

# The Silver Strand Series

BOOK ONE



# CORONADO *Dreaming*

“Distance is just an illusion that keeps us apart.”

**G.B. BRULTE**

## Chapter 1

She was beautiful.

Sitting there at the table, with a menu in her hand. I could imagine the DNA in each and every one of her cells cranking out transcripts... transcripts that would be translated into proteins that all knew just exactly where to go, and exactly what to do, in order to construct such a magnificent creature.

She was truly stunning.

I almost wanted to weep because human perfection is both rare and transient. I knew she would age and wither and rust, but, that day, she was beautiful. That day, she was a goddess.

If only I could stop time, I would have stopped it for her. I might have sat for an eternity simply contemplating that countenance. It was as if the universe had created matter, energy and a myriad of elusive forces just so such loveliness would be produced. After 15 billion years of endeavor, the universe could finally rest... mission accomplished.

Good job : )

I was attracted to her, but sex wasn't really much of the equation. I'm sure it was a component, for I did feel something of a stir in my nether regions. However, I think that was more from a rush of blood that made it to every part of my body and soul, reproductive organs included. Moths are attracted to flame... she was a supernova. I had no choice but to wing my way into the brilliance. No choice at all. If I had burned... well, I suppose that would have been a righteous end to my existence.

I got up from my chair and made my way over to her table.

"Could I have your autograph?"

She looked up from her menu and smoke grey eyes dissolved the natural world around me. Her head tilted to one side, and the hint of a smile graced her lips.

"I'm not a celebrity."

"I know. I just wanted to watch you write... it doesn't even have to be your name." I handed her an old Jiffy Lube card, flipped over to the blank side, and a pen.

Her beautiful head then tilted the other way, but the fragment of a smile remained.

"As a matter of a fact, it could even be numbers," I said. "It might be better if it was numbers... six random ones, like *The Lotto*."

"Six numbers?"

"Or five, or seven... it doesn't matter."

She seemed to contemplate for a moment. Then, "What will you do with them?"

"I... don't know. I haven't thought that far ahead."

At that point, she did smile... and, of course, her teeth were perfect.

"You're a bit strange, aren't you?" she responded. The upward curvature on her lips lingered... that was a good thing.

"I was fairly normal... up until a minute ago."

"What happened?"

I shook my head. "I honestly have no idea."

It was *'now or never'*. I braced myself. "Could I buy you lunch?" I held my breath and felt a deep hammering within my chest. After an interminable pause, there finally came an answer.

"No... I don't think so."

It had been going so well. She could see I was crestfallen. I nodded twice, and slowly, turned to leave.

"You forgot your numbers."

I turned back. She was scribbling them down... underneath something else she had written there. When finished, the goddess then handed the pen and the card back to me. Still, the smile. I looked in my hand. On the rectangle were seven digits and a name:

Melody

555-0127

A phone number... *oh, my God...* I put the card in my pocket.

"I'm Greg... I'll... I'll just let you get back to, umm..." I stammered.

The supernova seated there grew even brighter. "I said you couldn't buy me lunch... I didn't say you couldn't eat with me."

It was a good day to be a moth.

## Chapter 2

That was how it started.

My life, that is. I was born 2.4 decades earlier, but my life didn't fully begin until that day. I still remember the lunch. I had fish tacos... an Ahi and a Wahoo. She had a Greek salad and bread-sticks. We both had iced-tea. The San Diego sky was blue, as usual, and the only earthquakes that particular afternoon were inside of me.

Amazingly, we hit it off. She was a Master's student in Ecology, with an undergraduate in, of all things, Philosophy... brains *and* beauty.

I, on the other hand, was pretty much a professional drop out. I had switched majors 4 times, was on my 'summer break', and, at the time, employed only twenty hours a week.

