[Stone Barrington 03] • Dead in the Water

In *Dead in the Water*, **Stone Barrington**—New York attorney and former cop—finds himself entangled in a deadly Caribbean mystery while sailing in St. Marks. When a beautiful woman, **Allison Manning**, is accused of murdering her wealthy husband aboard their yacht, Stone steps in to defend her.

But the tropical paradise hides dark secrets: corrupt officials, a web of deceit, and a trial rigged against Allison. As Stone navigates the island's treacherous political waters, he uncovers a conspiracy involving insurance fraud, adultery, and cold-blooded murder. With his wit, charm, and legal savvy, Stone races against time to clear Allison's name—before they both end up *dead in the water*.

Woods delivers a sun-soaked thriller packed with courtroom drama, steamy romance, and the sharp, fast-paced storytelling that made Stone Barrington a household name.

Chapter 1

Stone Barrington wakes up disoriented aboard a yacht in St. Marks, recalling the chaotic events that led him there. The previous night, his girlfriend, Arrington Carter, failed to meet him for their flight due to a last-minute work opportunity involving Hollywood star Vance Calder. Though disappointed, Stone reluctantly agrees to travel ahead alone while Arrington promises to join him the next day. His journey is plagued by delays, leaving him exhausted upon arrival. Despite the setbacks, he remains optimistic about their planned vacation and even contemplates proposing to Arrington

during the trip, reflecting on their deepening relationship.

Upon boarding the chartered yacht, Stone settles in and explores the modest amenities, including a small television and navigation equipment. He notices a distressed yacht, *Expansive*, entering the harbor, steered by a striking young woman with a tattered mainsail. Intrigued, he considers offering assistance but hesitates due to customs protocols. The woman’s solitary presence and the yacht’s condition pique his curiosity, but he refrains from intervening. Instead, he focuses on enjoying the tropical setting, swimming in the warm water and soaking up the sun, all while musing about his relationship with Arrington.

Stone’s thoughts drift back to Arrington’s sudden work commitment, which disrupted their plans. Though he tries to be supportive, he feels a pang of resentment, especially given the rarity of their time together. The chapter highlights his internal conflict between understanding her career ambitions and his own desire for intimacy and commitment. His decision to propose signifies a turning point in their relationship, as he grapples with balancing his bachelor instincts with the growing appeal of a shared future.

The chapter ends with a sense of unease as Stone observes the customs officer rushing to the police shack after inspecting *Expansive*. This subtle hint of impending trouble contrasts with the otherwise idyllic setting, foreshadowing potential complications. Stone’s relaxed demeanor is momentarily disrupted, leaving the reader curious about the mysterious yacht and its lone occupant. The blend of personal reflection and external intrigue sets the stage for the unfolding narrative, blending romance with suspense.

Chapter 2

Stone Barrington, dressed in light tropical attire, enjoys the warm January evening at a bar in St. Marks. He orders a piña colada and notices a news report about a blizzard in New York, realizing his girlfriend's flight is canceled. The bartender, Thomas Hardy, reveals he was once a NYPD officer who recognized Stone from his time on the force. The two bond over their shared background, and Thomas offers Stone use of his phone to call his girlfriend, who rebooks her flight for the next day.

As the bar fills with customers, Stone observes Sir Winston Sutherland, the island's minister of justice, dining with a companion. Thomas explains that Sutherland is a powerful figure with ambitions to become prime minister. Their conversation shifts to a blond woman from a nearby yacht, who arrived alone after her husband disappeared during their Atlantic voyage. Thomas hints that she may face scrutiny from local authorities, particularly Sutherland, regarding her husband's mysterious absence.

Thomas reveals that the woman will appear before a coroner's jury the next day, with Sutherland leading the inquiry. Stone finds the situation intriguing, noting the potential challenges she faces in proving her innocence. The chapter underscores the island's tendency to suspect foul play, adding tension to the woman's predicament. Stone's curiosity about her grows, but he decides against approaching her that night, feeling too intoxicated for a proper introduction.

The chapter blends Stone's leisurely tropical experience with undercurrents of mystery and local politics. His interactions with Thomas provide insight into the island's culture and power dynamics, while the unresolved question of the missing husband sets the stage for future developments. Stone's personal concerns about his girlfriend's delayed arrival contrast with the larger intrigue unfolding around him, creating a layered narrative.

Chapter 3

The chapter opens with Stone arriving at the Markstown Meeting Hall for the coroner's inquest into the death of Paul Phillips Manning. The setting is informal, with a jury of six men and the coroner seated at a card table. Allison Manning, the deceased's wife, is present in a black dress, exuding a quiet dignity. Sir Winston Sutherland, dressed formally, oversees the proceedings. The coroner calls the inquest to order, and Allison is sworn in to testify. Stone observes her composed demeanor, wondering if she understands the gravity of the situation. The scene is set for a detailed recounting of the events leading to Paul's death.

Allison Manning begins her testimony by providing background on her marriage and their life in Greenwich, Connecticut. She describes their extensive sailing journey, starting from Newport, Rhode Island, to various European and Mediterranean destinations, before heading toward Antigua. Her narrative is precise, detailing their route and the technical aspects of their yacht. The journey was marked by adventure until the fateful incident ten days out of Puerto Rico. Allison's account sets the stage for the tragic event, emphasizing their shared passion for sailing and the routine nature of their voyage before things took a turn.

The crux of Allison's testimony revolves around the incident at sea. She explains how a malfunction in the roller-reefing gear required someone to climb the mast. Despite Paul's illness, she volunteered, as he was too unwell to go himself. While she was at the mast's top, Paul collapsed, showing signs of a heart attack. Allison, stranded and terrified, watched helplessly as he lost consciousness. Her emotional recounting highlights her desperation and the brutal reality of being unable to assist her husband. The jury listens intently as she describes the harrowing hours she spent clinging to the mast before mustering the courage to descend.

Allison concludes her testimony by recounting her perilous descent from the mast and her subsequent collapse from exhaustion. She admits to fainting before finally checking on Paul, who was by then unresponsive. Her narrative paints a vivid picture of isolation and trauma, underscoring the helplessness she felt during the ordeal. The chapter ends with her poised yet emotionally raw delivery, leaving the inquest—and the reader—awaiting further details. The testimony sets the foundation for the legal and emotional complexities that will unfold in the subsequent proceedings.



Chapter 4

In Chapter 4, Stone Barrington and Allison Manning retreat to her luxurious yacht to discuss the ongoing coroner’s inquest into her husband’s death. Over sandwiches, Stone explains the three possible verdicts: natural causes, homicide, or an open verdict. He warns that a homicide ruling could lead to murder charges against Allison, though she vehemently denies any involvement. Stone advises her to seek a recess to prepare her defense, but Allison, eager to return home, resists the idea, confident the jury will believe her account of her husband’s natural death.

Stone emphasizes the risks of rushing the legal process, especially given Sir Winston Sutherland’s role as the island’s justice minister and his political ambitions. Allison remains defiant, dismissing concerns about her husband’s diary as evidence. Stone probes further, asking if the police took additional items from the yacht, but Allison insists only the logbook and diary were removed. With limited time, they focus on building her case, though Stone remains cautious about Sir Winston’s potential to sway the jury with contrary evidence.

During a brief pause, Stone admires the yacht’s opulent design, noting its high-end craftsmanship and equipment, which hint at the couple’s wealth. Allison reappears, refreshed and ready to return to the inquest. As they head back, the tension mounts, with Stone carrying documents Allison provided, though the chapter leaves their strategy unresolved. The scene underscores the precariousness of Allison’s position and Stone’s role as her reluctant advocate.

The chapter concludes with Stone and Allison reentering the Markstown meeting hall, where Sir Winston resumes his questioning. The unresolved tension highlights the stakes of the inquest and Allison’s determination to clear her name quickly, despite Stone’s warnings. The interplay between legal strategy, personal urgency, and political undercurrents sets the stage for the next phase of the proceedings, leaving readers

anticipating the outcome of Sir Winston’s scrutiny.



Chapter 5

The chapter opens with Sir Winston aggressively questioning Allison Manning about her husband’s wealth, implying she may have killed him for financial gain. Allison defends herself, explaining she was uninvolved in their finances and emphasizing her husband’s physical strength, making it unlikely she could overpower him. The tension escalates as Sir Winston shifts focus to her husband’s habits on the yacht, suggesting Allison could have pushed him overboard while he urinated. Allison dismisses the insinuation with disdain, and the jury reacts with amusement, though Stone Barrington grows concerned about her assertive tone.

