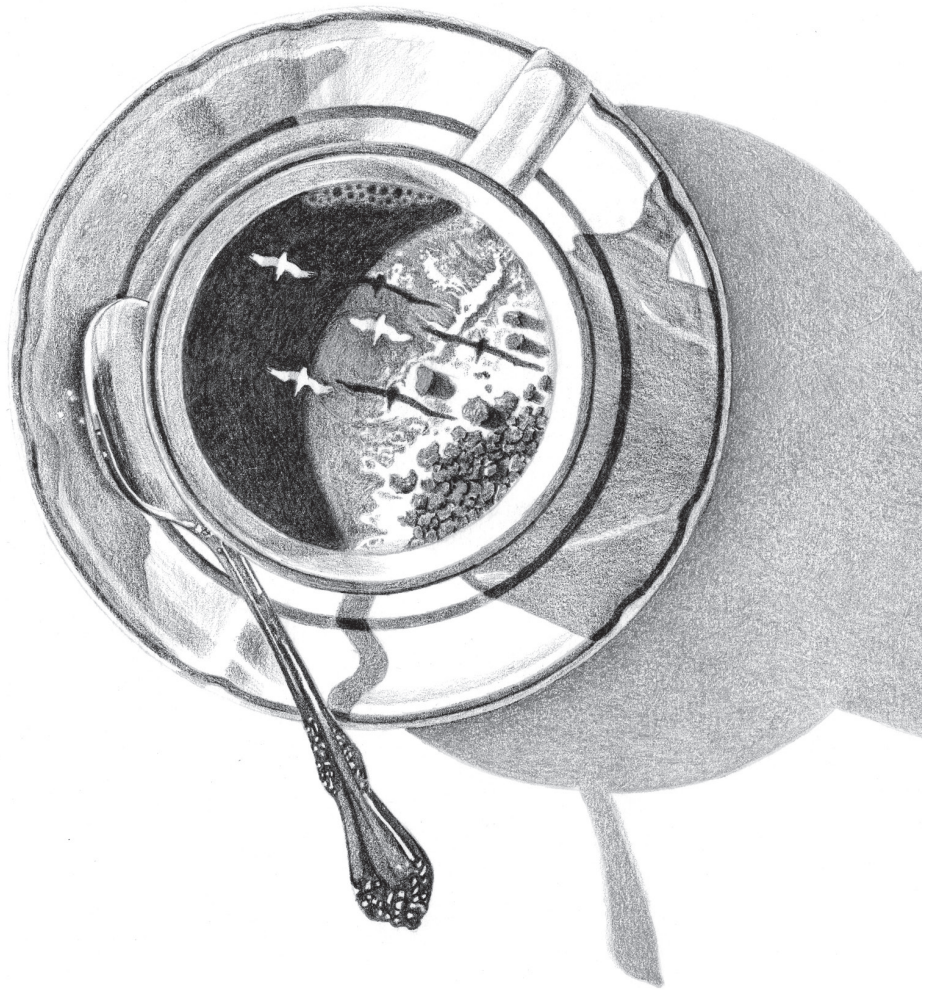
The mechanic pointed the wrench in his hand
And said "While you're here, enjoy the strand."
He gave me a wink. I gave him a frown.
A well-planned day had crumbled down
To an unwritten Wednesday with little to do
Than endure the advice of a greasy fool.
He sounds like Father, may God keep his soul.
He drifted through life with barely a goal.



