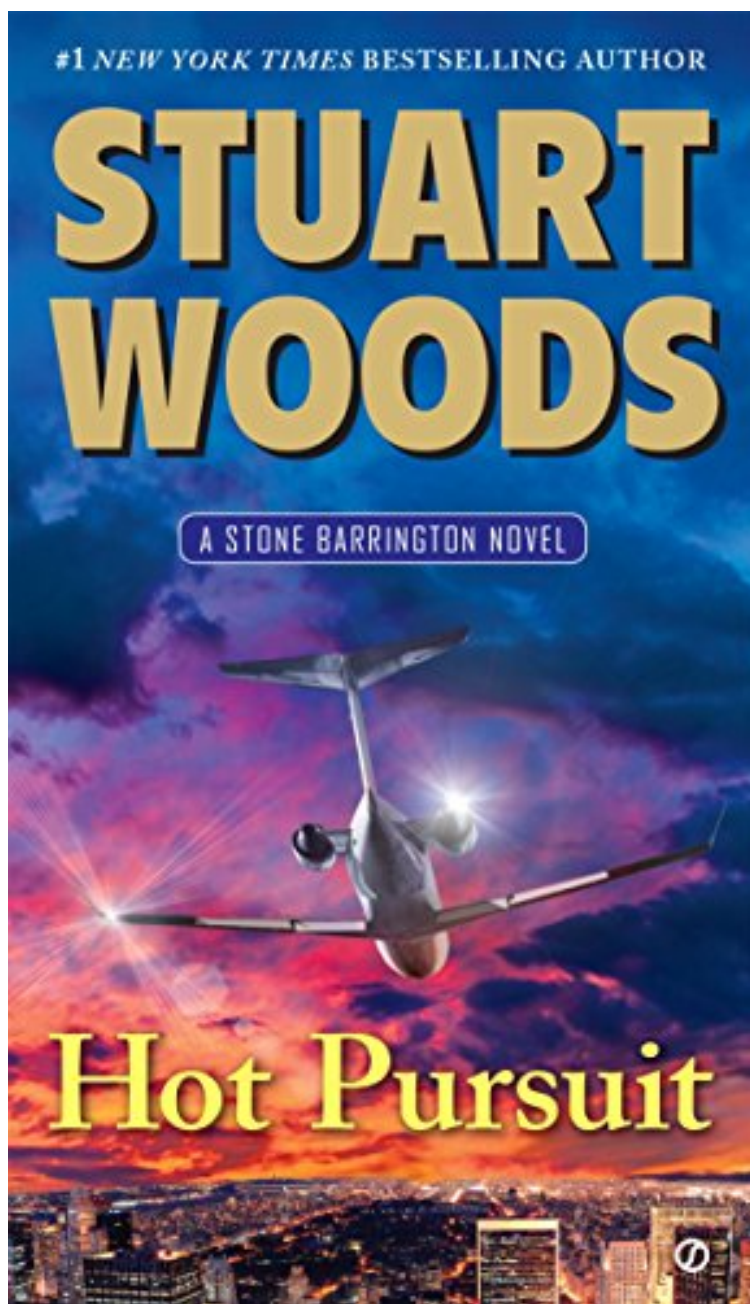


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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurStone Barrington and his new love rack up the frequent-flier miles with a stalker on their trail in this thrilling adventure in the #1 New York Times bestselling series.Its not often that Stone Barrington finds a woman as accustomed to the jet-set lifestyle as he, so hes pleasantly surprised when he meets a gorgeous pilot. Their travels together lead them from Wichita to Europe, but trailing them is some

unwanted baggage: his new lady loves unstable, criminal ex-boyfriend. And while Stone is fending off his newest adversary, trouble is brewing on the international stage. Several enemy operatives are at large, and only a coordinated intelligence effort will have any chance of stopping their deadly plot. But the clock is ticking...and time has nearly run out.