Stone intervenes, requesting permission to question Allison on her behalf. He challenges the informal nature of the proceedings and gains the coroner’s approval. Stone methodically dismantles Sir Winston’s accusations by establishing Paul Manning’s profession as a writer and his practice of keeping detailed notes, which Sir Winston had misrepresented as a diary. Stone then introduces medical evidence, revealing Paul’s poor health, including dangerously high cholesterol and a family history of heart disease, suggesting he likely died of natural causes.

Stone concludes his argument by portraying Allison as a courageous survivor who endured a tragic ordeal at sea. His compelling presentation leaves Sir Winston deflated and the jury silent. The coroner dismisses the jury to deliberate, while Stone and Allison retreat to a local bar, where she expresses gratitude for his defense. Stone remains cautiously optimistic about the verdict, having systematically addressed all suspicions raised against her.

The chapter highlights the clash between Allison’s vulnerability and Sir Winston’s accusatory tactics, ultimately undermined by Stone’s strategic intervention. Through logical reasoning and evidence, Stone shifts the narrative, casting doubt on the murder theory and emphasizing the plausibility of Paul’s natural death. The scene

underscores themes of justice, perception, and the power of a well-constructed defense, leaving the reader anticipating the jury’s decision.



Chapter 6

In Chapter 6, Allison Manning receives her husband’s death certificate, which reveals an "open verdict" due to insufficient evidence to determine the cause of death. Stone, her advisor, urgently advises her to leave St. Marks immediately, suspecting that Sir Winston Sutherland may still target her. Thomas Hardy, a former NYC policeman, confirms the danger and arranges a hasty escape via a flight from Antigua. The tension escalates as they prepare for Allison’s departure, with Stone emphasizing the need for speed to avoid potential arrest.

Allison insists on retrieving her passport and belongings despite Stone’s warnings. Thomas provides his car for their getaway, and Stone drives her to the airport where Chester’s plane awaits. During the ride, Allison expresses concerns about legal repercussions at home, and Stone recommends contacting his prestigious law firm, Woodman and Weld, for potential future legal battles. He also advises her to arrange for her boat’s removal from St. Marks to avoid further complications.

As they arrive at the airport, Allison thanks Stone with an unexpected kiss, hinting at her lingering attraction. However, their plans are abruptly interrupted when two policemen arrive with a warrant for Allison’s arrest, charging her with murder. Stone, though shocked, assures her he will secure a local lawyer and meet her at the courthouse the next morning. Allison is taken away, leaving Stone to retrieve her belongings and ponder the dire situation she now faces.

The chapter ends with Stone reflecting on Allison’s grim predicament and his inevitable role in assisting her. The sudden arrest underscores the looming threat posed by Sir Winston and the corrupt legal system in St. Marks. Stone’s protective instincts kick in as he resolves to help Allison navigate the coming legal battle, though the odds seem stacked against them. The chapter masterfully blends suspense, urgency, and emotional tension, setting the stage for a high-stakes confrontation.

Chapter 7

Stone returns to Markstown, contemplating how to assist Allison Manning, who faces serious legal trouble. Realizing local lawyers are reluctant to oppose Sir Winston, a powerful figure seeking a high-profile conviction, Stone considers hiring a British barrister. He meets Thomas Hardy, who provides a list of potential lawyers, but all refuse due to Sir Winston’s influence. The only remaining option is Sir Leslie Hewitt, an elderly, semi-retired barrister with a personal grudge against Sir Winston, though his competence is questionable due to his advanced age and occasional lapses in clarity.

Thomas explains Leslie’s background: once a brilliant lawyer, he is now in his eighties and hasn’t practiced in years. Despite his decline, Leslie might be the only one willing to represent Allison temporarily until a more qualified barrister can be brought in from London. Stone worries about Allison’s ability to afford such an expense, but Thomas insists they visit Leslie immediately. They drive to Leslie’s beachside cottage, learning about his family’s history and the political turmoil that left him with little but his home.

Upon meeting Leslie, Stone finds him eccentric but sharp enough to understand the urgency of the situation. Leslie agrees to handle the initial hearing, though he doubts his ability to try a full murder case. He suggests bail might be possible if Allison’s yacht is used as collateral, but warns the amount could be steep. Leslie insists on meeting Allison before the hearing and arranges to convene at the courthouse the next morning, emphasizing the need for preparation.

The chapter ends with Leslie’s grim revelation that St. Marks still enforces capital punishment, and hanging is a real possibility for serious crimes. Stone is unsettled by this, realizing the stakes are higher than he anticipated. The urgency to secure competent legal representation for Allison intensifies, as Leslie’s limitations and the island’s harsh legal system pose significant challenges to her defense.

Chapter 8

Stone, restless and anxious, spends a sleepless night aboard his yacht before gathering clothing and personal items for his client, Allison Manning, from her boat, *Expansive*. Despite his belief in her innocence, he searches the yacht for any incriminating evidence, wearing gloves to avoid leaving fingerprints. His internal conflict between respecting her privacy and uncovering the truth peaks when he attempts, unsuccessfully, to open her locked briefcase. Ultimately, he abandons the effort, deciding it’s not his place to invade her privacy further, and leaves with the gathered items.

Stone heads to the Shipwright’s Arms, where he contacts his colleague, Bill Eggers, in New York, urgently seeking an English barrister to defend Allison in her murder trial. Eggers connects him with a high-priced London lawyer demanding a hefty retainer and hourly fee, which Stone reluctantly considers, knowing Allison’s financial situation is unclear. Meanwhile, Thomas Hardy reassures Stone about their local ally, Sir Leslie Hewitt, despite concerns about his reliability. The financial and logistical challenges of securing top-tier legal help weigh heavily on Stone as he prepares for the upcoming hearing.

At Government House, Stone, Thomas, and Sir Leslie meet Allison, who appears exhausted and distressed. Sir Leslie outlines the hearing’s informal procedures, explaining that the judge will rely on the prosecutor’s affidavit rather than requiring evidence presentation—a stark departure from standard legal practices. Stone is shocked by this lack of due process, but Sir Leslie insists the system operates on streamlined, albeit questionable, protocols. The focus shifts to securing bail, with Allison’s yacht potentially serving as collateral, though the odds seem stacked against her.

The chapter highlights the tension between Stone’s commitment to justice and the flawed legal system of St. Marks, where efficiency overrides fairness. His frustration grows as he navigates bureaucratic hurdles, financial constraints, and ethical dilemmas. The stage is set for a contentious hearing, with Stone and Sir Leslie scrambling to mount a defense in an environment where the rules are opaque and stacked in favor of the prosecution. Allison’s fate hangs in the balance as Stone grapples with the limitations of the local judiciary.



Chapter 9

The chapter opens with Allison being escorted into the courtroom, where Stone Barrington, Sir Leslie, and Thomas Hardy take their positions. The judge, a distinguished black man in traditional robes and wig, presides over the proceedings. Sir Winston Sutherland, leading the prosecution, formally requests Allison's trial for murder, presenting evidence to support the charge. The judge then inquires about legal representation, and Sir Leslie announces Stone as his assistant, despite Stone's initial reluctance and unfamiliarity with local court customs, including wearing a wig.

Stone's admission to the St. Marks bar becomes a lighthearted moment as he humorously defends his trial record, winning the judge's approval. The judge grants Stone temporary bar privileges, allowing him to assist Sir Leslie. The focus shifts to bail negotiations, where Sir Leslie proposes Allison's yacht as collateral. The judge agrees but imposes strict conditions, warning Allison that fleeing would result in forfeiture and automatic conviction. Stone is stunned by the severity of the terms, highlighting the high stakes of the case.

The judge sets the trial date for just six days later, catching Stone off guard. He protests, arguing the defense needs more time to prepare and intends to bring in a London barrister. However, the judge dismisses his concerns, insisting the record cannot be altered. Sir Leslie, seemingly unfazed, asserts his extensive experience and authority, leaving Stone frustrated and confused. The chapter underscores the tension between Stone's expectations and the rigid legal procedures of St. Marks.

The chapter concludes with Stone realizing the gravity of the situation as Thomas Hardy appears distressed in the front row. Allison, however, remains oddly cheerful, oblivious to the mounting challenges. The scene sets the stage for a rushed and contentious trial, with Stone and Sir Leslie at odds over strategy and preparedness. The abrupt ending leaves readers questioning Allison's demeanor and the defense's

ability to navigate the impending trial.



Chapter 10

The chapter opens with Stone, Thomas, and Allison leaving jail, where Allison had been held. Despite her incarceration, Allison describes her experience as surprisingly tolerable, even mentioning interesting conversations with a fellow inmate. Stone, exhausted from stress, struggles to stay awake during the drive. The group arrives at a restaurant, where an insurance investigator approaches Allison, offering financial support for legal expenses. Stone excuses himself to make urgent phone calls, signaling the mounting pressure of the case.