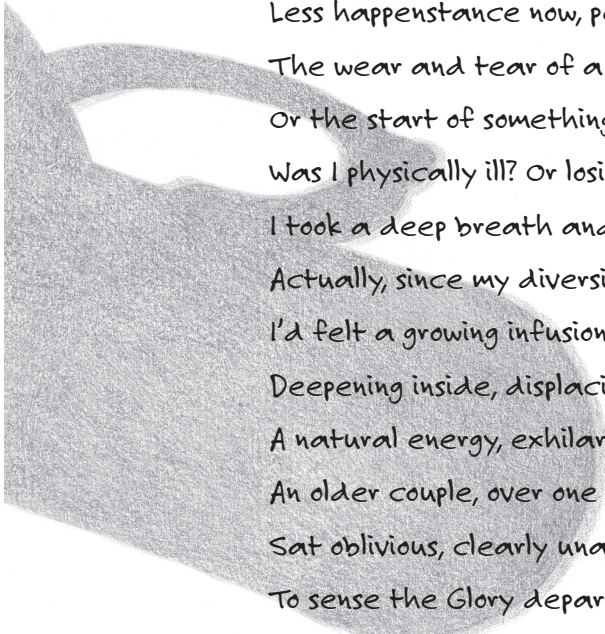
SAND DOLLAR SEVEN



Frustrated over this unseen delay,
I determined to wring from this changeling day
Each drop of value left in its veins
And, as business should go, turn losses to gains.
Way overdressed for the hours ahead,
I changed into casual clothes instead
To find that café I saw down the street
And use my computer, perhaps even eat.
Nearing the mouth of the ancient garage,
I heard what I took for a sonic mirage:
A mix of the socket wrench creaking behind
With the breeze in the door—a trick of the mind?
For the sound arose in the tunnels of air
Down deep in my ears, as whispers there.
I wheeled to see if I heard it alone...



SAND DOLLAR SEVEN



Gearhead was off in a world of his own.
I watched him a moment. He labored on.
The Harmony I heard was quickly gone.
But in the café It came again,
From the north, somehow I could ascertain,
Startling more on the second round,
Less happenstance now, perhaps profound:
The wear and tear of a stressful career?
Or the start of something more severe?
Was I physically ill? Or losing my mind?
I took a deep breath and tried to unwind.
Actually, since my diversion here,
I'd felt a growing infusion of cheer
Deepening inside, displacing frustration,
A natural energy, exhilaration.
An older couple, over one table,
Sat oblivious, clearly unable
To sense the Glory departing the room.



SAND DOLLAR SEVEN

But on its heels came rumbling booms
Invading the place in staccato time.
The windows rattled, responding in rhyme.
My cup and spoon were clinking along.
To the couple it seemed there was nothing wrong,
Though the woman clutched her demitasse
As the slammed little Honda paraded past
And her man, with veiled animosity,
Praised the "punk's generosity"
In sharing his bone-jarring stereo with all
And lifting, I quote, "this coffee-house pall."
The woman shushed him. I had to smile.
They heard the sounds from a tuner dial
But not this Sound, this Phenomenon,
Like radios, deaf to all stations but one.
Which was I catching? I wanted to know.
I returned to my car the computer to stow
And left the garage, this time to the right
With an escort of gulls and a biplane in flight.

The Music arose anew in their wake,
Unravelling gently and prodding an ache
I knew there and then had been buried for years,
Beneath a dozen leather veneers.
I followed. The Song would abruptly stop,
As in the garage and coffee shop,
Returning quicker and lasting longer,
My capacity seemingly growing stronger,
Like staring at 3-D computer art:
You look and see nothing right at the start,
For the image is hiding in open view
Till you deepen your focus and stare right through.
It pulled me along while building in power,
A swelling wave, an unfolding flower,
Ebullient, sweet, intoxicating. I
Barely noticed the tourists sliding by.
Before I knew it I knelt at the sand,
Shedding my shoes on holy land.
The Music crested and tapered away,
Inviting me Please come in and play.
I stepped from concrete unforgiving
To supple warmth, accommodating, living.

I reached at last the edge of the ocean,
Its water cold, a heady potion.
Touching my feet, it took my breath
And I fell right there in love till death.
With rolled up pants I splashed down the beach.
In foaming scallops the sea would reach
My tingling feet, for moments linger,
Massaging my toes with grainy fingers,
Then slip away hissing, persuading the sand
To forget I was there with the waves of its hand.
The ocean's voice interlaced with the Song,
A buoyant symphony. I floated along.
That sense of well-being minutes ago
Was just the beginning. It continued to grow
As I headed north. So I started to run.
My mind was clear, as if shot from a gun.
Approaching the pier, I made the decision
To rest in its shade. It spanned my vision.
Above on the boardwalk, against the railing,
Sightseers watched the surfing and sailing.
One stood out from all the rest,
Her movements suggesting marvelous zest.