STONE BARRINGTON STOOD on a wide expanse of tarmac, leaning into thirty knots of icy wind, holding his hat on his head, his trench coat inadequate to the task of keeping his body temperature in the normal range. It was January in Wichita. He watched as a thing of beauty made a turn and rolled toward him. It bore his tail number, but not on the tail on the engine nacelles. Its white fuselage bore stripes of blue and red, sweeping back to a night-blue tail, emblazoned with stars. It was his brand-new Citation M2, for which he had waited two years. The form of the delivery pilot, a man named Pat Frank, could be seen in the pilots seat, having flown the twenty-minute flight from the factory, in Independence, Kansas. A lineman ran forward and chocked the nosewheel, and the pilot cut the engines, their dying whine leaving the howl of the wind as the only noise on the ramp. Stone had spent the past sixteen days in the classroom and the simulator; the content of his life had shrunk to sweating out instruction all day, then ordering room service at night and falling asleep in front of the TV. He wanted the real airplane and he wanted New York. Now. The door of the airplane swung open and a figure kicked the folding steps down, and Stone got his first surprise of the day. The ferry pilot descended onto the tarmac, and her blond hair streamed with the wind. Hi, she said, holding out a hand. Im Pat Frank. Can we get out of this wind? Follow me, Stone said, running for the airplane and climbing the steps. He glanced into the cockpit, which was completely familiar to him, since the three fourteen-inch screens of the Garmin 3000 avionics and the accompanying switches and throttles were identical to those in the simulator. He sank into one of the four comfortable passenger seats and waved Ms. Pat Frank to a seat facing him. So youre the hand-holder my insurance company sent to make my first flight with me, he said. I am that, she replied. At the very least. You may recall that you paid me to do the acceptance flights and inspections for you, too. And I thought I was signing checks to some grizzled veteran of the airlines, corporate flying, and, maybe, FedEx. Im all that, except the grizzled part, she said, smiling, revealing perfect teeth set off by her red lipstick. The soft, goatskin leather jacket, zipped up against the weather, could not conceal her ample breasts. All we need is fuel and a flight plan filed. Ive taken care of both. I hope to God you dont want to do the walk-around inspection in this wind, she said. Ive already done it this morning in a nice warm hangar, and if you want to get me off this airplane youre going to have to drag me. A lineman stuck his head into the cabin. Fuels on the way, he said. You want me to stow your bags, Mr. Barrington? Pat Frank handed him a key. Up front, please, and kindly remove the ten bags of lead shot first. Lead shot? Stone asked, baffled. Weight and balance, she said. My hundred and twenty pounds werent enough to get us into the envelope. With you aboard, no problem, unless you have plans to have some slip of a girl fly the airplane alone. Cant think of one, Stone replied. Well, if youve already been to the can, lets button this thing up, then climb into the cockpit and see if we can make it fly. After you, Stone said, stripping off his trench coat. She pulled up the steps, closed the door, and swung the lever that locked it. In a moment, she was in the copilots seat. Stone went forward and, with some difficulty, managed to get his six-foot-two frame into the pilots seat. Pat helped him with adjusting the seat. Its snug, but youll get used to it, she said. For some reason, Cessna puts all the room in the rear, where the passengers sit not where the owner-pilots for whom this airplane was intended fly the thing. She read out the pre-start checklist, he flipped the appropriate switches, then he turned on the power and the three glass panels slowly came to life, along with the two smaller screens just ahead of the throttles, called the GTUs. These were the iPad-like units with which most of the airplanes systems were operated. Stone had spent a week playing with a computer-simulated version, memorizing the patterns and trying to forget the old G-1000 in his former airplane. Did you have a Mustang before? Yep, I gave it to my son. I hope hes older than eight, she said. Thats quite a toy. Hes twelve, or so, and hes already type-rated. She shook her head. I never heard of a father giving his son a jet airplane. She watched as he managed to tap a flight plan into the GTU, then run the system checks. Not bad for a first flight, she said. They drilled me well in class. Dont worry, Ill need your help before long. Outside, the fuel truck drove away, and the lineman signaled that the chocks had been pulled. Stone pulled the hand brake and started the engines. When all systems were running smoothly, he listened to ATIS, the towers recorded weather report, then called clearance delivery, adjusting the microphone attached to his Bose headset. Wichita clearance delivery, November One Two Three Tango Foxtrot is IFR to Tango Echo Bravo. Do you have a clearance for me? They did, and Stone copied it down and read it back. It included a departure procedure, and he inserted that into his electronic flight plan, then called for permission to taxi. Thank God that wind is right down the runway, he said. I dont feel like fighting

