

# Dark Harbor (A Stone Barrington Novel)

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In this perfect mix of sexy intrigue and swift suspense in the #1 New York Times bestselling series, Stone Barrington investigates the suicide of a CIA officer-his own cousin...

Stone Barrington hasn't heard from his cousin, Dick Stone, in years. Then, an otherwise pleasant meal at Elaine's is interrupted by the CIA with news of Dick's death-apparently by his own hand. It seems that Dick Stone, a quiet family man who doubled as a CIA agent, methodically executed his wife, daughter, and then himself...or did he? Appointed executor of Dick's will, Stone must settle the estate and-with the help of his ex-partner Dino and friend Holly Barker-piece together the elusive facts of his cousin's life and death as a CIA operative. At every step, Stone knows he is being watched by Dick's family-and one of them just may be the killer.

Stuart Woods is the author of more than sixty novels, including the #1 New York Times bestselling Stone Barrington series. He is a native of Georgia and began his writing career in the advertising industry. Chiefs, his debut in 1981, won the Edgar Award. An avid sailor and pilot, Woods lives in Florida, Maine, and New Mexico.<sup>1</sup>

ELAINE'S, LATE.

Stone Barrington had already had a drink and had almost given up on Dino Bacchetti. It was unlike his former NYPD partner, now the lieutenant in charge of the detective squad at the 19th Precinct, to be late for eating or drinking. Stone was signaling a waiter for another drink and a menu when Dino trudged in.

"Why are you trudging?" Stone asked.

"I'm trudging because I'm depressed," Dino said, waving at a waiter and making drinking motions.

"And why, pray tell, are you depressed?"

"Mary Ann and I have just split."

"Yeah, sure," Stone said. "Just sleep on the sofa tonight, and everything will be fine in the morning."

"Not this time," Dino replied, drinking greedily from the glass set before him. "Words were spoken that can't be taken back."

"Take it from a lawyer," Stone said, "the only words spoken that can't be taken back are "Guilty, Your Honor."

"Those were pretty much the words," Dino said.

"And who spoke them?"

"Who the fuck do you think?" Dino asked. "You think she would ever cop to anything?"

"What did you plead guilty to?"

"To the new desk sergeant at the precinct."

Stone's eyebrows went up. "Dino, are you switch-hitting these days?"

"A girl desk sergeant."

"Oh."

"Yeah."

"So the sofa is not an option?"

"Nah. I guess I'm moving in with you."

Stone blinked loudly.

"Relax. It's only 'til I can find a place."

"Stay as long as you like, Dino," Stone said, patting his arm and hoping to God it wouldn't be more than a day or two before Mary Ann relented and let him back in the house.

"Thanks, pal, I appreciate it." Dino nodded toward the door. "Look who's coming."

Stone looked toward the door to find Lance Cabot and Holly Barker approaching.

"May we join you?" Lance asked.

"Sure." Stone waved them to chairs. Lance was in charge of some sort of New York CIA unit that Stone didn't really understand, and Holly had left her job as a chief of police in a small Florida town to work for him. Both Stone and Dino were contract "consultants," and Stone didn't really understand that, either, except that Lance sometimes asked him to do legal stuff. Stone and Holly were, occasionally, an item.

Lance ordered drinks.

"Why do I perceive that this isn't a social visit?" Stone asked.

"Because your perceptions are very keen," Lance replied.

"What's up?"

"Tell me everything you know about Richard Stone."

Stone blinked. It was the second time that day that Dick Stone's name had come up. "He's

my first cousin," Stone replied.

"I said everything you know," Lance pointed out.

"Okay, he's the son of my mother's older brother, now deceased; he grew up in Boston, went to Harvard and Harvard Law. I think he's something at the State Department."

"How long since you've seen him?"

Stone thought about it. "We had dinner eight, nine years ago, when I was still a cop. Last time before that was a little more than twenty years ago."

"Did you know him as a boy?"

"Okay, let me tell you about it. The summer after I graduated from high school my parents sat me down and told me I was going to spend the summer in Maine with some relatives of hers. This came as a surprise, because my mother's relatives had stopped speaking to her years before I was born, because she had married my father, who had been disowned by his family, because he was a Communist. He didn't seem too happy about my spending the summer with a bunch of Stones."

MALON BARRINGTON WAS, indeed, unhappy. "Why would you want your son to spend ten minutes with those plutocratic sons of bitches, let alone a whole summer?" he asked his wife.

"Because Richard was my brother, and Caleb and Dick Jr. are Stone's cousins, and he ought to take advantage of the opportunity to get to know them," Matilda Stone replied. "They have that very nice place on Islesboro, in Penobscot Bay, and it's a wonderful place to spend a summer."

"Stone was going to work for me in the shop," Malon said. Malon was a maker of fine furniture and cabinets.