SAND DOLLAR SEVEN

Brightly dressed under wide-brim hat,
She pointed her camera, clunky and fat,
Directly at me, I'm fairly sure,
Then turned away with a smile demure.
Galvanized by her mischievous smile,
I thought I'd rest ON the pier a while.
So north of the pier and out of her sight
I climbed the stairs. She was off to my right,
And heading seaward, away from me,
Glancing northward casually.
Waiting for me to reappear?
Or not? The "not" I'd normally fear,
Normally, yes, on a normal day
But not that day when far away
I found where I was meant to be
And discovered the local Symphony.
Fearlessly I strode on by
With an effortless smile and a casual "Hi."
"Hi!" She giggled, caught unaware.
She turned away, all hat and hair.
Guess I was right. I continued to play.
"Isn't it such an incredible day?"
She turned to me with eyes on Stun
And a smile that humbled the morning sun.



SAND DOLLAR SEVEN

"Like music to my ears," she sighed.
Her smile, her voice, her bearing, her eyes,
Conspired with her phrase—a coincidence of words?—
To throw me off. I was walking backwards.
Behind my heel, an ornery plank
Had raised its edge to complete the prank.
What happened next was a jester's dance,
A loss of title to elegance.
I danced the Two-handed Taxi Hail,
The Surfer's Crouch and Backpedal Flail.
I capped it off with the Wings of the Gull
And survived the trip without cracking my skull.
Our eyes for a second locked together
And temporarily I didn't know whether
To laugh or curse. "Are you all right?"
She stepped toward me, easing my plight.
I summoned my humor and bowed very low
Like an actor on stage at the end of a show.
"Catch my act at Stratford-on-Avon,
For professional klutzes, a welcome haven."
Clapping, her smile returned to the fore.
Full of esprit, she yelled "Encore!"