it. He taxied to the end of the runway, and Pat read out the pre-takeoff checklist. With every switch in its proper position, he asked permission to take off and was cleared. He rolled onto the runway, lined up with the centerline, centered the heading bug, flipped on the pitot heat switches, and pushed the throttles to the firewall. Airspeeds alive, Pat said after a few seconds, then, Seventy knots... aaaand rotate! Stone put both hands on the yoke and pulled back until two V-bars on the display in front of him mated, showing that he had achieved the proper climb angle. Positive rate of climb, Pat said. Stone raised the landing gear flaps. Four hundred fifty feet, she said. He pressed the button that turned on the autopilot, then removed his hands from the yoke. They were given an initial climb to ten thousand feet, and he was told to switch to Wichita departure. The frequency was already entered into the G-3000; all he had to do was tap the glass panel at the proper spot. Wichita departure, N123TF with you out of three thousand for one zero thousand. N123TF, cleared on course. Climb and maintain flight level 410. Stone repeated the instruction and pressed the NAV button to tell the autopilot to follow the flight plan, then he dialed forty-one thousand feet into the computer, pressed the Flight Level Control button, and sat back. He put behind him the claustrophobic previous two weeks and room-service food, and reveled in his new airplane as it climbed quickly to FL 410. Does your wife fly? Pat asked. Im a widower, Stone replied. For some years. My condolences. Thank you. Why dont you delay your return to Wichita, and lets have dinner tonight? Im moving into a new apartment tomorrow in New York, she said, and Id love to. 2 THE FLIGHT was predictably smooth for the first hour. They grilled each other, this being more of a first date than a qualifying flight for the insurance company. Pat was from a small town in Georgia, Delano, which somehow had a familiar ring for Stone. She had started flying after college, had flown air taxi and package delivery, then corporate jets, then for an airline. By the time that went bust, she had made captain, and she took herself to another airline. Finally, she had made the break. Im starting a business, she said. Im calling it The Pat Frank Flight Department, something that the charterers and the corporates have as a matter of course, but not the owner-flown jets. Ill do all the paperwork, keep the maintenance schedule, update the logbooks weekly, et cetera, et cetera. I could use a service like that, Stone said. My secretary has been doing all the work, but since she knows nothing about airplanes, its hard for her. Youre hired. Great! My first client! Of course, I cant have dinner with you tonight, for professional reasons. Youre fired, Stone said. Well, I guess I can make an exception, your being my first client and all. Youre rehired. Stone looked at the multi-function display before him. Theres the weather the forecast predicted, he said, pointing at a green mass ahead of them that was dotted with yellow areas. Well fly over the bulk of it, but when we start our descent on the arrival procedure, well have to contend with it and maybe with some ice, too. And well need an instrument approach. Your airplane is equipped to deal with it, she reminded him. Stone tapped an icon or two and brought up the weather at Teterboro. Six-hundred-foot ceiling, six miles of visibility, wind 040 at twelve, gusting twenty, he read. No problem. Well keep an eye on it, though. There was some light snow in the forecast, too, Pat said. They entered into the arrival procedure, a loop to the north, then back to the south, that the air traffic controllers used to line up and keep distance between the conga line of airplanes that would be landing at TEB. ATC gave them a lower altitude, and Stone turned on the ice prevention systems that heated the leading edges of the wings and tail and the windshield. Five minutes later they were in Instrument Meteorological Conditions and blind, except for their instruments. They continued their descent on the arrival, and at the end of it they were vectored to the Instrument Landing System for runway 6 at Teterboro. ATIS told them that the weather had deteriorated to three hundred feet and two miles of visibility, with blowing snow. Once established on the ILS, Stone watched the indicator for the glide slope and put down the landing gear. The three green lights that indicated that the tricycle gears were down did not come on. Uh-oh, he said, then recycled the gear switch. I guess were going to have to blow the gear down. There was a tank of nitrogen aboard that could be used to force the gear down in the event of a hydraulic failure. Pat reached forward and twisted the knob that selected night or day flying to day, and the three green gear lights appeared. Some ass turned it to night, she said. And the daylight washed out the dimmed lights. Thats a relief, Stone said. She read out the landing checklist, and the autopilot flew them down the glide slope; all Stone had to do was control the airspeed. At three hundred feet they broke out of the clouds, into light snow, and the runway lay directly ahead of them. At 160 feet, Stone turned off the autopilot and landed the airplane smoothly by hand. And your first landing is a greaser! Pat said. Youve just passed your insurance check ride! Stone called ground control, requested taxi to Jet Aviation, where he kept the airplane, and was given the route. Five minutes later Pat was reading the shutdown checklist, and he was shutting down the engines and switching everything off. He noted the flight time on the Hobbs meter and entered it into his logbook. Were home, he said. Pat left the cockpit, opened the