I did have a little money. One night I was dead drunk and put my entire student loan check on a penny stock using an SDSU library computer. I don't really remember doing it. A few days later, after discovering there was no money in my ATM, I ran into the nearest branch office of my bank, got a print out of my Checking, and saw there was a debit to Charles Schwab for 5,500 dollars. I had opened that account with a Benjamin Franklin from my brother (a birthday present), and the cash had been sitting there for 2 years in a money market fund. That fund was supposed to have 107 dollars and 26 cents in it, according to my last statement.

I stumbled to the only payphone around, looked through the yellow pages, and called the brokerage.

My account was worth \$27,286.24.

I put in an immediate sell order.

I bought a sailboat, even though I knew nothing about sailing... I just thought it would be cool to live on one. It's a 32 footer, and, at the time that I met Melody, the vessel had never been outside of its slip since I'd owned it. The marina is on Coronado Island, which is a fantastic piece of real estate just across the bay from San Diego, California, and I can't think of a better place to just sit on the water. The weather here is probably the best in the country, and visitors tend to flock to this idyllic locale from places both near and far.

Between dock fees, sporadic tuition and what I had paid for the boat, there was about 7 thousand dollars left in my Charles Schwab account on that fateful day at the restaurant. Almost all of the money was in penny stocks... I spent an inordinate amount of time reading IHUB message boards while hoping for another big pay out.

At best, I had been breaking even.

To supplement my day trading, I had taken a part-time job mowing greens at the Coronado Municipal Golf Course. I could walk to work in the mornings since it was adjacent to the marina, and although it didn't pay much, I really loved the job. I had done the same type of work in my hometown (back in Alabama when I was a teenager), and there I was, doing it again. At least the second go 'round I had a sailboat... however, what good is a boat without a girl?

Preferably, one in a bikini.

I didn't really think of her in that way. She was much too good for ordinary lust. Besides, we had just met. As our little lunch went on, though, I fell deeper and deeper in... love? Is that the word for the feeling you get when you meet someone, and you know, without a doubt, that you'll do whatever is required of you just to breathe the same air into your lungs that had moments before been exhaled from theirs? The feeling that you would start cutting off your own body parts if they were shackled to an immovable object keeping you from them?

Is that the word?

We went for a walk down by the bay. We watched seagulls careen off the wind and surf the atmosphere. Sunlight glinted on the water as if thousands of diamonds were floating in the ripples, and, as we stood there, a dolphin surfaced through the brilliance only twenty yards out... I took that as a good sign. On the way back to our cars, we actually held hands. I was in heaven.

I didn't see her again for four years.

### Chapter 3

I didn't see anyone for four years. Well, that's not exactly true... I saw lots of people, only I'm not sure if they were really real. They were more like figures in a dream.

I was in a coma.

It was the morning after our lunch on the previous day and I still had Melody's number in my wallet. In addition, I had written it down three other places in my boat, one place in my glove compartment, and, just to be sure, had also e-mailed it to myself.

Plus, I memorized it... 555-0127.

I'd just finished mowing the greens, and had hopped off of the machine to check for a hydraulic leak in one of the hoses. In order to bend over and view the underside of the mower, I removed my protective helmet. That's when the golf ball hit me in the temple. It was a 3 wood shot, and it ricocheted off my head and onto the putting surface for a gimme birdie. I don't remember it at all. I vaguely remember the sound of a siren. They had to drill holes in my skull to relieve the pressure, and give me copious amounts of medication in order to stop life-threatening seizures.

My brother, the only actual blood relative I had, flew out from Alabama... I have no real recollection of that, either. I spent two weeks in the ICU, and then was moved to a long-term care facility. They said I had low-level, sporadic brain activity... but, for four years I never quite made it up to the threshold of consciousness.

Luckily for me, I had just gotten on the employee insurance plan at the golf course, so some of the hospital bills were covered. My brother Jeremy had to soak up the rest. Thank goodness he and his wife made decent livings as pharmaceutical representatives.

My sibling came out several times a year, stayed on the Catalina (he kept up the slip fees), and consulted with doctors and specialists. They all said the same thing... I could come out of it the next day, or, I might be a vegetable for life. There was no way to know.