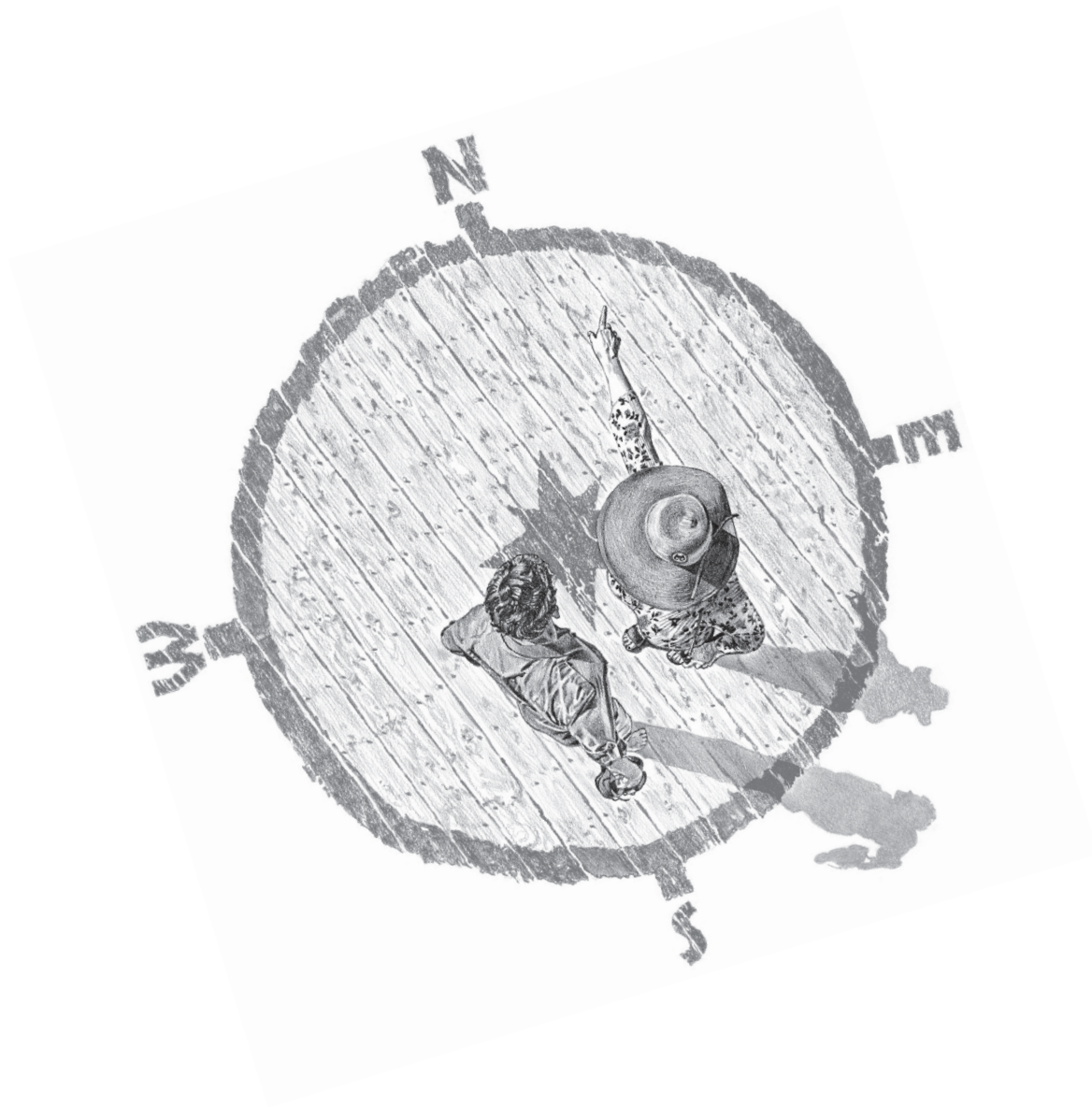
SAND DOLLAR SEVEN

"Thanks," I said. "That's all for today.
You'll have to come and see the play."
"Give me a time and I'll be there."
Was she joking or flirting? I returned her stare.
It was safer to err toward innocence
And grant a wide berth to impudence.
So I redirected the conversation
In favor of a deeper explanation.
I walked to her. "Like music,' you said?"
She picked up the conversational thread.
"You know...the surf, the gulls. And the breeze
When it blows through the eucalyptus trees..."
She paused. I nodded, disappointed.
They were things to which most people pointed.
It was pleasure, however, just watching her speak.
Had her ample lips been purring in Greek
I'd feign I knew it to stand in her presence
And bask in her sparkling effervescence.
She carefully weighed her next expression.
"There's something else. It's just an impression—"



SAND DOLLAR SEVEN

"Maybe you'll laugh. This may sound dumb,
But...never mind. So, where are you from?"
My jaw was dangling. I reeled it in.
Better not push it. I gave her a grin.
Don't rock the boat. Just hold it steady.
She'd open up if or when she was ready.
I answered her question. Her mouth opened wide.
"That's MY city! You're kidding. What side?"
"The south," I said. She inhaled. "Come on!"
"I swear it's true!" I laughed. Whereupon
of all things to happen, her handbag rang.
"My car is ready," she practically sang.
She spoke to her phone, looking down. "Hello?"
She glanced at me, her eyes aglow.
"How much will it be?...That's not too bad...
I'll be right over." My heart went sad.
"I'll be right over" meant she would go.
I did my best to delay her, though.
"My plugs," she said. "He gave me a deal."
"We share a city. How unreal,"
I nearly gushed, not paying attention.
"What brings you here-a camera convention?"



SAND DOLLAR SEVEN

She touched her camera, worn and knobby.
"I wish," she grinned. "It's just a hobby."
Her eyes ran off for a place to hide.
I knew it. I WAS on that film inside.
"I've loved to shoot since I was a child.
Then growing up, the dream got filed."
Her mouth wore a smile and her eyes, regret.
I knew that song. We could sing a duet.
"But I'm glad I brought my camera along.
I found a place where I could belong."
She pointed northward up the beach.
"It's way up there and hard to reach.
You'll walk for an hour, but once you're there
You won't see a tourist anywhere.
Which is odd. It's such an incredible place,
And, ..." Again, shyness tinted her face.