airplanes door, and kicked down the steps, which lowered themselves gently into place. Stone went to the rear luggage compartment, switched off the battery to conserve power, and handed a lineman the engine and pitot covers for installation. He locked up and went to the forward luggage compartment, removed his and Pats bags, and handed them to another lineman, who put them onto a cart. Put her in the barn, Stone said to the other lineman, then he and Pat followed their luggage through the Jet Aviation terminal and out to where Stones factotum, Fred, waited with the Bentley. Good flight, sir? Fred asked. A great one, Fred. This is Pat Frank. Fred tipped an imaginary cap, and they got into the car. Pat produced her phone. I didnt book a hotel for tonight, she said. Dont bother, Stone replied. I have guest rooms. How kind you are! Saves picking you up for dinner. Half an hour later they were in the garage, and while Fred dealt with the luggage, they took the elevator to the third floor. Well put you in here, Stone said, showing her to the largest guest room. Im right down the hall. He looked at his watch: Youve got two hours to get gorgeous, he said. Well meet in my study for a drink at seven on the first floor. How are we dressing? she asked. You mean you have more than one dress in that little bag? The option is jeans. Wear the dress. See you at seven. He walked down the hall to the master suite. AT SEVEN he was reading the New York Times in his study when she walked in, clad in a tight LBD and sporting pearls and very high heels. You got gorgeous, Stone said. What would you like to drink? What are you drinking? Bourbon. Knob Creek. I have gimlets and martinis already made and in the freezer, and most other drinks, but I cant make a banana daiquiri. Im a Georgia girl, she said. Ill have the bourbon. He poured them both a drink. Some friends are meeting us at the restaurant, he said. Dino and Vivian Bacchetti. Shes called Viv. Fine. In my extreme youth I was a cop, and Dino was my partner. Now Im a failed cop, and Dino is the police commissioner of the City of New York. How did you fail? I got shot in the knee, and I disagreed with my betters on the handling of an important case. They used the knee as an excuse to dump me. And how did you go about becoming a lawyer? I was already a law-school graduate. I took a cram course and passed the bar, and an old school buddy had a job waiting for me. You make it sound so easy. I was lucky. I had inherited this house from a great-aunt, my grandmothers sister, and I was renovating it, doing most of the work myself. I was more than a year into the job, my savings were gone, and I was in debt to the bank and a lot of building suppliers, when I ran into my old friend Bill Eggers, of Woodman Weld. The rest, as they say, is history. A pretty successful history, she said, looking around. The place is beautiful. Fairly successful. When my wife died I came into some money that had been made by her first husband. Thus, the gift of a jet to your son. Thus. How do you happen to be moving into an apartment in New York tomorrow? My sister got married and moved to the suburbs. She owned an apartment and rented it, until I could clear the decks for the move. The tenants lease is up tomorrow. Ill probably buy the place from my sister, eventually. Good idea. Stone wrinkled his brow. Whats your sisters name? Greta Frank. The Greta Frank who was recently acquitted of murdering her husband? Her first husband. I followed the trial in the media. She was completely innocent, of course. Of course. And she was lucky enough to have a very smart attorney. Yes, Herbert Fisher. Do you know him? Hes a partner in my law firm, and was a protg of mine. Then I suppose Greta has you to thank, as well. In a roundabout way, I guess. She didnt lose any time remarrying, did she? Nope. I think they were an item before her husbands untimely death. Whom did she marry? Larry Goren, a hedge-fund zillionaire. Her late husband was also one of those, wasnt he? Greta has always been attracted to money. Fred appeared in the doorway. The car is out front, Mr. Barrington. They both polished off their drinks and left the house. 3 THEY BEAT DINO and Viv to Patroon and ordered another drink. A jazz group was playing, a new wrinkle of which Stone approved. Mike Freeman ambled over. Good evening. Hi, Mike, Stone replied. Pat, this is Mike Freeman, an old friend and business associate. Join us, Mike. Im stag tonight. Sure you dont mind? Not in the least. Mike signaled to Ken Aretzky, the owner, that he was joining Stone, then sat down and ordered a drink. Dino and Viv will be here soon, Stone said, looking at his watch. I think. I thought you were in Wichita, Mike said, and yet here you are with a beautiful woman. Shes not a woman, shes a pilot, Stone said. Pat did the acceptance for me at the factory, and the insurance company okayed her to do the first flight with me. We just got in this afternoon. Hows the new Citation M2? Wonderful. Its already parked in your hangar. Pat, Mike is the head of Strategic Services, a large security company, and they own a hangar at Teterboro. How convenient, Pat said. Pat is starting a new business, running the flight department for owner-operators, like me. Good idea. Im her first client. I had to fire her to get her to have dinner with me. Whats your business called? Mike asked. The Pat Frank Flight Department. Catchy. I thought so, too. Dino and Viv finally arrived, and introductions were made. They had just ordered drinks when another man approached the table. Dino introduced everybody to Everett Salton, who was the junior senator for the state of New York. Stone had never met him but was usually impressed