"You're going to have to hire somebody when Stone goes to NYU in the fall anyway," Matilda said, "so it might as well be now as then."

Malon made a disgruntled noise.

Matilda got down an atlas and found Maine. "Here," she said, tapping her finger on a large body of water. "This is Penobscot Bay, the largest bay in Maine, and this long, skinny island is Islesboro. The Stones live here, in the village of Dark Harbor. I spent a couple of summers there in their big, drafty old house, which isn't insulated. It's one of those rambling summer 'cottages' that's unusable before June or after Labor Day."

"Sounds swell," Stone said dryly.

"AND THAT WAS IT," Stone said to Lance. "I took a train to Bangor, where I was met by a retainer in a 1938 Ford station wagon. We drove to Lincolnville, then took a twenty-minute ferry ride to Islesboro."

"Dick had a brother named Caleb?"

"Yes. He was two years older than Dick, who was my age, and Caleb was a pain in the ass; he was a bully and a general all-round shit. Dick was a nice guy: smart, good in school, good athlete. All Caleb ever did in school was wrestle, and he liked nothing better than to grab Dick or me and get us in some sort of stranglehold. This went on until the day I kicked him in the balls and broke his nose with an uppercut. His mother almost sent me back to New York. When I left after Labor Day, she made it pretty clear that I wouldn't be invited back, and I wasn't."

"What did you do that summer?" Lance asked.

"We sailed and played golf and tennis. The Stones lived near the yacht club, and there was a nine-hole golf course and a tennis club. We didn't lack for activity."

"Did you and Dick keep in touch?"

"We exchanged a few letters over the next year or two, but that petered out. I didn't hear from him again until he turned up in New York and called me at the precinct and invited me to dinner. We went to the Harvard Club, I remember, and I was impressed."

"What did you talk about that evening?"

"About our work: He was stationed in Rome, as I recall-he was the agricultural attaché, or something-and I was working homicides with Dino. I remember he asked me if I was interested in government service, and I said I was already in government service. I asked him what he had in mind, but he was vague. I didn't hear from him again until this morning."

Lance nearly choked on his drink. "This morning?"

"Yes, I had a letter from Dick-a package, really-by FedEx. There was a letter saying that he wanted me to put the package, which was sealed, in my safe and not to open it, except in event of his death. There was a check for a thousand dollars, too, as a retainer. He wanted to formally hire me as his attorney. Why do you find it so odd that I heard from him this morning?"

Lance put a hand on Stone's arm. "Because, my friend, yesterday your cousin, Dick Stone, shot his wife and only daughter, then put a bullet in his own brain. At his house in Dark Harbor."

STONE UNLOCKED THE front door of his house and let everybody in. "Dino, put your stuff on the elevator, take it up to the third floor and put it in the big guest room. We'll be in my office." Dino complied.

Stone led the way downstairs to the basement and switched on the lights in his office. "Have a seat," he said to Lance and Holly. They did so. Stone went to his safe, punched the combination into the electronic keypad, removed a package and set it on his desk.

Lance bent over and looked at the package, then smiled. "Smart boy, Dick."

"Why?"

"Look at how he's done this: The package is one large sheet of heavy paper, cut so that four corners come together and are sealed with wax and Dick's signet ring."

"Why?" Stone asked.

"Because it's impossible to open and reseal the package without his ring and without being detected. I think you should draw up a document saying that Holly, Dino and I witnessed your opening the package."

"Okay by me," Dino said, joining them.

Stone switched on his computer, typed out a brief statement, and the three of them witnessed his breaking the seals and opening the package. Then Stone put the package back into his safe and locked it.

"What are you doing?" Lance asked.

"It's your turn to answer some questions," Stone said. "What is your interest in my cousin Dick?"

"I don't have to answer your questions, Stone," Lance said.

"And I don't have to show you what's in Dick's package," Stone replied.

"All right, I guess we're all family here," Lance said. "Dick Stone wasn't with the State Department. Until recently, he was Assistant Deputy Director for European Operations for the CIA. Two weeks ago, he arrived with his family in Washington to replace Hugh English as Deputy Director for Operations—that's the top job on the operations side, reporting to the Director of Central Intelligence. After thirty years on the job, Hugh is retiring at the end of the summer. You remember when you and I met in London a couple of years ago?"

"Of course."

"I was working for Dick at the time. I've been assigned to investigate the deaths of him and

his family."

"All right," Stone said, "now everybody go sit in my waiting room while I read what's in the package."

"Why?" Lance asked.

"Because I'm representing Dick as his attorney and what passes between us is confidential, unless I determine that it doesn't need to be."

Lance stared at him for a moment, then got up and left the room, followed by Holly.

"You, too, Dino," Stone said. Dino got up and left the room.