Stone contacts his colleague Bill Eggers, expressing frustration over the seemingly unjust legal proceedings against Allison, who faces a potential death sentence. He reveals his concerns about the erratic behavior of their local barrister and the tight timeline before the trial. Eggers offers support, but Stone acknowledges the dire situation, emphasizing the need for swift action. The conversation underscores the gravity of Allison’s predicament and Stone’s determination to fight against the odds.

Next, Stone calls Bob Cantor, a retired cop, to enlist his help in gathering evidence. He instructs Cantor to travel to the Canary Islands to investigate the last known whereabouts of Allison and her late husband, Paul Manning, aboard their yacht, *Expansive*. Stone hopes to find witnesses who can testify to the couple’s harmonious relationship, countering the prosecution’s narrative. Cantor agrees but expresses skepticism about the feasibility of proving Allison’s innocence without direct evidence.

Stone then coordinates logistics with his secretary, arranging Cantor’s travel and requesting a barrister’s robe for himself. The chapter concludes with Stone confronting Allison, indicating a serious conversation about her case. His grim demeanor hints at the escalating stakes and the need for full transparency between them. The tension builds as Stone prepares to confront the harsh realities of the trial ahead.

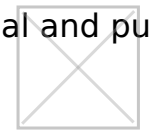
Chapter 11

In Chapter 11, Stone delivers a blunt assessment of Allison Manning’s dire legal situation. He explains that Sir Winston Sutherland, a politically motivated official, has orchestrated an open verdict in the coroner’s jury, enabling murder charges against her. Stone warns that the trial is unavoidable and could result in the death penalty, given St. Marks’ swift and harsh judicial process. Allison, initially confident in her innocence, grows alarmed as Stone details the rapid timeline: conviction, a 24-hour appeal window, and execution within days. The gravity of her predicament sinks in, leaving her visibly shaken and desperate for solutions.

Stone outlines two potential strategies to counter the charges. First, he emphasizes mounting a strong legal defense, though he acknowledges limitations, such as the judge’s refusal to allow an external barrister. He reveals that an investigator is en route to the Canary Islands to gather evidence about Allison’s relationship with her late husband, Paul. Second, Stone proposes leveraging international media pressure to undermine Sir Winston’s political motives. By portraying Allison as a victim of a corrupt system, they hope to sway public opinion and force the government to reconsider her case. Allison hesitates, wary of the spotlight, but Stone insists it’s her only chance.

The chapter delves into the logistics of the media campaign. Stone contacts Bill Eggers to hire a PR firm, aiming to flood global news outlets with Allison’s story. He envisions sensational headlines highlighting her plight as an innocent American targeted by a backward regime. Eggers agrees to mobilize resources, including engaging politicians and 60 Minutes, to amplify pressure on St. Marks. Stone stresses urgency, given the tight trial schedule, and cautions against revealing damaging information about Allison or Paul. The plan hinges on portraying her sympathetically to garner international support.

Allison remains conflicted but ultimately consents to the PR strategy, recognizing the stakes. Stone arranges for her to transfer funds to cover the campaign’s costs, while also cautioning her about potential complications with her insurance payout. The chapter ends with Stone and Eggers plotting to escalate the media blitz, including involving U.S. politicians and exaggerating political tensions to galvanize action. The tone is tense and pragmatic, underscoring the race against time to save Allison’s life through both legal and public relations maneuvers.



Chapter 12

Stone Barrington, weary and frustrated after an unanswered call to Arrington, retreats to his chartered yacht for rest. Upon waking at dusk, he is greeted by Allison, a woman staying nearby, who invites him to dinner with the condition that they avoid discussing her problems. Stone agrees, freshens up, and joins her on her yacht. The two share lighthearted banter, setting a relaxed tone for the evening as Allison prepares dinner and Stone mixes martinis, showcasing their chemistry and mutual comfort.

As they cook and drink, Allison reveals her coping mechanism for adversity: temporarily setting aside her troubles to gain clarity the next day. Stone admires her resilience and shares snippets of his own background, including his career shift from the NYPD to law after an injury. Their conversation flows easily, blending personal anecdotes with playful flirtation. Allison’s cheerful demeanor contrasts with Stone’s lingering disappointment over Arrington, subtly highlighting his emotional vulnerability.

The dinner progresses with smoked salmon, chicken, and fine wine, further easing the tension between them. Allison’s playful teasing about Stone’s romantic life and her bold questions about his income underscore their growing intimacy. The atmosphere becomes increasingly charged as Allison lowers the lights and unties her blouse, signaling her desire to abandon their attorney-client relationship for the night. Stone, fueled by alcohol and attraction, readily agrees, surrendering to the moment.

Their physical connection is immediate and intense, culminating in a passionate encounter. Afterwards, Allison leads Stone to her cabin, hinting at more to come. The chapter closes with their mutual satisfaction and anticipation for further intimacy, marking a turning point in their relationship as Stone temporarily sets aside his heartache over Arrington. The scene captures their shared vulnerability and the escapism they find in each other.

Chapter 13

The chapter opens with Stone Barrington waking up beside Allison Manning, his client, after a night of intimacy. Reflecting on their impulsive connection, Stone acknowledges his own vulnerabilities and Allison's possible motivations—whether driven by fear of her impending legal peril or simple desire. Their playful morning is interrupted by a knock from Hilary Kramer, a reporter from *The New York Times*, who has arrived unexpectedly to interview Allison. Stone advises Allison to meet Kramer discreetly, and they arrange to talk at a nearby pub, where Stone plans to join them as her attorney.

At the Shipwright's Arms, Stone introduces himself to Kramer, explaining his role in Allison's case. Kramer reveals she flew in after hearing about the story on the AP wire. When Allison arrives, the reporter begins a thorough interview, probing the details of Allison's legal situation. Stone strategically hints that media pressure could influence the outcome, subtly urging Kramer to investigate further. He also alludes to potential bias from Sir Winston Sutherland, St. Marks' Minister of Justice, sparking Kramer's curiosity.

Kramer's skepticism grows as Stone and Thomas, the pub owner, encourage her to confront Sutherland directly. Stone offers off-the-record insights into St. Marks' flawed justice system, leaving Kramer stunned. Realizing the story's gravity, she decides to extend her stay, arranging for a room and transportation to Government House. Thomas assists with logistics, while Kramer secures photos of Allison and Stone for her article, planning to contact Allison's late husband's agent for additional material.

As Kramer departs to pursue the story, Allison questions whether the interview went well. Stone reassures her, noting Kramer's engagement but warning they must maintain a professional demeanor in public. Despite the tension, their private connection remains undeniable, though Stone humorously suggests abstaining from intimacy—a plan he quickly doubts they'll follow. The chapter ends with a sense of

cautious optimism as the media’s involvement could shift the legal battle in Allison’s favor.



Chapter 14

Stone receives a phone call from Bob Cantor in New York, who provides background information on Allison Manning and her husband, Paul. While details about Allison are scarce, Cantor reveals that Paul is a successful writer with a lucrative book contract, a lavish lifestyle, and significant assets, including a multi-million-dollar home and a yacht. However, Paul also carries substantial debts, including a large mortgage and credit card balances. The conversation suggests that while Paul appears wealthy, his financial situation is more precarious than it seems, with a net worth estimated at five to six million dollars.

Cantor further discloses that Paul has no criminal record and only one ex-wife, with a brief marriage that ended before his financial success. Paul’s career began in journalism before he transitioned to full-time writing, earning accolades and awards. The call ends abruptly as Cantor must board his flight, leaving Stone with preliminary but inconclusive information. Stone expresses frustration to Thomas, the bartender, about the lack of progress in Allison’s case, though the background on Paul provides some context.

Thomas mentions increased media interest in Allison’s case, with more reporters arriving in St. Marks. Stone, concerned about Allison’s privacy, arranges for security at the marina with Thomas’s help, leveraging his connections with local police. Their conversation shifts to Thomas’s large family, highlighting their prosperity in St. Marks, which adds a personal touch to the otherwise tense narrative.

The chapter concludes with Stone receiving a fax from Arrington, who informs him she is leaving for Los Angeles indefinitely. Her detached tone unsettles Stone, prompting him to react emotionally by tearing up the fax. His resentment fuels a resolve to continue his affair with Allison, reflecting his personal turmoil. The chapter ends with Stone returning to work on Allison’s case, blending professional duty with his

unresolved personal emotions.