with what he heard about the man in the news. Will you join us, Ev? Dino asked. Thank you, but the senior senator and I are having dinner, as if we don't see enough of each other. Another time, I hope. The senator said good night and wended his way to his table. Good guy, Dino said. I think. You think? Stone asked. Don't you know? He's a politician; you can never really know a guy like that, you just know what he's for and against, issue by issue, and sometimes even that changes with the wind. You know, since becoming commissioner, you've also become a cynic. I'm a realist, that's all. You, however, are a pushover for anybody who's nice to you. Nonsense. Name somebody who's nice to you that you don't like. Stone thought about that for a moment. Well... A pushover, like I said. I think that's a good personal trait, Pat said. Do you like Pat? Dino asked. Of course, she's nice to me. **THEY WERE BACK** at Stone's house by eleven, and he kissed her good night at her bedroom door. I don't suppose you need tucking in? I can handle it, thanks. Do you have an early start tomorrow? Not so early. The movers are supposed to show up at noon. Then wander down the hall around seven and have breakfast with me. Sounds good. What would you like? Whatever you're having. See you at seven. He kissed her again and went to the master suite, undressed, and left a message about breakfast for Helene, his housekeeper. He turned on the news, but there was nothing much new since the early-morning shows, and he fell asleep quickly. He was awakened by a soft hand on his cheek and a light kiss on the lips. Good morning, she said. I'm early. How early? Half an hour. Then join me, he said, reaching over and turning down the covers on the other side of the bed. She shed her robe, giving him a glimpse of a curvaceous body, and pulled the covers up over her breasts. I don't think I've ever started a day like this without an intimate evening before. Best time of day, Stone said, raising an arm and offering her a shoulder. She moved over and nestled against him. Things moved quickly along, and they were resting in each other's arms when a chime rang. That's the dumbwaiter, Stone said. He got out of bed, opened the door, and removed a large tray, setting it on the bed. Wow, Pat said. That's what I call room service. Helene is always punctual. Stone switched on the morning shows and saw an interview with the two senators on the sidewalk outside Patroon. Salton is pretty slick, Pat said. He is, isn't he? You didn't know him before last night? Only from television. He seemed to know who you were. I didn't notice that, and there's no reason why he should. But he knew Dino. Dino's the police commissioner. You have a point, she said. Still... Stone's bedside phone rang, a rare event at this hour. Stone picked it up. Hello? This is Ev Salton. I hope I haven't called too early. Not at all, Senator. Will you have lunch with me today? He didn't ask if Stone already had a date. Yes, Stone said. Salton gave him an address. Just ring the bell, he said. Twelve-thirty? That's fine. Good morning to you, then. Good morning. They both hung up. That was Senator Salton, Stone said. I told you he knew who you were, Pat replied. **4** **STONE ARRIVED** at the address, a double-width town house in the East Sixties, and rang the bell. He noticed a security camera high and to his left. Almost immediately a man in a black suit and green tie opened the door. Your name, please? Barrington. Please come in, Mr. Barrington, and follow me. The man took his overcoat, then led him to an elevator, and Stone was ushered in. Press five, the man said. Stone pressed five, the doors closed, and when they opened, Senator Everett Salton stood waiting in a small foyer. He shook Stone's hand. Good to see you, Stone. And you, Stone replied. This way. Stone followed him to one of several doors opening off the foyer, and into a sort of sitting room with a table set for two. Salton indicated where Stone should sit. I hope you don't mind, I've ordered for us to save time. That's fine, Stone said, taking a seat. His place was set with elegant china and crystal and a huge, starched Irish linen napkin. Would you like a drink? Salton asked. Thank you, just some fizzy water. Instantly, a waiter entered the room and took their drink orders. What is this place? Stone asked. It's a sort of club, I suppose, Salton said. He supposed? Does it have a name? It does not. The members refer to it vaguely as the club or the association or the East Side House. To what clubs do you belong, Stone? Only a small golf club in Washington, Connecticut, where I have a house. No city clubs? None. I find that remarkable, Salton said. Stone didn't ask why. Are all meals taken in this setting? Stone asked, indicating the room. No, there is a proper dining room downstairs, but only members are permitted to use it. As a group, they guard their privacy jealously. Guests are received in these private rooms. I see, Stone said, overstating his understanding. I've wanted to meet you for some time, Salton said. Stone wrinkled his brow. Why now? Because, until last evening, we had not been introduced. He smiled. I realize that's a bit old-fashioned of me, especially since I'm a politician, but it has been my experience that the means by which one makes acquaintances is almost as important as the acquaintance. That's not only old-fashioned, it's very selective, Stone said. Yes, it is, isn't it? Last evening you were in the company of two men I know fairly well, and that spoke well of you. Is either of them a member of this club? Stone asked. One is. I proposed the other this morning, along with you. Stone was dumbfounded. This man, who professed to be so selective, had proposed a man he didn't know for what

was obviously an extremely exclusive club. Im not sure I have the qualifications for membership, Stone said.