SAND DOLLAR SEVEN

"And," I knew I could finish her thought,
"There's Music there, like a song you forgot.
It plays between your skull and your brain,
And energy-wise, you're a child again."
Surprised, her eyes moved to and fro,
Probing my own, seeking to know
Just how I was able to speak her mind.
I stared her down, feeling unconfined.
"How did you know that?" Twice she spoke.
"How did you know?" And then I awoke.
Her smile had mellowed. Her eyes were intense.
I admitted her into my confidence.
"I hear it, too. It's the wildest thing.
And I sense that this is just the beginning."
Her fingers plucked her camera pack.
I tested the water. "Wanna go back?"

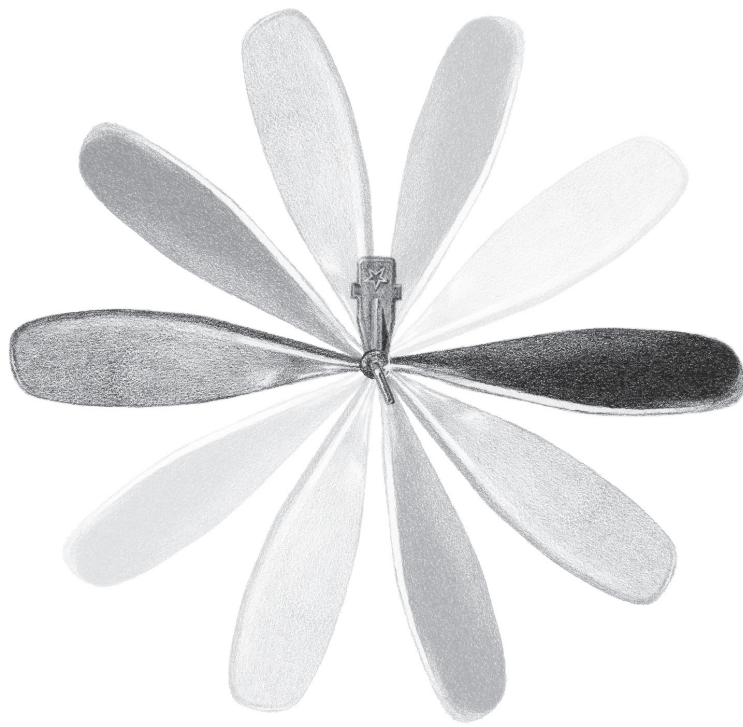


SAND DOLLAR SEVEN

Her face slipped under the brim of her hat.
Attached to its band was a stickpin cat.
"I'd love to but sorry, I have to go."
All I could catch was the audio,
But her voice was sincere. "Here it is."
Her face reappeared. "This is my biz."
She offered a blue-green, plastic card.
I dug in my pockets, rummaging hard-
My cards were back in my business suit.
She watched me patting my pockets. "Cute,"
She giggled. "Don't worry." My ears were heating.
"Leaving now, I can make my meeting.
But call me if you figure it out,
And tell me what this place is about."
(As if I wouldn't call anyway?)
"I'll be back in the city on Friday.
Unless I come back here for good.
And given a choice, I certainly would."

We started back to the head of the pier.
"The choice is yours. Your future is here,"
I said, and read her name aloud.
Saying it made me strangely proud.
I said my name and "Nice meeting you."
"You really think so? Truly you do?"
"I think it WAS nice meeting you."
At last she caught my humor. "Ooo!"
She slapped my arm. "You knew what I meant."
Her smile approved of my devilment.
"Yes," I laughed. "For a certain few,
"This is where their dreams come true."
We lingered in each other's eyes,
A rapturous, fleeting, final reprise.
Soon our feet were back on land.
"Have fun up there." She gave her hand,
I shook it with my right and left.
Her lightning gaze, quick and deft,
Ricocheted off my lips and back,
The touch of those eyes a thunder crack.
She smiled and turned and walked away.