Some said the brain activity was promising and that the radiographs and CT scans looked good... but they didn't want to give him false hope. Periodically, I would mumble something unintelligible and the nurses would get all excited; inevitably, though, I would go back down into my slumber. I don't remember being in the facility all of that time... at least not in the normal sense.

However, I do remember my guardian angel.

## Chapter 4

His name is Giddeon. Kind of a smart-ass for an angel.

What kind of a guardian angel lets you get hit in the head by a Titleist and spend the next four years in a coma?

In Giddeon's defense, he said he wasn't an angel at all. He said he was just a part of my brain that I had access to due to my injury. Giddeon insisted that all of the things he knew and related to me during those four years were already in my head, or, had somehow been 'tapped into' by me... supposedly, there is a *collective consciousness* that I and everyone else on the planet can employ. He also maintained that most people only use 10 percent of their brains (apparently, I had not been anywhere close to that benchmark), and that the 90 percent left over is capable of almost supernatural feats.

To this day, I'm not sure I totally buy it. I still have a hard time believing that the things he showed me were already in there, or were somehow 'obtained' by me from the ethers. A man's got to know his limitations, and, I do. I was a slacker with the sub-10 percent... and I'm pretty sure that the other 90-plus percent was just as slack.

## Chapter 5

The first thing he said to me was, "Man, that must have hurt!"

I was sitting on the fringe beside the number three green. The sun was setting, the mower was gone, and the course seemed to be deserted. A few sailboats were tacking in the light breeze, making their way across the bay to wherever they were berthed.

I reached up to feel the side of my head with my left hand, for some reason expecting to find a very tender area, and possibly, blood. To my surprise, nothing. . . no pain, no blood.

"Where's the Jacobsen?" I asked, casting my gaze about for the machine.

"They took it back to the work shed hours ago, after the ambulance hauled you off."

His words were dipped in a slightly Southern accent, similar to my own.

"After the... who are you?"

He walked over and offered a hand.

"Gideon."

I took his help and he pulled me to my feet.

"What time is it?" I questioned, noticing from my new angle a difference in the light and shadows all around me.

Gideon looked at his wristwatch. "7:15... P.M."

"P.M...? How did it get to be...? What did you say about an ambulance?"

"It took you away hours ago. You're in surgery at Sharp Hospital," said the young man. I noticed that he had serious, blue eyes; however, the skin around them had faint tracings of smile-induced lines.

"In surgery...? What are you talking about?"

"You got hit in the head by a golf ball this morning. Don't you remember?"

"I remember mowing this green, and getting off to check something... and, then..." I pushed the dark hair back from my own hazel eyes as I tried to recall, "... I'm right here talking to you, so, how could I be in the hospital?"

"Let's just call this a dream."

"A dream?"



“Actually, you’re in a coma.”

“No way.”

“Way.”

I thought to myself that this guy must have watched a lot of old *‘Saturday Night Live’* reruns. I rubbed the side of my head, again, and inspected my surroundings. After a few seconds, I replied,

“This is too real to be a dream... I can feel the breeze, smell the water...”

“Nah... it’s pretty much a dream,” said Gideon. “At least that’s the closest thing I can compare it too.” He gazed around and took in our local slice of the world. “I have to say, I’m impressed with what you’ve done, here... very impressed.”

“Look, I don’t know what’s going on, but, I’d appreciate it if you...”

Gideon began to rise up off of the ground. About 3 feet of clear space appeared below his feet.

“Could I do this if this wasn’t a dream?” He then did a slow, graceful back-flip, and gently, returned to the earth.

I stood, stunned, for a moment.

“I guess not.”

“Or, this?” Gideon morphed into a perfect facsimile of Melody, and, after a few seconds, back into himself... which was kind of a cross between a young Brad Pitt and a boyish Kevin Bacon. He seemed to be approximately my age. Longish hair, slightly scruffy.

“I like you better the other way.”

“I’ll bet you do. She’s something, huh?”

I blew air out of my cheeks. “You’ve got that right.”

Other than being in a coma, I couldn’t believe my recent luck.

