



Of Salt and Sand

Michael Barnes

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World War II has ended leaving the world forever wounded. Now a cold war brews between the two remaining superpowers: the United States and the capricious Soviet Union. A unique trade takes place, Russian spies for five mysterious individuals—children, liberated survivors from a Nazi experimental clinic once known only as the GGRC. But it is soon discovered that these are no ordinary children. They are academic prodigies, brilliant beyond any minds of the day. The United States moves quickly to take advantage. The five youths are whisked away to the top secret Los Alamos National Laboratory where no expense is spared for their research needs. Now among colleagues, the young team finally feel accepted and are tempted to break an oath—to reveal the true capabilities of their Nazi-engendered adaptations. They yield to promises of world peace and the altruistic needs of all humankind. In so doing, they divulge incredible new concepts: equations, formulas and scientific revelations untold. But they are deceived. Their priceless intellect is to be used, instead, for military dominance. Profoundly hurt, the Five—a name coined by their Los Alamos colleagues—stage an accident, one which will bury their work, and themselves, forever. The calamity is a tragic setback for Los Alamos, but not all are so easily fooled. Decades pass and the world tips dangerously towards nuclear confrontation. The young scientists are forgotten and relegated to the shelves of history. But their personal declaration to return and undo what they so unwittingly released upon the world—knowledge, premature—is not forgotten. Then, in the middle of Utah's desolate salt desert, something extraordinary is viewed on the west horizon. Seemingly overnight, a fantastic modern estate towers and blooms from the bleached and dead sands. Locals soon coin the lavish structure, Sandcastle, and she becomes a desert icon. But who lives within her impenetrable gates; her high walls and elusive grounds? And why such an opulent structure amid the seclusion of the deadest lands on earth? Rumors expound of its occupants: a reclusive billionaire and her business-savvy son. But when outlandish contributions pour-in to every needy institution in the state, the rumors become fact. During this whirlwind of speculation, Jessie and Sam Goodwin find themselves in Utah State custody after their parents are killed in a tragic accident. Things seem beyond bleak. But when a fantastically wealthy woman—claiming to be their great-grandmother—makes a phone call, everything changes. Using her influential strong-arm, the old woman lands the pair at the mysterious Sandcastle Estate. It is a place of acceptance and beauty beyond their dreams. But why are they there? And why had they never been told of this woman's existence? Jessie and Sam's questions are about to get answered as they discover more about great-grandma, and her desert oasis, than they could have possibly imagined. Not far from the mysterious Sandcastle sanctuary, Brant Stephens—a confirmed bachelor and part-time professor—finds himself investigating the strange weather phenomenon taking place within the West Desert: burned-out transformers, strange electrical storms, and even aircraft flying overhead at thirty-thousand feet feel the breath of . . . something. Brant decides to stay in the sandy oven for one last summer, collecting data with his self-enhanced weather equipment. It will be a decision which will change his life forever. For before the curious professor sees the end of summer, he will join ranks with a forgotten high-school sweetheart, Teresa Henington; discover his elusive desert nemesis; and be hurled into the realm of Sandcastle Estate, and the mysterious people she protects. Come join in this exciting, family-rated read! One imbued by love, purpose, and technology beyond this world!

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