Chapter 15

Stone, preparing for Allison’s trial, falls asleep due to exhaustion and depression. He is abruptly awakened by Thomas, who informs him that two prominent journalists—Jim Forrester from *The New Yorker* and Jake Burrows from *60 Minutes*—are waiting downstairs. Stone hurriedly freshens up and meets them, where Burrows immediately demands an exclusive interview. Stone negotiates, insisting the *60 Minutes* segment must air the following Sunday to maximize its impact on the trial. Burrows reluctantly agrees to secure a written guarantee, while Stone allows Forrester to observe the interview for his magazine piece.

The tension between the journalists highlights the high stakes of Allison’s case. Burrows emphasizes the prestige of *60 Minutes*, but Stone counters that timing is critical to save Allison’s life. He plans a media blitz, including a press conference, to keep her story in the public eye. Forrester, meanwhile, reveals he previously met Allison and her late husband, Paul, in the Canary Islands, offering potential insights into their relationship. Stone recognizes Forrester’s firsthand account as valuable and shifts focus to questioning him about the couple.

Forrester describes Paul as charismatic and Allison as intelligent and charming, noting their apparent mutual affection. His recollections suggest a stable, loving relationship, contradicting any motive for Allison to harm Paul. Stone probes further, asking about the time Forrester spent with them, including a dinner aboard their boat. Forrester’s observations could bolster Allison’s defense by painting her as a devoted partner. The chapter ends with Stone eager to delve deeper into Forrester’s experiences, seeing them as a potential breakthrough in the case.

The chapter underscores Stone’s strategic use of media to influence public opinion and the legal outcome. His negotiations with Burrows and Forrester reveal his ability to balance competing interests while prioritizing Allison’s survival. Meanwhile, Forrester’s

testimony offers a glimpse into Allison’s character and relationship dynamics, which may prove pivotal in court. The interplay between legal strategy and media manipulation drives the narrative forward, setting the stage for the trial’s unfolding drama.



Chapter 16

Stone meets with Jake Burrows and reporter Chris Wheaton from *60 Minutes* at a local bar to discuss the upcoming interview with his client, Allison Manning. Wheaton, a sharp and camera-ready journalist, prefers not to meet Allison until filming to keep the interview fresh. Stone agrees to the open-ended discussion but realizes the extended taping could lead to selective editing, potentially skewing the narrative. He emphasizes Allison's need for breaks if overwhelmed, while Wheaton remains focused on the story's potential.

The conversation shifts to Stone's unexpected involvement in Allison's case, which began when he attended her inquest as a bystander. Wheaton probes his motives, questioning why a New York lawyer is handling a local case. Stone explains his pro bono role and the bizarre nature of St. Marks' legal system, urging Wheaton to highlight its irregularities. She finds the system outrageous and hints at broader coverage, including the upcoming trial, while Stone hopes media scrutiny will benefit Allison.

Wheaton's questioning turns personal as she digs into Stone's background, referencing his past as a cop and recent legal successes. She subtly challenges the coincidence of his presence in St. Marks, but Stone defends his credibility. The tension rises when Wheaton mentions Stone's girlfriend, Arrington Carter, and her association with actor Vance Calder. Stone remains composed, though irritated by Wheaton's probing.

By the end of the dinner, Wheaton decides to stay for the trial, signaling her commitment to the story. Stone feels cautiously optimistic, recognizing the potential media leverage but aware of Wheaton's relentless approach. The chapter underscores the delicate balance between Stone's legal strategy and the media's influence, with Allison's fate hanging in the balance.

Chapter 17

After dinner, Stone Barrington is approached by two men, Henry and Arliss, who are providing security for the marina. They verify his identity and discuss their roles in protecting Allison Manning, a client Stone is representing. Stone suggests they position themselves more visibly to deter unwanted visitors. The men agree, and Stone heads to his yacht, where Allison unexpectedly joins him in bed, revealing her playful and reckless nature by crossing the dock naked despite the presence of a nearby camera crew.

Stone wakes to find the *60 Minutes* crew arriving early for an interview with Allison. Panicked, he tries to delay them while Allison, still naked, sneaks back to her own yacht via the water. Stone attempts to maintain composure, pretending Allison is just waking up, but her antics nearly expose their intimate relationship. The crew leaves briefly, giving Allison time to prepare, though she teasingly suggests another intimate encounter before the interview, much to Stone’s exasperation.

By eight o’clock, Allison is miraculously ready, appearing fresh and professional in a modest dress that belies her earlier behavior. She greets the crew warmly, while Stone struggles to calm his nerves after the morning’s chaos. The contrast between Allison’s composed public demeanor and her private impulsiveness highlights the tension between her personal life and the high-stakes media scrutiny she faces.

The chapter captures the duality of Allison’s character—charming yet reckless—and Stone’s role as both her lawyer and reluctant accomplice in her escapades. Their dynamic adds humor and tension, especially as Stone navigates the professional risks of their relationship. The arrival of *60 Minutes* underscores the public spotlight on Allison’s case, making Stone’s efforts to maintain control all the more precarious.

Chapter 18

Stone watches nervously as Allison Manning, a widow accused of murdering her husband, undergoes a televised interview with reporter Chris Wheaton. Despite his fears, Allison handles the initial sailing-related questions with ease, explaining how she managed to sail their yacht alone after her husband's death. Jim Forrester, a journalist from *The New Yorker*, observes quietly. Wheaton shifts to probing Allison's marriage, searching for motives, but Allison remains composed, answering candidly. Stone is impressed by her resilience, though he remains wary of the interview's potential pitfalls.

The interview takes a sharper turn when Wheaton asks about Allison's financial situation, including her husband's life insurance and their mortgaged assets. Allison admits ignorance of their finances, emphasizing her domestic role. She expresses uncertainty about keeping their large house or yacht, citing emotional pain. Her tearful response strikes Stone as genuine, reinforcing his belief in her innocence. The interview continues smoothly, with Allison maintaining her poise through multiple tape changes, leaving Wheaton and the crew visibly impressed.

After the interview, Allison casually engages with Wheaton and Forrester, agreeing to a follow-up discussion with the latter. As they depart, Wheaton privately praises Allison's performance but shocks Stone by confessing she believes Allison is guilty. Wheaton, drawing on her experience interviewing accused criminals, insists Allison's flawless demeanor masks guilt. Stone defends Allison, challenging Wheaton to find inconsistencies, but she dismisses his arguments, attributing her certainty to intuition. Despite her personal doubts, Wheaton assures Stone the broadcast will portray Allison sympathetically, aligning with his goals.

Wheaton's final warning leaves Stone stunned: she cautions him against emotional or physical involvement with Allison, labeling her "dangerous." Stone is left speechless,

grappling with Wheaton’s stark contrast between Allison’s public image and her private suspicions. The chapter ends with Stone’s internal conflict—his professional duty to defend Allison clashes with Wheaton’s unsettling verdict, casting doubt on his client’s innocence and his own judgment.



Chapter 19

Stone Barrington, while having lunch with journalist Hilary Kramer, is interrupted by a phone call from Bob Cantor, a private investigator. Cantor reports his findings on the Mannings' activities in Las Palmas, revealing that the couple had a heated argument before their departure, centered on their sailing route. Additionally, Paul Manning had a specific rubber dinghy, a Parker Sportster, flown in from Barcelona after theirs was stolen. Cantor notes the Mannings' routine activities in Las Palmas but finds no further leads, prompting Stone to instruct him to return and continue researching Manning’s background ahead of the upcoming trial.

Stone then questions journalist Jim Forrester, who confirms dining with the Mannings on their last night in Las Palmas. Forrester recalls their disagreement over sailing routes but denies witnessing a full-blown fight. He corroborates the detail about the Parker Sportster dinghy, noting Paul’s meticulousness about boat equipment. Stone, intrigued by the dinghy’s significance, arranges for his secretary to gather more information on it. Meanwhile, Forrester’s casual demeanor and acceptance of a drink from Stone hint at their professional yet friendly dynamic.

Back at his table, Stone observes Allison Manning being interviewed by Hilary Kramer. Kramer’s positive impression of Allison as honest and brave aligns with Stone’s own views, contrasting with the skepticism of others like Chris Wheaton. Stone subtly probes Kramer for any inconsistencies in Allison’s story, but Kramer finds none, reinforcing Stone’s confidence in his client’s credibility. This exchange highlights Stone’s strategic approach to building a strong defense for the trial.

The chapter underscores Stone’s methodical investigation into the Mannings’ past, focusing on key details like the dinghy and the couple’s argument. His interactions with Cantor, Forrester, and Kramer reveal a blend of professional diligence and personal intuition. As the trial approaches, Stone’s efforts to uncover the truth and

bolster Allison’s defense take center stage, setting the tone for the legal battle ahead.