“You know,” said Gideon with a bit of a lecturing tone to his voice, “looks aren’t everything.”

I nodded in agreement. “I know. I think she could be the whole package, though. She’s very nice... and, smart... really seems like a good, good, person. Back to me being in the hospital...”

“You held hands,” he interrupted and smiled. His eye-lines crinkled a bit at the corners.

I paused, remembering. “Yeah, we did. That may be the crowning achievement of my life, so far.”

Gideon laughed, and his indigo irises seemed to almost dance when he did. “You’re probably right.” He looked back out over the bay and the breeze rustled his light brown locks. “We could go over to the

operating room and check on you, but I don't really like the sight of blood. How about we go back to your boat, and then, maybe get something to eat?"

I reached back up to my temple. I could have sworn I felt just the slightest sensation of something drilling through the bone. Not knowing what else to do, I agreed.

"Sounds like a plan."

## Chapter 6

We walked back along Glorietta Boulevard to the marina. The sky was going that dark blue that makes the palm trees into long-necked silhouettes with just a hint of color to them... browns and greens gently fading into grays and blacks. By the time we arrived, the moon had just come out over Mexico. It looked like a large, yellow painting of the moon. The golden orb hung suspended against the canvas of infinity, dappled with textures here and there as if by the brush of a gigantic, master artist.

The gate was open, so we made our way over to the boat, stepped on board, and then went down into the living quarters, below. The cabin door had been unlocked... crime's not really much of a problem on the island... so I flicked on the lights and was greeted by my usual disarray. I had intended to start cleaning up that afternoon in anticipation of a beautiful houseguest sometime during the weekend. Gideon reached back and closed the cabin door behind him.

"I see your outside environment is much like your inner one," he commented.

"Come again?"

"As above, so below."

Then, I got it... he was making cracks about what was inside of my cracked cranium.

"I was gonna clean up this afternoon... didn't know I'd be in surgery and all." I looked around my small domain. "This is sure one heck of a hallucination."

Gideon inspected the interior of the boat, also. After a few moments, he said, "It looks so real because it sort of is... in its own way. Oddly enough, your brain seems to work better under pressure. That's what they're trying to relieve right now, by the way."

I could definitely hear a dull noise, if I concentrated, and was also aware of some unsettling vibrations.

"Don't worry... no pain receptors in the brain."

I shook my head back and forth. "I need a beer."

"I'll take one, too," said my new acquaintance. He had a seat at the small table on the starboard side of the cabin.

I opened the door to the little square fridge and fished out two Coronas. After popping the tops, I handed one to Gideon.

"Sorry, no lime."

“No problem.” He set the beverage down on the Formica surface before him, crossed his arms, and did a rather excellent impression of the *‘I Dream of Jeannie’* head bob and blink. A perfectly cut lime slice appeared on his bottle, stuck partway into the opening. “Want one?”

“No thanks.” I was impressed with his magic trick, but it didn’t compare with the back-flip and image changing, earlier. “Right now, I just want to get this inside of me.”

I sat down on the couch across from him and took a swig. It tasted great... nice, cool and real.

“So... am I gonna die?”

“Everybody dies.”

“I mean, like, soon?”

He shrugged his shoulders. “No idea. It’s probably a darned good thing they got you to the hospital so quickly, though.”

The vibrations stopped... I thought I could hear people murmuring, and wondered if it was the surgeon, anesthesiologist and assistants. Gideon pushed his lime slice into the clear neck of his Corona, and took a sip.

“Anyway, no point in worrying about it,” he said. “Why don’t you tell me about Melody?”

I took another drink and glanced back around the interior of the boat, unsure if it would continue to remain so solid with people fishing around inside my head. Finally, I decided he was right, and answered, “She’s awesome. I wrote her number down in four places... plus, I e-mailed it to myself so I wouldn’t lose it.”

“Good thinking.”

I took a long draught of lime-free beer, and then continued, “Also, I memorized it. I even considered writing a song about it like that 867-5309 one by Tommy Tutone.”