I watched her walk, her full hips sway
And rifled my mind to find a way
To keep her there. What could I say?
"Have a safe trip!" I yelled at her back.
Clever words, Sir Brainiac.
But hey, she smiled. "I want a report!"
I yelled out "Saturday! Let's consort!"
She nodded and slipped behind a fence
Displaying a parade of advertisements:
Restaurants, rentals, shops of all manner.
The loudest of all was a yellow banner
And on it a view it claimed was "the most"-
A plane ride's aerial view of the coast.
As I read, it soared overhead
With a sign in tow. "What a view!" it read.
Curiously, though its diluted roar
Was not of the Music, ulterior,
It nevertheless was resonating
With an inner rhythm, resuscitating
Sepia-tone memories, decades deep
Of childhood days when fun came cheap:



SAND DOLLAR SEVEN

Airplanes of paper and balsa wood
(The propellers never worked as they should!)
And fork-tailed martens circling the sky
And...why did I never learn to fly?
And why was I dwelling on this stuff
As if she'd dealt a harsh rebuff
That made me run and hide in shame
By imagining my favorite game?
When, rather than humiliation,
She'd offered me an invitation
To see her later back in the city
And-wow, she was fabulous, wasn't she?
A reason, if one, for leaving this place.
For now, though, there was this Power to trace.



SAND DOLLAR SEVEN

I paused for water, descended the stairs
And ran on, past the haunts and repairs
Congested with tourists, focused instead
On the Energy locus directly ahead.
Running, I felt a paradox
Untraceable by gauges or clocks,
Unless their gears could run in reverse:
I grew less winded the more I traversed.
And-how could it be?-with each new meter
The Symphony grew even fuller and sweeter
Till, just as she had indicated,
The beachfront grew less populated
And seconds later I ran alone
Except for a man and his dog with a bone
Who were heading my way. We nodded and smiled.
Beyond their tracks the sand looked wild,
Just wood-grain ripples, no tracks at all,
Like tourists had met an invisible wall.
The tracks of the man were a tight U-turn
As if he'd recalled a pressing concern
So near the promontory ahead,
And pressing on he'd forfeited.

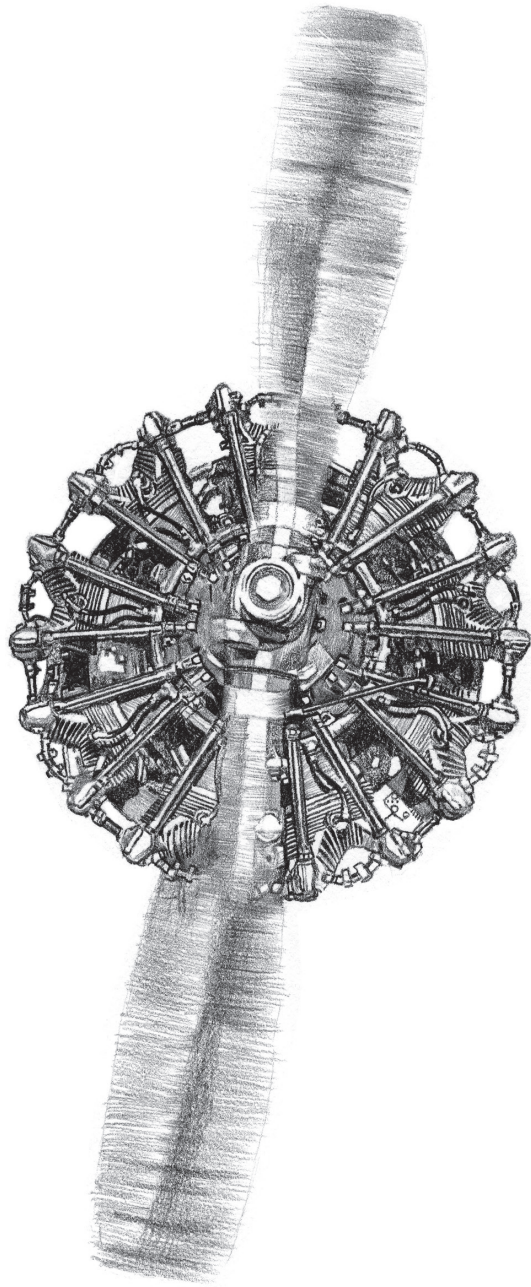
He wasn't alone, to look at the sand.
Was forward motion somehow banned?
There wasn't a "Keep Out" sign in sight.
But she had made it through all right.
She'd pierced the unseen barricade.
And even the sinuous trail she'd made
Echoed the joy that moved her feet.
I stepped in her footprints, certain we'd meet
On the coming weekend, feeling her there
In her shorter stride. Why I didn't prepare
By committing her number to memory
Is a thought that racks me incessantly.
Her tracks at the headland were all confusion,
For there in the path were rocks in profusion;
But she made it through and so did I.
The tide pools normally would gratify