Chapter 20

The chapter opens with the arrival of media personnel eager to cover Allison Manning's case, prompting Stone Barrington to delay the press conference until the next morning. To manage the growing crowd, Stone increases security at the marina while Allison, visibly anxious, drinks martinis to calm her nerves. Stone reassures her, emphasizing the importance of a clear-headed presentation the following day. The media’s intense interest is evident as they charter flights to attend, setting the stage for a high-stakes public appearance.

That evening, Stone cooks dinner for Allison aboard her yacht, a rare gesture that lightens the mood. Their conversation reveals Allison’s past with her late husband, Paul, who never cooked for her, contrasting with Stone’s willingness to care for her. The shared meal and banter provide a brief respite from the looming press conference, though the underlying tension remains. Outside, the bar is crowded with journalists, but police ensure their distance, allowing Allison and Stone a moment of privacy before the storm of publicity.

The next morning, Stone and Allison face a chaotic press conference at the Shipwright’s Arms, where a large crowd of reporters and cameras awaits. Stone sets ground rules, announcing that Allison will only make a statement and take no questions. He delivers a detailed account of the legal proceedings in St. Marks, highlighting the unusual judicial system and the challenges Allison faces. The media’s aggressive questioning focuses on the legal intricacies, but Stone maintains control, emphasizing the need to protect Allison from self-incrimination.

Allison then steps forward to share her story, recounting Paul’s sudden death at sea and her struggle to sail alone to St. Marks. Her emotional testimony captivates the audience, but the press conference ends abruptly as Stone enforces his no-questions rule. The media rushes to photograph Allison’s yacht, while Stone escorts her to

safety, leaving the journalists clamoring for more. The chapter closes with the pair retreating to Stone’s rented room, awaiting the fallout from the highly publicized event.



Chapter 21

Stone observes as Sir Winston orchestrates an unexpected operation where a yellow school bus arrives to transport journalists to a supposed press conference. Instead of heading to the capital, the bus diverts toward the airport, leaving Stone puzzled. Meanwhile, Thomas informs Stone that police are confiscating reporters' belongings from rented rooms, raising suspicions about Sir Winston’s intentions. Stone, Allison, and Thomas decide to follow the situation, with Allison returning to the yacht while Stone and Thomas head to the airport to investigate further.

At the airport, Stone and Thomas witness two DC-3s preparing for departure, with reporters being forcibly herded aboard by police. The scene is chaotic, with luggage hastily loaded and reporters protesting. Stone notes the absence of violence but senses the officers’ firm resolve. The planes eventually take off toward the northwest, prompting speculation about their destination—possibly St. Thomas or San Juan. Stone finds the situation audacious and anticipates backlash from the press, believing their mistreatment will amplify outrage over Allison’s plight.

Back at the Shipwright’s Arms, Stone receives two packages: one containing a profile of Paul Manning and Allison, which he finds unremarkable, and another with a brochure for the Parker Sportster inflatable dinghy. Intrigued by the dinghy’s sailing capabilities, Stone studies the brochure before heading to the marina. There, he quietly boards Expansive and searches the cockpit lockers, discovering both an AVON dinghy and a new, unused Parker Sportster—a finding that brings him a sense of relief.

The chapter highlights Stone’s strategic thinking as he leverages the journalists’ expulsion to pressure Sir Winston, while also uncovering clues about the yacht’s equipment. The tension between the government’s heavy-handed actions and the potential media fallout underscores the political stakes. Meanwhile, Stone’s discovery of the Parker Sportster dinghy hints at deeper mysteries surrounding Allison and the

yacht, setting the stage for further revelations.



Chapter 22

The chapter opens with Stone preparing breakfast and waking Allison, who suggests a swim to wake up. Stone cautions her against swimming naked due to lingering press on the island, and they instead head to the Shipwright’s Arms to borrow a car. There, they encounter Hilary Kramer, a journalist who missed the press purge. Kramer inquires about their plans, but Stone declines to include her, citing strict business. The exchange highlights the ongoing media scrutiny surrounding Allison’s case and sets the stage for their visit to co-counsel Leslie Hewitt.

Upon arriving at Hewitt’s cottage, Stone is relieved to find the elderly lawyer lucid, unlike their last meeting. Hewitt requests Stone fetch milk from a nearby grocer, leaving Allison to tour the garden with him. Stone grows impatient with the errand, frustrated by the delay in discussing trial strategy. Returning, he discovers the milk was unnecessary, hinting at Hewitt’s occasional forgetfulness. He finds Allison and Hewitt deep in conversation, which they dismiss as gardening talk, though their demeanor suggests a more serious discussion.

Back in Hewitt’s study, the lawyer outlines the trial’s expected progression with confidence, dismissing Stone’s concerns about detailed preparation. Hewitt predicts the prosecution’s dramatic opening, followed by his own concise rebuttal, and anticipates the jury’s swift decision-making. Stone questions the lack of formal evidence disclosure and jury deliberation norms, but Hewitt brushes off his concerns, emphasizing cultural differences in St. Marks. His casual approach leaves Stone uneasy, especially when Hewitt abruptly ends the meeting without addressing key details or offering the promised tea.

The chapter closes with Allison expressing doubts about Hewitt’s mental state, mirroring Stone’s concerns. Their private exchange underscores the tension between Hewitt’s apparent eccentricities and the gravity of the upcoming trial. Stone’s

frustration and Allison’s evasiveness about her conversation with Hewitt leave lingering questions about the lawyer’s reliability and the true nature of their discussion, casting a shadow over their preparedness for Monday’s proceedings.



Chapter 23

Stone Barrington receives a call from Bob Cantor while having lunch at the Shipwright’s Arms. Cantor, recently returned from the Canaries, shares new findings about Paul Manning’s financial situation. Despite earning a substantial income, Manning was living on the edge, heavily reliant on loans to sustain his lifestyle. Cantor reveals that Manning’s credit records show he was maxed out on credit cards and frequently borrowed large sums to bridge gaps between royalty payments. This financial strain suggests Manning’s precarious position before his death, raising questions about the timing of his demise.

Cantor admits to unauthorized snooping in Manning’s Greenwich home, uncovering detailed financial records. Manning’s debts were so significant that his wife, Allison, would face substantial liabilities—except for the revelation that he held $12 million in life insurance. The premiums were exorbitant, further straining his finances. Cantor notes that Allison has already transferred most of the insurance payout to a Cayman Islands account, suggesting shrewd financial maneuvering. This development casts suspicion on Allison, as her husband’s death coincided perfectly with his financial collapse, leaving her wealthy and debt-free.

The conversation shifts to the circumstances of Manning’s death. Cantor and Stone speculate whether Manning could have faked his death using a sailable dinghy, but they dismiss the idea since both dinghies remain on the yacht. The possibility of Manning swimming back is also deemed unlikely due to sharks and the risk of being spotted. Stone acknowledges the mounting circumstantial evidence against Allison but reiterates his role as her lawyer, not an investigator. His primary focus is securing her acquittal, regardless of her guilt or innocence.

Stone reflects on the ethical dilemma of defending a potentially guilty client but resolves to proceed professionally. The chapter ends with Stone reaffirming his

commitment to Allison’s defense, even as the evidence paints a damning picture. Cantor’s discoveries have undeniably shifted the narrative, implicating Allison in a possible murder-for-financial-gain scheme. However, Stone’s duty remains clear: to navigate the legal complexities and ensure a fair trial, despite his personal reservations about her innocence.



Chapter 24

Stone, while troubled by rumors about Paul Manning’s affairs, is joined by reporter Jim Forrester during lunch. Forrester, a key witness, confirms he avoided being sent off the island by hiding from the police. Stone questions him about his testimony, focusing on Paul and Allison Manning’s seemingly happy relationship during their meeting in Las Palmas. Forrester agrees to testify but reveals an earlier connection to Paul from their college days, though he emphasizes Paul’s cheerful demeanor and lack of suicidal tendencies. Stone considers this history useful for the trial, especially to counter claims about Paul’s alleged dissatisfaction with Allison.

Forrester hints at a potential ethical dilemma regarding Paul’s leather-bound notes, suggesting he could fabricate details to counter the prosecution’s unfair tactics. Stone advises against this, stressing the risks of perjury. The conversation shifts to the Parker Sportster dinghy, which Forrester notes could theoretically be sailed. He speculates Paul might have faked his death, but Stone dismisses the idea, revealing the dinghy was found unused on the boat. Forrester is relieved, as he didn’t want to implicate Allison in a conspiracy. Stone encourages him to include this detail in his article to dispel future suspicions.