“Oh, yeah! That’s a great song. You should take your guitar more seriously... maybe have some lessons.” He pointed at the Ovation next to me on the couch.

“Soon as I’m out of this coma, I’ll get right on it.”

Those words kind of had a dampening effect on my mood, so we just sat there for the better part of a minute and drank our drinks in silence. The quiet around us seemed to grow softly into a hushed crescendo; then, from outside of the door, I heard a familiar scratching noise and a faint meow. Gideon stood up as if glad for the distraction and said,

“I’ll get it.”

My visitor walked over and popped the latch.

In strolled Boris, the local marina cat. A big, brindle-coated tabby. The feline hesitated and looked around as if something was not quite right with his surroundings. After a few seconds, he came right over to me and sniffed the air in a quizzical way. The friendly animal then leaned over to rub against my leg. To his surprise, he went right *through* me to the couch. Boris backed away and tried again... with the same result.

I was as surprised as he was.

"He can see you and hear you, but that's about it," said Giddeon.

"He's not part of my dream?"

"No... he's real."

I patted the couch next to me. "Come here, Boris."

He jumped up beside me and meowed. I gently reached over and 'patted' him. I noticed that my hand sank down *into* him, and I could sort of feel his fur as it did... oddly, though, the thick, keratinized layer didn't ruffle at all when my fingers went through it.

Boris made his way over to my lap and settled in... seeming not to care that he was actually lying on the couch and unsupported by my frame. I looked down, and the effect was surreal. It was as if the head and tail of a cat were sewn into my blue jeans. I couldn't see the rest of him. I 'scratched' what parts of the brownish-grey mammal I could get to.

Boris purred and meowed, again.

"Now you know why cats act so funny, sometimes... they can see things humans can't," informed Giddeon.

"What about dogs?"

"Not so much... sometimes they can hear and smell, but it just freaks them out. Cats go with it. Now, back to Melody." He said the last sentence as if he could hardly wait to hear all about her.

I nodded.

"She's amazing..." I began, again, but then something occurred to me and switched my focus. "Wait a minute... Boris couldn't come in. You opened the door and let him in. I'm petting him, but nothing is happening to his fur... why couldn't he just come through the door?"

"To him, the boat is 'real', too." Giddeon made quotation marks in the air with his fingers to accentuate his remark. "For the most part, it overlaps with 'his' boat."

More quotation marks followed his first pair.

"Hmmm..." I intoned. "Well... what about the beers? They sure taste real. Why aren't our hands just going through them? Instead, we're holding them and drinking them."

Giddeon nodded.

"Well, we sort of are. They're actually in the refrigerator, over there... it's kind of hard to explain, but, I'll try." He paused for a moment, as if collecting his thoughts, and then said, "You've heard about quantum physics, right?"

"I saw that documentary '*What the Bleep!?*'"

"Okay, good. Do you remember how the film explained that individual particles can exist in a supposition of states? How they might have all possibilities until their field of probabilities 'crashes' down into one reality simply by being observed?"

"I think so..." I said, trying to remember back.

"Like in the *Double-Slit Experiment*," relayed Giddeon. "Where a single electron can go through two different slits, simultaneously, as a wave. It flows through both openings like water. So, if you fire a succession of them, they leave an interference pattern on a wall behind the openings. It's as if they each somehow interfered with themselves... like waves do... when they passed through." Giddeon paused, again, to make sure that I comprehended, and then carried on, "However, when you try to measure which slit individual electrons go through," he gestured at two imaginary spaces, "they become particles and the interference pattern disappears. You just get two rows recorded on the wall where they all hit."

I pursed my lips and furrowed my brow, trying to get my damaged brain to recall.

"You know," said Giddeon. "When the experimenter actually makes a recording, that's when the field of probabilities condenses around the electron, and it goes through either one opening or the other. It's like the observation, itself, actually influences the experiment." He looked at me expectantly, as if waiting for an echo to come back to him.

Finally, I nodded. "Yeah... I remember, now."