Were I less obsessed with rounding this headland
Blocking a sight unparagoned.
Others, I'm certain, would disagree,
As one loves coffee and another, tea.
So I speak for myself, myself alone
In calling that place carved deep in stone
By the endless thrusts of a passionate sea
With its clifftop grove of night-green tree
Serrating the edge of the sky on top,
A vision that brought my heart to a stop.
The Chorus was softer here at its source,
A storm's eye turning with tamer force.
Its peaceful drizzling warmed me through
And my inner percussion matched it anew,
The beat of my heart in sync with that cove.
I lost all desire thereafter to rove.



SAND DOLLAR SEVEN

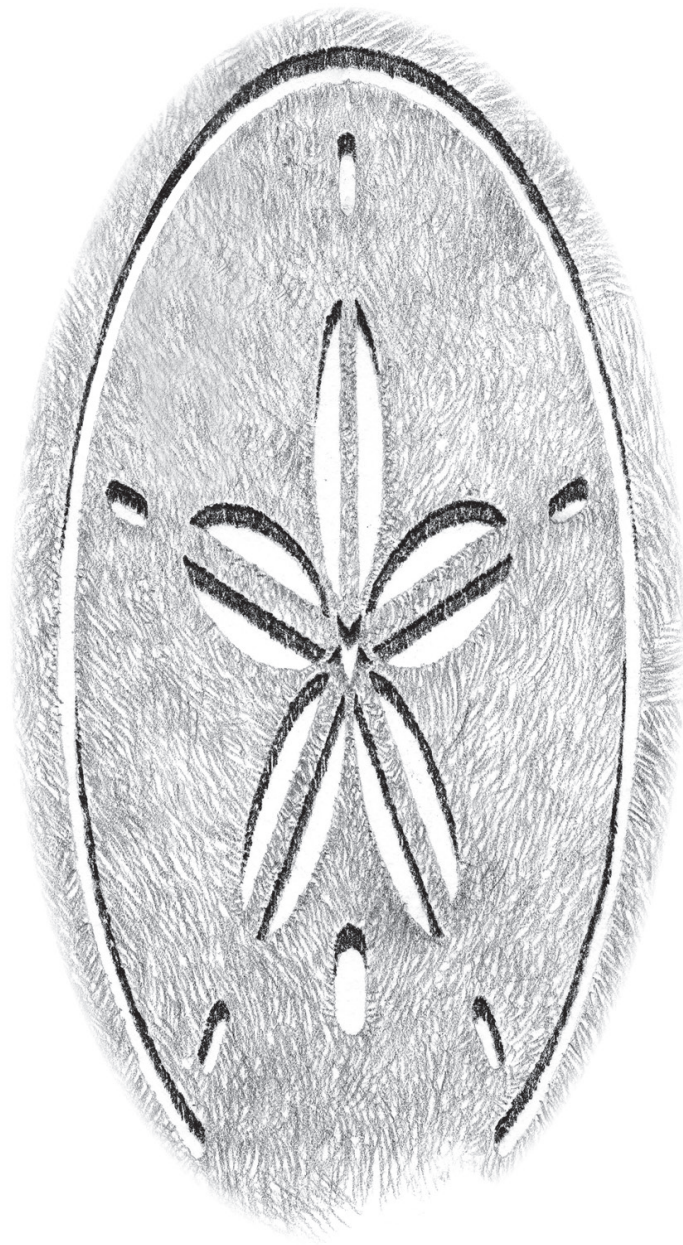
I knew every shadow, each shift of the breeze,
Each pelican levitating past with ease,
And the lizard's miniature avalanche
And the driftwood's desiccated, fractal branch.
I knew them like I'd lived there before.
That's not it. It was something more.
It was just as if I'd always been there,
Right there standing, though unaware,
Erect on my feet but immersed in sleep,
Dreaming a dream so wide and deep
That it seemed like life, the actual thing,
With its building, striving, accomplishing,
Then suddenly woke to reality
In the place I knew I was meant to be.
I turned to the sea for an awesome view
The best all morning, completely new,
Then back to the cliff and its half-moon edge.
To stand up there would be a privilege!
But could I climb so steep a cliff?
Error's penalty would be stiff.
Assistance came right out of the blue:
The plane and its banner that read "What a view!"