Forrester shares that his editor is highly interested in Allison’s story due to its publicity. Stone acknowledges the piece could help Allison by satisfying public curiosity, though he worries she underestimates the severity of her situation. Forrester observes Allison’s openness but senses her denial of the risks. Stone admits he hasn’t addressed this with her, believing her attitude might help her cope. The reporter then presses Stone for a candid assessment of Allison’s chances, leading to a sobering discussion about the trial’s unpredictability.

Stone concedes Allison could face execution, a stark contrast to how the case would likely be dismissed in the U.S. due to lack of evidence. Both men reflect on the

injustice of her predicament, wondering how things might differ if she had landed in another jurisdiction. The chapter ends with their silent contemplation of the worst possible outcome for Allison, underscoring the gravity of her situation and the limitations of their efforts to help her.



Chapter 25

Stone Barrington is engaged in conversation with Jim Forrester when a middle-aged woman arrives at the scene. Dressed in a wrinkled silk dress and a straw hat, she introduces herself as Allison Manning, the widow of Paul Manning, a deceased writer. She claims to be his legitimate wife and presents a marriage certificate as proof. Stone, skeptical but intrigued, questions her further while ordering her a drink. The woman, who insists on being called Libby, reveals she has come to St. Marks to claim Paul's estate, asserting she was never divorced from him and possesses a will naming her as the sole beneficiary.

Libby explains her history with Paul, stating they met while working at the Miami Herald and married 14 years prior. She admits he left her after four years but continued to support her financially until his death. Stone informs her that Paul's estate is being handled in Connecticut, where another woman—also claiming to be his wife—has a more recent will. Libby dismisses this, insisting she is the only legal wife. Stone, wary of her motives, avoids offering legal advice but suggests her claim would need to be addressed in Connecticut, not St. Marks.

Frustrated, Libby declares her intention to seek a second opinion and investigate the murder trial surrounding Paul's death. Stone grows increasingly concerned about her potential interference, especially if she involves local authorities like Sir Winston Sutherland. After she leaves for her room, Stone urgently calls Bob Cantor, requesting a copy of Paul's divorce decree to verify Libby's claims. He confides in Thomas Hardy, who finds the situation amusing but agrees to keep Libby away from Sutherland.

The chapter ends with Stone grappling with the complications posed by Libby's sudden appearance. Her claims threaten to disrupt the ongoing legal proceedings and estate matters, adding another layer of complexity to an already convoluted case. Stone's desperation to neutralize her influence underscores the tension, while Thomas's

amusement highlights the absurdity of the situation. The stage is set for further conflict as Libby vows to pursue her claims, ensuring more challenges lie ahead for Stone.



Chapter 26

Stone confronts Allison aboard the yacht *Expansive*, urgently questioning her about Paul’s first marriage. He reveals that Paul’s ex-wife, Libby, has arrived at the Shipwright’s Arms, claiming rights to Paul’s estate. Allison is dismissive, insisting Libby deserves nothing, but Stone presses for details about their divorce. Allison admits she has never seen a divorce decree and recalls Paul had been sending Libby monthly alimony payments. Stone grows increasingly concerned about the legal implications, especially if the divorce was never finalized, which could complicate Allison’s inheritance.

Stone examines Paul’s will, confirming Libby is not mentioned, but remains wary. He explains that if the divorce is invalid, Libby could have legal claims as Paul’s surviving spouse. Allison downplays the threat, but Stone warns that Libby’s presence could destabilize Allison’s upcoming trial, especially if manipulated by adversaries like Sir Winston. The tension escalates as Stone emphasizes the need to remove Libby from the island quickly to avoid potential legal and reputational damage.

Allison suggests extreme measures to deal with Libby, but Stone admonishes her for reckless talk. He proposes negotiating a financial settlement to persuade Libby to leave. Allison reluctantly agrees, revealing she has over a million dollars in her bank account. Stone secures a blank check and signed documents from Allison, preparing to negotiate with Libby. His frustration is evident as he laments the lack of a divorce decree, which would clarify Libby’s legal standing.

The chapter ends with Stone leaving the yacht to handle the situation, underscoring the urgency and high stakes. Allison’s trust in Stone is tested as she hands over financial control, while Stone’s focus shifts to mitigating the risk Libby poses. The confrontation highlights the precariousness of Allison’s legal position and the potential for unforeseen complications in her defense. Stone’s actions reflect a strategic effort to

neutralize threats before they escalate further.



Chapter 27

Stone arrives at the Shipwright’s Arms, seeking Mrs. Manning but is told she’s unavailable. After a brief exchange with the bartender, Thomas, he decides to wait for her to appear for dinner. Stone retreats to his room to prepare a document, attempting to contact Bob Cantor unsuccessfully. When he returns downstairs, he finds Libby Manning at the bar and invites her to dine. Their conversation reveals Libby’s background and her connection to Allison, the woman Stone is defending. Stone subtly probes Libby’s intentions while maintaining a cautious demeanor.

During dinner, Stone spots Sir Winston Sutherland, a feared prosecutor known for targeting American women, and warns Libby to avoid him. Their discussion shifts to Paul Manning’s will, which Stone presents to Libby, revealing she’s been left with minimal support. Libby reacts angrily, threatening legal action, but Stone advises against it, highlighting the financial and emotional toll a lawsuit would take. He proposes a settlement: a lump sum payment in exchange for her dropping any claims against Allison.

Stone offers Libby $400,000, presenting a check and a legally binding document to ensure the payment’s validity. He emphasizes the benefits of accepting the offer, including financial security and avoiding a protracted legal battle. Libby hesitates, questioning Allison’s reliability, but Stone reassures her, explaining that the money is hers regardless of Allison’s fate. The tension builds as Libby weighs her options, torn between immediate gain and potential future leverage.

Ultimately, Libby agrees to the deal, signing the documents with Thomas as a witness. She plans to leave the next morning, and Stone arranges her transportation. The chapter concludes with the resolution of their negotiation, leaving Stone relieved but aware of the ongoing challenges with Allison’s trial. The interaction underscores Stone’s strategic thinking and ability to navigate complex interpersonal dynamics

while protecting his client’s interests.



Chapter 28

Stone returns to the yacht Expansive, where Allison is preparing lamb chops. He declines her offer to join her for dinner, mentioning he already ate with Libby Manning, Paul’s ex-wife. Allison, anxious about the outcome of their negotiation, is relieved when Stone reveals Libby accepted her offer of $400,000—$100,000 less than Allison expected. Stone hands her the signed agreement, assuring her it’s legally binding. Despite the successful deal, Stone admits feeling uneasy about Libby’s financial struggles, while Allison remains unsympathetic, emphasizing that the payout is substantial.

The conversation shifts to Allison’s financial status, as Stone reveals he’s researched her background and confirmed her wealth. Allison playfully questions his motives but seems reassured when he finds no negative information. She then confesses guilt over their intimate relationship, given Paul’s recent death, but Stone reassures her, suggesting she deserves happiness. However, he privately worries about her legal situation and the challenges ahead, hinting at unresolved issues that could impact their future.

Allison probes Stone about his past relationship with Arrington, admitting her own regrets about not experiencing cohabitation before marriage. Stone acknowledges his infidelity but defends his emotional honesty. Their discussion turns introspective as Allison reflects on her newfound freedom and excitement for the future, despite lingering guilt. Stone encourages her to embrace this new chapter, though he remains cautious about her legal prospects and his own unresolved feelings for Arrington.

As the evening winds down, Stone declines Allison’s invitation to stay, opting to sleep on his own boat to rest and write a lengthy letter to Arrington. He advises Allison to notify her lawyer and banker about the payment to Libby to avoid complications. The chapter closes with Stone mailing the letter and briefly hearing Allison return to the

dock late at night, leaving their future together uncertain but hinting at deeper emotional undercurrents for both characters.



Chapter 29

Stone wakes up in a hurry, anxious not to miss Libby Manning’s departure from the island. He rushes to the inn, where he intercepts Thomas, who is loading Libby’s luggage for her trip to the airport. Stone hastily prepares a FedEx envelope containing a letter to Arrington and asks Libby to mail it upon arrival in Miami. The group then speeds off to the airport, discussing Jim Forrester’s illness, which Thomas attributes to contaminated conch from a street vendor. At the airport, Stone and Thomas help Libby board Chester’s small plane, which also carries another passenger, and they bid her farewell.

As the plane takes off, Stone and Thomas watch it ascend, relieved Libby is finally leaving. However, their relief turns to alarm when they notice smoke and flames erupting from the left engine. Chester attempts an emergency landing on the water, but the plane cartwheels upon impact, breaking apart. Stone and Thomas immediately rush to a nearby fishing village to arrange a rescue boat, though Stone privately doubts anyone could have survived the violent crash. The urgency of the situation is underscored by Thomas’s frantic driving and their quick boarding of Henry’s fishing boat.

