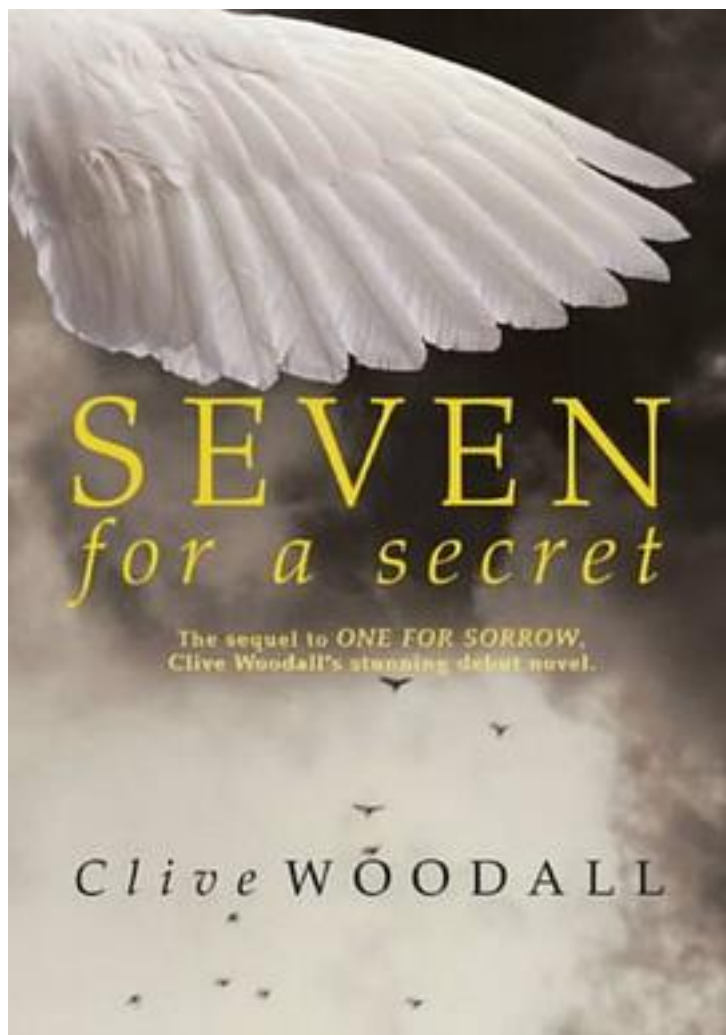


Seven for a Secret



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Who killed the mosaic girl? As Lord Chamberlain, John spends his days counseling

Emperor Justinian while passing the small hours of night in conversation with the solemn-eyed little girl depicted in a mosaic on his study wall. He never expected to meet her in a public square or afterwards find her red-dyed corpse in a subterranean cistern. Had the mysterious woman truly been the model for the mosaic years before as she claimed? Who was she? Why had she sought John out? Who wanted her dead -- and why? The answers seem to lie among the denizens of the smoky streets of that quarter of Constantinople known as the Copper Market, where artisans, beggars, prostitutes, pillar saints, and exiled aristocrats struggle to survive within sight of the Great Palace and yet worlds distant. John encounters a faded actress, a patriotic sausage maker, a sundial maker who fears the sun, a religious visionary, a man who lives in a treasure trove, and a beggar who owes his life to a cartload of melons. Before long he suspects he is attempting to unravel not just a murder but a plot against the empire. Or is John really on a personal quest, to find the reality behind the confidante he thought existed only in his own imagination? Is there such a thing as truth in a place where people live on memories, dreams, and illusions? Even if there is, can John push aside the shadows and find the truth in time?

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