What are they? Substance, character, and to a lesser extent, cordiality, Salton replied. And influence? He thought he was beginning to see what this was about. Sometimes. Many members acquire more of that here than they bring to the party. And we are more inclusive than you might imagine. There is an unspoken rule virtually all the rules here are unspoken that no candidate is discriminated against for any of the usual exclusionary traits race, religion, et cetera. The membership is quite broad in that regard. Is it also large? Given that the membership is worldwide, not terribly. There are no more than a couple of hundred members who have their main residence within a fifty-mile radius of the city, and you know more of them than you think you do. Several of them joined you in a group whose contributions started Katharine Lees campaign for the presidency. And that, Stone thought, is why I am here. Their lunch arrived a fish soup, followed by poached salmon and a glass of a flinty white wine. Youre going to the inauguration, of course, Salton said. Of course. Will you be staying at the White House? No, I wouldnt want to impose on the Lees at such a frenetic time for them. Ill be at the Hay-Adams Hotel. He didnt mention that he had declined an invitation to stay at the White House because his date was his friend Holly Barker, who ran the New York station of the CIA. Holly had felt it was inappropriate for her to stay there because of her position. My wife and I would be delighted to have you stay with us at our home in Georgetown, Salton said. Thats very kind of you, but there will be four in my party. Then perhaps you, your companion, and the Bacchettis would be our guests for a buffet dinner before the Inaugural Ball? Wed be delighted, Stone said. They ate in silence for a few minutes. Finally, Salton spoke up. I suppose youre wondering why Im not pumping you for more information about yourself, but you see, I already know a great deal about you your background, parentage, education, police service, and law practice. There are at least a couple of members here whose fat you pulled from the fire during your early career. Stone laughed. I used to do quite a lot of that, he said. And you did it well and discreetly, Salton replied. I admire that. I know a fair amount about you, too, Stone said. Youre that rare person whose first public office was the United States Senate. I liked, when you first ran, that you didnt seem to scramble for the seat. Oh, I consumed my share of rubber chicken, Salton said, but my way was eased somewhat by members of this club. The waiter returned to take their dishes. Would you like dessert? Salton asked. Thank you, no. The waiter came back and poured coffee. Shortly another man in a black suit and green tie entered and handed Salton an envelope, then departed. Salton opened the envelope, took out a sheet of stationery, and read what was written on it. He tucked the paper into his inside pocket. Congratulations, he said. You have been elected to membership, as has Michael Freeman. Stone blinked. Do you mean that Dino Bacchetti was already a member? Dino was your co-proposer, as was Bill Eggers. You mustnt blame them for not telling you. Another of our unwritten rules is that we may not tell any non-member that we belong, or even confirm that the association exists. Stone laughed. Ill blame them anyway. This is how it works: for a year you will not receive a bill from the group. After that, youll be billed annually for a sum that is the cost of our previous years operating expenses, divided by the number of members, plus a sum usually around ten percent to account for inflation and new expenses. Occasionally, the board will authorize an assessment to cover some large expense a new roof, renovation, et cetera. There is no initiation fee. If you do not receive a bill on the first day of your thirteenth month of membership, then enough of the membership will have thought ill of you to cancel it, and no more will be said. How often does that happen? Stone asked. Rarely. There have not been more than two such cases in any year. How long has the club existed? Since 1789, Salton replied, more than a century in this building, which was purpose-built from a rough plan drawn by Thomas Jefferson, who was a member, along with Washington and Benjamin Franklin. Now, come, and Ill give you a tour of the house. SALTON LED the way to the stairs. Well walk down, he said. By the way, theres a lovely roof garden above us, but it wont open until spring. They didnt pause at the fourth floor. There are some rooms here, which are sometimes used by out-of-town members or members who have found their domestic arrangements temporarily inhospitable. Are there women members? About twenty percent of us, Salton said, and the number is growing. Kate Lee is among them, elected many years ago, as is our future first gentleman. They came to the dining room, which, at that hour, was thinly populated. Stone spotted a couple of familiar faces there, lingering over coffee. Another floor down and they entered the most beautiful library Stone had ever seen, paneled in American walnut with white accents and two stories of bound volumes. We have a very fine collection of American history, Salton said, including some volumes from Jeffersons library. They continued past the first floor and emerged into a garage, albeit a very elegant one. I didnt notice the garage door when I entered, Stone said. The garage extends into the building next door, where our administrative staff are located and which provides the entry

for cars. We find it convenient, because driving in means that members wont be seen to come and go so often. We wouldnt like to encourage curiosity. They approached a slightly stretched Lincoln town car, where a chauffeur stood with the rear door open. Come, Salton said, Ill give you a lift home. They got into the car, and Stone found it had a non-standard interior of tan Nappa leather and burl walnut. I cant be seen in a Bentley or a Mercedes, Salton explained, so I bought an old town car and had it renovated. There are so many in the city, no one notices. They drove up a ramp to street level, and Stone noticed that there were two garage doors: one closed behind them before the other opened to the street. Now, that was discreet, he thought. The building is open twenty-four hours a day, Salton said, handing him a gold key. This will get you in between midnight and six AM, should you feel the need for a quiet drink or just to remove yourself from the world for a few hours. He reached into a compartment, withdrew a handsome envelope, and handed it to Stone. This will tell you something of our history and perhaps mention a few of those unwritten rules. If you wish to bring a guest, call the front desk and book a dining room on the fifth floor. Its a privilege best used rarely. The Lincoln drew up at Stones front door. Would you like to come in for another cup of coffee? Stone asked. Id love to another time, but Im expected downtown for a meeting, Salton said. He handed Stone a card. Here are my private numbers in both New York and Washington, along with my Georgetown address.