Stone opened the safe, took out the package and spread its four flaps. On top there was a letter from Dick Stone and beneath was a will. Stone read the letter:

My Dear Stone,

First of all, I wish to hire you as my attorney, and I enclose a check for \$1,000.00 as a retainer. Of course, I know that your fees will surpass that amount, should I require services, but that will be taken care of in due course.

Barbara and I have written a will, which is enclosed, and I have had it properly witnessed by four people, whose names and addresses are noted. I have appointed you as our sole executor and, should it be necessary, guardian for our minor daughter, Esme, who is now eighteen, until she reaches her majority. She is entering Oxford this fall. I have also appointed you as her trustee, as she stands to inherit a lot of money if Barbara and I should both walk in front of the same oncoming bus.

You will note that, apart from a few bequests to distant relatives on Barbara's side of the family, there are none to members of my family. My only close relatives are Caleb, his wife and their twin sons, now twenty-one years old and seniors at Yale this fall. I have specifically excluded them from inheriting any of my property. I have provided for our caretaker in Dark Harbor, Seth Hotchkiss (you'll remember him), and his family.

You will also note that, in the highly unlikely event of Barbara, Esme and me dying simultaneously, as in a plane crash, you would become a beneficiary, along with the foundation mentioned in the will. I say highly unlikely because we always travel on different airplanes.

Next time we meet, I will explain why I have made the decisions I have regarding our estate. In the meantime, I ask you to follow my wishes as you understand them.

It is not inconceivable that, should I die anytime soon, my employers may express an interest in my affairs, and I authorize you to cooperate with them to the extent you deem advisable.

Finally, I have attached a joint financial statement, giving account numbers, phone numbers of brokers, etc., which you would find useful in the event of our deaths. I should explain that most of our combined assets come from Barbara, inherited from her father.

I thank you for your kind attention to this matter, and the next time I find myself in New York, I'll take you to dinner again—it's been too long—or, alternatively, perhaps you might find some time to spend with us in June in Islesboro. I built my own house there four years ago, and you'll find it more comfortable than the old family barn, now occupied by Caleb and his m<sup>2</sup> nage.

Warm regards,

Dick

Stone put the letter aside and read the will and the financial statement, then he called the group back into his office.

"All right. I have Dick's permission to talk with you about the package. Let me summarize: It contains a letter to me, his and his wife's will and a financial statement."

"What..." Lance began.

Stone held up a hand. "It's all very simple," he said. "If Dick dies first, Barbara gets everything; if she dies first, he gets everything; if they both die, their daughter, Esme, gets everything in trust. I am appointed their executor and their daughter's guardian and trustee."

"What happens if they all die?" Lance asked.

"Apart from a few bequests to Barbara's relatives and to a family retainer, the bulk of the estate would go to the Samuel Bernard Foundation. I would inherit the use of the Islesboro house for the life of myself and my heirs, along with the proceeds of a trust, set up to pay the expenses of maintaining and running the house. If I don't want the place, it would be sold, and the proceeds would go to the same foundation. Dick has specifically excluded his brother and his brother's family as heirs, and if I sell the house, I am instructed to entail the deed in such a way that Caleb could never buy it."

"Sounds like some hard feelings between the two of them."

"Given my experience of them in their youth, I'm not surprised," Stone said. "I know Sam Bernard, of course, but what is the foundation?" Samuel Bernard had been a law-school professor of Stone's and had remained a mentor who had historic connections to the CIA.

"It's set up to provide for the families of Agency officers killed or disabled in the line of duty," Lance said. "How much did Dick leave the foundation?"



"A million dollars," Stone said, "in the event of his own death. As I said, in the event of the whole family dying simultaneously, most of the estate goes to the foundation."

"And how much is that?"

"Thirty million dollars, give or take. Dick's wife was a very wealthy woman."

Lance drew in a quick breath. "That is astonishingly generous," he said.

"Lance," Stone said, "what reason do you have for thinking that Dick murdered his family and killed himself?"

"That is the opinion of the sheriff and the state police in Maine," Lance said. "My superiors would like for you and me to determine if he's right."

"Do you think Dick was mentally ill? You've seen him more recently than I."

"I have no reason to think so, and certainly the contents of his letter to you and his will are lucid and make him seem sound of mind."

"So the sheriff wants us to believe that a man who has spent his career handling intricate intelligence matters and who has just received the promotion of a lifetime is so nuts and despondent as to murder his family and commit suicide?"

"At this date, I suppose the sheriff's conclusions are preliminary and based only on the physical evidence."

"And what is the physical evidence?"

"I have no idea."

"Then I guess we'd better go to Maine," Stone said.

#### Other Books

Library Journal, Includes, beginning Sept. 15, 1954 (and on the 15th of each month, Sept.-May) a special section: School library journal, ISSN 0000-0035, (called Junior libraries, 1954-May 1961). Also issued separately.

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