During the search, debris from the plane floats on the water, including Libby’s straw hat. They soon spot Chester’s body, missing an arm, confirming the grim reality of the crash. The retrieval process is slow and difficult due to the rough sea conditions. Stone’s earlier fears about Libby’s departure are tragically overshadowed by the disaster, leaving both men shaken by the sudden turn of events.

The chapter ends on a somber note as the rescue effort continues, with little hope of finding survivors. The abrupt shift from mundane morning routines to a life-threatening crisis highlights the unpredictability of the island’s dangers. Stone’s relief at Libby’s departure is replaced by horror, emphasizing the fragility of life and the swiftness with

which circumstances can change. The scene sets the stage for further investigation into the cause of the crash and its repercussions.



Chapter 30

The chapter opens with Stone having breakfast at a table when he is joined by Hilary Kramer, a journalist from the New York Times. Their conversation quickly turns somber as Stone reveals he witnessed a plane crash earlier that morning. The crash involved Chester's plane, which carried two passengers, including Elizabeth Manning, a Palm Beach socialite and the ex-wife of Paul Manning. Stone explains the technical failure—an engine fire—and describes the tragic outcome: Chester's body was recovered, but the two women were lost when the plane sank in deep water. Kramer begins taking notes, sensing a story.

Jim Forrester, another journalist, joins them and shares his own health woes from food poisoning. The discussion shifts to Elizabeth Manning's background and her possible motives for visiting. Stone speculates she may have sought a share of Paul Manning's estate, though he downplays her legal claim. Kramer probes further, asking if Manning could have aided Allison's trial, but Stone dismisses the idea. The group also questions whether local authorities will investigate the crash, given the logistical challenges of recovering the wreckage from deep waters.

Kramer's persistent questioning hints at her suspicion that Stone is withholding information. Stone maintains he knows little about Elizabeth Manning, though he privately recalls her lawyer's involvement in a financial negotiation with Allison. The tone remains tense as Kramer closes her notebook, unsatisfied but resigned to filing her story. Meanwhile, Forrester's sudden illness provides a brief moment of dark humor before he rushes off.

The chapter concludes with Stone receiving a fax revealing Elizabeth Manning's divorce decree, which shows her alimony payments had recently ended. This discovery explains her desperation to secure funds, including her successful extraction of $400,000 from Allison. Stone reflects on the irony of the situation, shaking his head at

the calculated maneuvering behind Manning’s seemingly casual visit. The chapter ends on a note of unresolved tension, leaving readers to ponder the broader implications of the crash and Manning’s motives.



Chapter 31

Stone returns to the marina deeply troubled by Libby Manning’s death in a plane crash, despite not having been close to her. He shares the news with Allison, who is shocked and struggles to process the loss. The crash, caused by an engine fire, leaves little evidence, and Stone speculates about possible mechanical failures due to lax oversight. Allison’s initial grief is complicated by the realization that Libby’s death relieves her of a $400,000 financial obligation, sparking a moral dilemma about whether the money should still be paid to Libby’s potential heirs.

Allison questions whether she is legally bound to honor the agreement with Libby, given that the physical documents were lost in the crash. Stone explains that Libby’s heirs could still claim the money if evidence of the agreement exists, such as a copy or a witness. However, he acknowledges that without such proof, Allison’s position is legally secure. The conversation shifts to ethical considerations, with Stone suggesting she search for Libby’s heirs to fulfill her moral obligation, though Allison resists the idea, prioritizing her financial gain over ethical concerns.

Stone reveals that Libby’s alimony had recently expired, meaning her claim to the estate was baseless, and she had essentially lucked into the $400,000. Allison is angered by this revelation but acknowledges Stone’s earlier advice to pay Libby was sound under the circumstances. Stone reiterates that while Allison has no enforceable legal obligation to pay Libby’s heirs, she still faces a moral decision. Allison, however, remains focused on the legal loopholes that allow her to keep the money, dismissing the ethical implications.

The tension escalates as Allison challenges Stone’s own morals, accusing him of hypocrisy for engaging in a relationship with her while representing her as a client. Stone defends himself with legalistic reasoning, which amuses Allison, lightening the mood. Despite the laughter, the underlying conflict about ethics and responsibility

remains unresolved, highlighting the complex interplay between legality and morality in their situation. Allison’s final words suggest a mix of affection and admiration for Stone’s unwavering adherence to his principles, even as she resists them.



Chapter 32

Stone Barrington, preparing an opening statement for Allison Manning’s trial in his rented room, is interrupted by Thomas, who informs him that two police officers are downstairs requesting him. The officers refuse to explain their purpose but take the guest registration forms before escorting Stone to their car. Despite his protests, Stone is taken to Government House, where he assumes he’s being arrested, possibly due to his involvement in Allison’s case. The journey is tense, with Stone speculating about the charges, but the officers remain cryptic, only hinting that he’s in "a lot of trouble."

Upon arrival, Stone is led through the building to a waiting room, where he observes the formal yet worn surroundings, including a portrait of the prime minister. The officers then direct him into a lavish office, where he’s left alone until Sir Winston Sutherland, the minister of justice, enters. Sir Winston greets Stone warmly, dismissing any notion of an arrest and framing the encounter as a pretrial meeting between opposing counsel. He invites Stone to a balcony lunch, offering champagne and pleasantries, though Stone remains wary of the sudden hospitality.

Over lunch, Sir Winston engages Stone in seemingly casual conversation, touching on topics like the recent plane crash of Chester, Allison Manning’s background, and Stone’s own circumstances. Stone answers cautiously, denying any prior connection to Allison or her late husband. Sir Winston’s questions grow more pointed, probing Stone’s involvement in the coroner’s inquest and Allison’s identity. Stone deflects, but the tension rises as Sir Winston’s friendly demeanor masks an underlying interrogation.

The chapter culminates with Sir Winston producing a slip of paper and directly asking Stone about Elizabeth Allison Manning’s true identity. Stone’s internal reaction—“Oh, shit”—signals his realization that Sir Winston is onto something significant. The encounter, framed as a polite lunch, reveals itself as a strategic move by Sir Winston

to extract information, leaving Stone in a precarious position as the trial approaches. The chapter ends on a cliffhanger, hinting at deeper secrets surrounding Allison’s case.



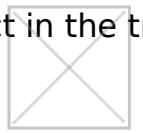
Chapter 33

In Chapter 33, Stone Barrington finds himself in a tense confrontation with Sir Winston, who questions him about his interactions with Elizabeth Manning, the ex-wife of the deceased Paul Manning. Stone admits to their connection but avoids revealing too much, citing attorney-client confidentiality. Sir Winston probes further, suspecting Stone's involvement in financial matters related to Manning's estate. Stone deflects by emphasizing Elizabeth's lack of inheritance and the second Mrs. Manning's charitable gesture. The exchange highlights Sir Winston's attempts to exploit Elizabeth's presence for legal advantage, while Stone carefully navigates the conversation to protect his client's interests.

The dialogue escalates as Sir Winston presses Stone about the documents exchanged with Elizabeth Manning during their dinner. Stone maintains his professional discretion, only acknowledging the second Mrs. Manning's kindness toward her predecessor. Sir Winston's skepticism is evident, but Stone remains composed, using legal boundaries to avoid further disclosure. The tension is momentarily diffused as they turn to their meals, but the underlying power struggle persists. Stone senses Sir Winston's frustration, recognizing his failed attempt to extract compromising information about Elizabeth Manning's role in the case.

Sir Winston shifts focus to Elizabeth Manning's background, questioning her residence in Palm Beach despite her alleged lack of wealth. Stone downplays the discrepancy, suggesting she lived modestly while working for a local newspaper. He offers practical suggestions for locating her next of kin, but Sir Winston dismisses them, revealing his ulterior motives. The conversation takes a personal turn as Sir Winston insinuates that Stone's relationship with the second Mrs. Manning extends beyond legal counsel. Stone feigns ignorance, forcing Sir Winston to bluntly accuse him of an affair, which Stone vehemently denies.

The chapter culminates in a heated exchange, with Stone accusing Sir Winston of overstepping his prosecutorial bounds and focusing on irrelevant personal matters. Stone storms out, refusing to entertain further accusations, while Sir Winston threatens retribution. The confrontation leaves Stone wary of potential repercussions, but he manages to escape without immediate consequences. The chapter underscores the high-stakes legal and personal tensions between the two men, setting the stage for further conflict in the trial ahead.