Giddeon smiled. "The beers are like that... so is this boat. We're just picking one of their realities and leaving the rest alone. We're not crashing the system and condensing the fields... the door, on the other hand, I had to crash."

He nodded in its direction.

"It really is open?"

"Over here and over there."

"And, by over there, you mean..."

He smiled, again. “Where Melody lives. Now, tell me about her. I know she’s all you’ve thought about since yesterday. Other than her physical perfection, what’s the attraction?”

I had stopped petting Boris. He looked up and meowed for me to resume. Apparently, he liked the ‘virtual’ attention.

“Like you said... ‘*As above, so below.*’ ... I’m pretty sure the perfection is through and through.”

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*Note: for a more complete understanding of the Double-Slit Experiment, please view the following clip at You Tube by typing in: Dr Quantum - double slit experiment. It’s entertaining, and, quick : )*

## Chapter 7

If I live to be a hundred, I'll never forget the way she looked that day. I know a person is more than their epidermis and bone structure, but, man-oh-man! Dirty blonde hair with auburn hues buried here and there. A cute nose and succulent lips. Not a trace of make-up... why cover up something like her face? That would be like trying to touch up a Rembrandt with a can of spray paint. Her body was perfect... at least for me. Maybe 5'9", a hundred and thirty-five pounds, or so. She had an athletic look about her, and moved with the grace of someone who had taken dance lessons from a very young age. Melody's appearance was elegant, and yet, wholesome, at the same time.

Like I said... perfect.

I don't know why she was attracted to me. Nothing special, here. I'm in decent shape, but fairly non-descript. No glaring deformities... however, I'm most definitely not in her league. Maybe she's so beautiful that nobody ever approached her... lucky for me that I worked up the nerve.

We instantly seemed to understand each other. You know how people talk about how when they met their 'soul-mate' it's like they'd known each other, before? How they say they just seemed to fit together like pieces of a puzzle? It was like that, except that the puzzle pieces were vibrating in harmony and a backdrop of celestial, symphonic music was playing at the same time. When I touched her hand, it was as if a transfusion of possibilities, endless summers and purpose invaded my basic being.

Like the future began to glow

I know it sounds ridiculous, but I had the feeling that with her I could become so much more than the bumbling, drifting excuse for a person that I had been... and, I suspected that even if I didn't become more, it wouldn't really make a difference. I was almost certain that no matter what, she would have accepted me for who I was, and would have been totally satisfied just knowing all of those possibilities were somewhere in there.

Apparently, she felt something, too.

We were actually completing each other's sentences after talking for five minutes. After ten minutes, it was like we had grown old together... we could have simply sat on a park bench, fed the pigeons, and been totally happy just watching them waddle around and peck at crumbs. When lunch arrived, it was as if we had died in each other's arms and gone on to our reward. And, there, our reward was... the delicious food and the San Diego sky. The beautiful setting all around us like a three-dimensional frame on a piece of Southern California. We were young again and just meeting for the first time. What a perfect reward. What a perfect day.

What a perfect woman.



I told all of this to Giddeon, and all about our little conversation as she and I walked beside the bay, holding hands. I remembered practically every word and gesture... and even though it was about nothing, it was about everything.

Giddeon listened attentively, almost raptly, until at length, I was finished.

“Wow... you have quite a way with words. The pictures you painted are almost as clear as this ‘dream’ of yours. Most people go their whole lives and never have a day like that. You’re a lucky man.”

“Who’s in a coma,” I added.

“Well, there is that. If you survive, you should write all of this down. You might have a future as an author.”

## Chapter 8

I considered what he said.

When I finally did emerge from my coma, I was much too overwhelmed to attempt something like that, at first... I was simply elated that I was fully alive and able to have the opportunity to walk and talk and interact. I was so grateful that all I really wanted to do was to have actual human contact and participate in the world all around me. It was just incredible to once again share in the magic of everyday life and the wonder of living.

Writing was the furthest thing from my mind.

**This is the end of the sample. I hope you enjoyed it!  
Please consider downloading the rest of the book.**