Drinks at six on Inauguration Day, dinner early. If you decide you wont attend the ball, therell be entertainment at the house. Thank you, Senator, Stone said, shaking his hand. From now on its Ev, Salton replied. Were very happy to have you among our number. I look forward to it, Stone said. He got out of the car, and it drove away. He entered the house through his office door. Good afternoon, his secretary, Joan, said as he walked past her office. Would you like your messages, or would you prefer a nap? Stone took the pink slips from her hand. Im wide awake, thank you. He handed Joan the senators card. Put all these numbers into the system, please. The system would populate his iPad and his iPhone, as well. Oh, was he your lunch date? He was. Hes such a handsome man, she said. And so well spoken. Hes all of that and more, Stone said, and went into his office. Dinos call was first. He dialed the private number. Hello, new boy, he said. You son of a bitch, Stone said. You never said a word about it. Thats because I know how to keep my mouth shut, Dino replied, when its desirable to do so. You should work on that. How long have you been a member? I guess thats not classified: since shortly before I made commissioner. By the way, I was having lunch with Mike Freeman next door, while you and Ev were talking. Hes very pleased to be among us. So am I, Stone said. Its a good place to lunch when youre alone, Dino said. Theres a big table where the stags sit. Youll meet some interesting people. Thats good to know. Ev didnt mention it. Theres too much to mention in one lunch. Did you like the guy? Very much. He seemed very like what I thought hed be. He invited us all to dinner inaugural night. I know. Tell me, Dino, have you been much put upon for favors from other members? Hardly ever, Dino said. Thats frowned upon, unless a member has invited you to call upon him. I try not to offer that courtesy to many people. Listen, I gotta runspeaking date. Talk to you later. His next call was to Holly Barker. Well, hi there, she said. Are we still on for the inaugural? You bet your sweet ass we are. And you should wear that green dress you bought in Paris. Its perfect for a ball. Howd you guess? Oh, and we have a dinner invitation before the ball: Senator and Mrs. Everett Salton, at their house in Georgetown. That sounds very grand. It should be. I have some news, but Im sitting on it until were in D.C., she said. Youre being secretive. Im secretive for a living, remember? Well, there is that. Ill send Fred to pick you up: Home or office? What time? Ten AM? Oh, home, I guess. How much luggage can I bring? As much as you need, and not a bit more. Oh, shoot, I wanted to bring a selection of things. Select before you pack. If I have to. See you tomorrow. Bye. Stone hung up and made his other calls. Finally, he got to Pat Frank and dialed the number she had left. Hello? Its Stone. How was your lunch? Very interesting. First time Ive had lunch with a senator.

