

An aerial photograph of a beach. The top half of the image shows turquoise water with white foam from a wave washing onto the shore. The bottom half shows a sandy beach with many footprints. In the bottom right corner, a person is lying on the sand under a bright orange beach umbrella, next to a pink and white striped beach towel.

Robin Jones Gunn

by the sea

glimpses of eternity, reflections of simple hope

by the sea

Robin Jones Gunn



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*For my favorite surfer boys,
who are the most treasured men in my life:
my dad, my husband, my son, and my three grandsons.*

*I love the ocean even more because of
the way all six of you showed me
how to frolic by the sea.*





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An aerial photograph of a wide, sandy beach. The sand is a warm, golden-brown color with visible ripples and textures. In the lower-left corner, the edge of the ocean is visible, with white foam from a wave washing onto the shore. In the center of the beach, a small figure of a person is standing next to a white surfboard.

sandy toes

sunny days at the shore

God called the dry ground “land,” and the gathered waters he called “seas.” And God saw that it was good.

Genesis 1:10



sonnets for the sea

Do you remember your first visit to the sea?

Mine was a family trek to Newport Beach. I was almost five years old. We had just moved from Wisconsin to Southern California. I remember running to the water's edge, slipping out of my sneakers, and testing the cool sand with my bare feet. Unfurling before me was the vast Pacific Ocean with all its salty fragrance and rhythmic sound of the waves as they slid to the shore and curled back to the sea.

My brother, sister, and I dug for buried treasure and collected tiny shells. The golden afternoon felt frozen in time as we ran and laughed and then returned to the blanket where Mom handed us peanut butter sandwiches seasoned with a few granules of sand. Brazen seagulls made broad-winged swooping attempts to snatch our lunch out of our hands. Dad kept saying that, if we were back "home," he would be shoveling snow.

The afternoon sun sauntered toward the horizon, leaving a silver trail in her wake. Our shadows stretched out long across the wet sand, and Dad announced it was time to go, but that we would be back soon.

I have a black-and-white photo my mom took of us that day. You can't make out our faces, but our poses give away our sense of newness and simple joy. Rolled-up pant legs, my sister with her hands on hips, my dad looking as if he had conquered a new land. Our posture says, "We are beach people now. We belong here."

My love of the sea began that day and it has remained a true love. Over the years, many of my happiest vacations have been spent at various beaches on this beautiful planet.

Perhaps the same is true for you. You hold close the many memories made with family and friends under beach umbrellas or sailing across the blue. You still have the small shells you found

while strolling along a shoreline laced with white squiggles of sea froth.

Every visit to the sea is different, isn't it? The tides change, the winds shift, clouds gather and flee. Sunsets never grow old. The invitation to come as we are is always open. After every visit we leave a little changed too. The burdens of our hearts don't feel quite so heavy. Gloomy thoughts have cleared our minds. We

can breathe again. Fresh dreams rise to the surface, and we are renewed.

If you're holding this book, you likely are a fellow lover of the sea. You are well acquainted with the way the ocean nourishes



something burrowed inside you that hibernates when routines take command of your life. You need to hear the song of the waves, which can echo in your thoughts on dark nights. You have experienced the way the sunshine can quench an inner thirst like nothing else.

Some of the times you've found yourself lost in prayer or most deeply in awe of God likely were moments when your toes were anchored in the cool sand. You know how a stroll on a pristine stretch of beach can settle your windswept soul.

This book is for all of us who love the sand, the sun, and all that comes with the joy of being near the ocean. It is my sonnet for the sea, composed with affection. As you turn these pages, my wish is that the lovely images and heartfelt words will kindle memories of moments that you've savored being by the sea. May you catch glimpses of eternity and see reflections in your own life of the gift of simple hope. ☂

THE SEA! the sea! the open sea!
The blue, the fresh, the ever free.

Bryan Waller Procter