CHAPTER TWO



The ad was true. "My God, what a view!"
I yelled to the pilot. It was nothing new,
To him, anyway. He nodded and smiled
While I sat there grinning, a full-grown child
Who'd found a way, after all this time,
To jump in a paper plane and climb
Way up to the sky like a human bird,
A boisterous one. The engine thundered.
How had I torn myself away
From the cove up ahead? I'd almost stayed
But felt more need for a view from the air.
Some things are visible only from there.
"There!" I yelled, pointing down to the site.
"Where?" yelled the pilot. "There on the right?"
"Yes," I said, "on the cliff in the grass."
"Grass? Or did you say 'crevasse?'"
Was noise impairing our conversation
Or did I see a hallucination?



SAND DOLLAR SEVEN

"Turn around...let's see it again!"
He heard me THEN, for he banked the plane.
Heading south, we dropped in low,
With the left wing down and flying slow.
The trees below us ambled past.
The grassy clearing came at last.
"There it is! The five-point pattern!"
He looked as if I'd beamed from Saturn.
"Didn't you see? It was big as a house!"
"Big as a house or small as a mouse,
All that's down there, north of the beach
Is dangerous shoreline no one can reach.
But folks see weird stuff way up here.
I've heard it all in my career.
Saw my own 'ex' down in that water.
I looked again. It was just an otter."
His face was grave, then popped with laughter.
What else could I say thereafter?
According to him, I hadn't explored
Nor stood where no man stood before
Nor seen a giant, ellipse design
Embossed in the grass, a five-point sign.



SAND DOLLAR SEVEN

But I knew that SHE would want to hear.
I'd send her a photo. She wouldn't jeer.
I dug in my pocket to grab my phone.
What happened next still makes me moan.
Stuck in the phone was her business card,
Hitching a ride in the button guard.
The wind attacked. It fluttered away.

Five P.M.: I was well on my way
And beating myself for losing her card
With a better solution, sharp and hard:
I could have input-bloody hell!-
Just punched her number into my cell!
A lo-tech man in a high-tech world.
On top of which my senses swirled
Anticipating Saturday's kiss.
And thus her words I quick dismissed:
"My plugs," she said. "He gave me a deal."
My fists relaxed on the steering wheel.

Hang ON then. There's no need for panic.
Both of us met the same mechanic...
And he would have her number and street!
I called his number on the receipt
But got the message, Maalox mild,
"Your call cannot be completed as dialed."
I punched the numbers again and again
And remember thinking I'm insane
When, reaching over to check the receipt,
I watched it fade on the passenger seat.
I called the Chamber. I called Information.
Neither knew of the service station.

A column of ants crawled up my spine.
My car was purring, running fine...



Spellbinding poetry and visuals immerse the reader in a mindbending journey of two lonely people in search of each other and themselves in Sand Dollar Seven - a charmer fans are calling "a captivating, romantic mystery" and "a poetry masterpiece." SD7 is an epic-length tribute to the power of our mind to shape any future we desire. When the dream is strong enough - when it's real enough - it's never too late for a second chance.

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