How was your move-in? Not bad. I had the movers take everything out of the boxes and then take them away. Im already half done with putting things away. When do you leave for Washington? He had told her about the trip. Tomorrow morning. Need a copilot? Ive got to fly the thing alone sometime when better than when a thousand other private airplanes are simultaneously diving on the capital? Try not to bump into any. You betcha. Ill be back in a few days. Ill call you. Youll be only one of a hundred clients by then. Yeah, but Ill still be the first, and deserving of special attention. And special attention you will get. He hung up laughing. 6STONE MADE his first landing as a single pilot in the M2 without incident, in spite of the inaugural traffic in the area. He flew the ILS at Manassas, Virginia, and taxied over to the FBO. The stretch limo he had reserved months ago awaited on the ramp; the driver introduced himself as Benny, and he quickly had their luggage in the trunk. Where to, Mr. Barrington? The Hay-Adams Hotel, please. Traffic was heavy, and they had to wait in a line of cars to unload at the hotels front door. Stone got everybody out and

left Benny to deal with the luggage. He was warmly welcomed at the front desk, and they were immediately taken up to their suite, which Stone and Dino had once used before Dinos marriage. The spectacular view of the White House was still there. They ordered from room service, and while they waited, Holly broke her news. Kate is going to appoint me assistant to the president for national security affairs, which means Ill sit on the National Security Council, she said. Wow! Stone shouted. Good going, Holly! He added champagne to their lunch order. Then youre going to resign from the Agency? Ill take an unpaid leave of absence, Holly said, in case it turns out Im not a good enough politician. Does Lance know? Dino asked. I told him yesterday. If hed had to hear it on the news he wouldnt have liked it. When do you start? One second after Kate takes the oath, so I wont be flying back to New York with you. Ive got to find an apartment here as soon as possible. Stone had a thought. How about in Georgetown, on Pennsylvania Avenue? Sounds good. Do you know somebody? I do. Let me call him. Stone took his cell phone into the bedroom and called Bruce Willard, who had briefly been his client. Bruce had an antique shop on Pennsylvania Avenue, and he lived in an apartment above the store. He had also recently inherited a house in Georgetown from his lover, so he would be moving soon. Hello, Stone, Bruce said. You in town for the inaugural? I am, and Ive brought a friend along who is going to be serving in an important job on the White House staff. She needs a place to live. Are you moving out of your apartment? I moved a week ago, and I need a good tenant. I recommend her highly. When can she see it? Ill be here all afternoon. Ill send her over in a couple of hours. Her name is Holly Barker. Ill look forward to meeting her. They hung up, and Stone went back to the living room. You can see the place after lunch. Tell me about it. Ive never seen it, but the owner has very good taste. He owns a high-end antique shop, and the apartment is over that. He inherited a Georgetown house from his friend, and hes already moved out of the apartment. Benny will drive you over there. Any idea how much the rent is? None at all. Make sure he likes you. Ill try. HOLLYS LIMO PULLED UP before the shop, and she took a moment to look it over before she went up the steps. The building was wide, and she took that to mean that the apartment would be, too. She walked into the shop and a handsome, middle-aged man greeted her and introduced himself. Hi, Im Bruce Willard. I expect youre Holly Barker. I am, Holly said, looking around. What a beautiful shop. Thank you. Would you like to see the apartment? Yes, thank you. He took her into the hallway to the elevator and pressed a button. There are two apartments. My shop manager lives on the second floor, and the third and fourth floors were my apartment until last week. The house Im moving into is fully furnished, so I can leave whatever of my things you might like. The door opened into a foyer, and that into a beautiful living room. A spiral staircase rose to the floor above. The elevator goes to the fourth floor, too, which will make it easier to move in. Stone says youre going to work at the White House. In what position? I cant say, until the president has announced it publicly, Holly replied. It happened only yesterday. Im ex-army, Bruce said. So am I. I commanded an MP company and later was exec of a regiment. Bruce grinned at that and showed her the well-equipped kitchen and the study, then he took her upstairs, where there were two bedrooms with baths. Its all wonderful, Holly said. Can a government employee afford it? Bruce mentioned a number. Thats very generous of you, Holly said. I want the right person. How can I not fall for an ex-army officer with a White House job, who arrives in a limo? Holly offered her hand. Done, then. When would you like to move in? Ive already packed some boxes in my New York apartment. Ill call the movers and tell them to start moving me. Stone and my other friends are going back to the city the day after tomorrow. Id like to start sleeping here then, if thats all right. Ill have the housekeeper clean it within an inch of its life, Bruce said. Oh, the rent includes cleaning, electricity, and gas. Holly couldnt help it; she hugged him. Promise not to let me buy too many things in your shop. Ill promise you no such thing, only good prices. He took her downstairs and gave her the keys to the building and the apartment, and she wrote him a check for the first months rent. Bruce said her lease would start the first of the month, and he wouldnt take a security deposit. Holly burst into the suite at the Hay-Adams and threw herself at Stone. Its perfect! How did you do that? You did it. I just referred you. Im moving in the day after tomorrow! Im delighted for you. I cant tell you how much trouble this is going to save me. I wont have to sneak off work to hunt for an apartment. They dined in the hotels restaurant that evening. The place was choked with Democrats from all over the country, with a sprinkling of senators and congressmen thrown in for spice. Revue de presse Praise for Hot Pursuit Fans will enjoy the vicarious luxury ride. Publishers Weekly More Praise for Stuart Woods Stuart Woods is a no-nonsense, slam-bang storyteller. Chicago Tribune A world-class mystery writer... I try to put Woodss books down and I cant. Houston Chronicle Mr. Woods, like his characters, has an appealing way of making things nice and clear. The New York Times Woods certainly knows how to keep the pages turning. Booklist Since 1981, readers have not been able

to get their fill of Stuart Woods New York Times bestselling novels of suspense. Orlando Sentinel
Woodss Stone Barrington is a guilty pleasure...hes also an addiction thats harder to kick than heroin. Contra Costa
Times(California)