Chapter 34

Stone arrives at Sir Leslie Hewitt’s house seeking clarity after a tense meeting with Sir Winston Sutherland. To his surprise, he finds Hewitt having lunch with Allison Manning, their client. Stone is alarmed by this unauthorized meeting and questions Hewitt’s role, reminding him that he, not Hewitt, is the lead attorney. Hewitt dismisses Stone’s concerns, claiming authority over the case. The tension escalates as Stone insists on leaving with Allison, who resists but eventually complies. Hewitt’s erratic behavior, including forgetting Allison’s identity, hints at his declining mental state, adding to Stone’s unease.

Stone confronts Hewitt about the lunch with Sir Winston, who had become hostile during their discussion. Hewitt warns Stone about the dangers of insulting Sutherland, suggesting it could jeopardize Allison’s case. Stone grows frustrated as Hewitt’s focus wavers, leaving him uncertain about the potential consequences. Allison, confused by Hewitt’s behavior, presses Stone for answers. Stone avoids elaborating in front of the taxi driver, heightening the mystery and tension as they return to the yacht.

Back aboard the yacht, Allison demands an explanation for Hewitt’s actions. Stone reveals his concerns about Hewitt’s mental instability and reiterates his role as her primary attorney. Allison admits Hewitt questioned her extensively about her case, acting as if he were her sole representative. Stone admonishes her for meeting Hewitt alone, emphasizing the need for transparency. The conversation shifts to Stone’s meeting with Sutherland, where he reveals the judge inquired about Libby’s next of kin. Allison’s reaction to this news suggests she may be hiding something, unsettling Stone.

Stone presses Allison for full disclosure, warning her against withholding information that could undermine their case in court. Allison insists she has been truthful but becomes emotional, leaving Stone to comfort her. Despite his reassurances, Stone

remains deeply worried about the trial and Allison’s credibility. The chapter ends with Stone grappling with his own doubts and the looming threat posed by Sutherland, underscoring the precariousness of their legal situation.



Chapter 35

Stone returns to the Shipwright’s Arms to prepare for an upcoming trial and receives a call from Bob Cantor, who provides details about Elizabeth Manning’s background. Cantor reveals that Manning was a socialite who relied on parties and a small newspaper column for income, while her elderly mother, Marla Peters, struggled financially as a pianist living on Social Security. The information leaves Stone troubled, painting a bleak picture of Manning’s life and her mother’s dependence on her.

Shortly after, Stone receives another call from Harley Potter, a Palm Beach attorney representing Manning’s mother. Potter expresses concern over Manning’s sudden silence, prompting Stone to deliver the devastating news of her death in a plane crash. Potter is visibly shaken, emphasizing the emotional and financial toll this will take on Manning’s ailing mother. Stone offers to assist with legal formalities, including obtaining a death certificate, while Potter hints at Manning’s unrealized expectations of financial gain from her ex-husband’s estate.

Potter probes whether Manning might have been entitled to any inheritance, but Stone confirms there was no provision for her in Paul Manning’s will. Despite this, Stone agrees to discuss the possibility of financial assistance with Manning’s widow, Allison, though he remains uncertain of her willingness to help. Potter also raises the prospect of seeking compensation from the crashed plane’s insurance company, adding another layer of complexity to Stone’s responsibilities.

The chapter concludes with Stone feeling overwhelmed by the tragic circumstances surrounding Manning’s death and the dire situation of her mother. As he resumes work on his trial preparations, he struggles to shake the image of Marla Peters, a frail woman scraping by on meager earnings, now facing an even more uncertain future without her daughter’s support. The weight of these revelations leaves Stone emotionally drained and apprehensive about the challenges ahead.

Chapter 36

The chapter opens with an inquest into the deaths of Chester Appleton, Alene Sanders, and Elizabeth Manning, held in the same village hall as a previous inquest. The proceedings are nearly identical, except for the absence of Sir Winston Sutherland. Stone and Thomas testify, followed by Harvey Simpson, the mechanic who maintained Chester's airplane. Simpson confidently asserts that the aircraft, particularly the port engine, was in excellent condition, with no signs of potential failure. Despite his thorough maintenance, he cannot explain the engine fire that led to the crash, leaving the cause a mystery.

During the inquest, Marvin, a jury member and relative of Alene Sanders, questions who will be held accountable for her death. Simpson reveals that Chester had no insurance, having stopped payments due to financial strain. This revelation underscores the tragic lack of recourse for the victims' families. The jury quickly returns a verdict of "death by misadventure," concluding the proceedings. Stone interacts with journalists Hilary Kramer and Jim Forrester, who probe for details about Elizabeth Manning's background and the documents she reviewed, though Stone remains evasive.

After the inquest, Stone obtains Elizabeth Manning's death certificate for her mother's legal proceedings. The coroner remarks on the simplicity of this case compared to the previous one, though Stone notes its lack of intrigue. Returning to the Shipwright's Arms, Stone receives a fax from Arrington, who is enjoying her time in California and mentions a prestigious book review assignment. Stone realizes she never received his heartfelt letter, as it was lost in the crash, and resolves to write to her again.

The chapter blends procedural detail with personal moments, highlighting the unresolved mystery of the crash and its emotional fallout. Stone's interactions with the journalists and his delayed communication with Arrington add layers of tension and

introspection. The narrative maintains a steady pace, balancing legal formalities with character-driven subplots, while leaving key questions unanswered for future development.



Chapter 37

Stone returns to Expansive with reluctance, anticipating a difficult conversation with Allison, who is preparing to leave after her trial. To his surprise, he finds her packing and learns she plans to sell the boat and move on. When Stone insists on discussing a pressing matter, Allison pauses her preparations, revealing her pragmatic yet detached demeanor. The tension builds as Stone prepares to deliver unwelcome news, setting the stage for a fraught discussion about Libby's mother and potential legal complications.

Stone reveals that Libby's elderly mother, who relies on her daughter for support, is now destitute following Libby's death. He explains that the mother's lawyer may pursue financial claims against Allison, given Libby's possible ties to Paul's estate. Allison reacts coolly, dismissing immediate action and asserting she will handle the matter post-trial. Stone's attempts to persuade her to address the issue sooner are met with resistance, highlighting Allison's determination to prioritize her own legal troubles over the moral implications of the situation.

As Stone leaves the boat, he notices a sleek motor yacht arriving at the marina, sparking a fleeting suspicion about Allison's intentions. He proceeds to contact Libby's mother's lawyer, Harley Potter, to relay the inquest's outcome and the lack of assets in Libby's estate. Potter expresses concern for Mrs. Peters' plight, but Stone deflects responsibility, stating Allison will consult her own attorney later. The call underscores Stone's discomfort with the ethical dilemma, as he grapples with the limits of his ability to intervene.

In a final act of conscience, Stone arranges for $25,000 from his personal funds to be sent to Libby's mother's estate, attributing the gesture to Allison. This decision reflects his internal conflict and desire to mitigate the situation, even as he recognizes the futility of his efforts. The chapter closes with Stone's unresolved unease, emphasizing

the moral complexities and personal stakes intertwined with Allison’s legal battle and the fallout from Libby’s death.



Chapter 38

Stone, feeling thirsty after work, visits a bar where he meets Sam, the skipper of a high-speed yacht named *Race*. The yacht, capable of reaching 60-70 knots, is a custom-built vessel designed for racing. Sam reveals he is in St. Marks to pick up charter clients, Mr. and Mrs. Chapman, who are expected to arrive by evening for a midnight departure to St. Thomas. The conversation shifts to the yacht’s specifications, charter logistics, and costs, with Stone expressing casual interest but ultimately dismissing the idea due to the high price tag of $65,000 per week.

Sam offers Stone a tour of *Race*, showcasing its luxurious interiors, including four cabins, a well-equipped saloon, and advanced navigational gear. The yacht’s design prioritizes speed, resulting in slightly reduced living space. After the tour, Stone inquires about incoming flights at the local airport, as Sam’s clients are supposedly arriving by air. Thomas, the bartender, checks and confirms no flights are scheduled, raising suspicions about the legitimacy of the charter arrangement.

Stone’s curiosity leads him to board *Expansive*, where he finds Allison packing duffel bags and accessing a safe. Despite her attempts to dismiss him, Stone persists, questioning her plans. Allison initially denies any intention to leave but eventually admits she plans to depart after midnight. The scene suggests she is preparing for a sudden and secretive departure, possibly linked to the mysterious charter clients Sam mentioned.

The chapter builds tension through Stone’s investigative demeanor and Allison’s evasive behavior. The discrepancies in Sam’s story about the charter clients and the lack of scheduled flights hint at a larger, undisclosed scheme. Stone’s persistence uncovers Allison’s planned escape, setting the stage for further revelations about her motives and connections to the yacht’s mysterious charterers. The chapter ends with an air of suspense, leaving readers eager to uncover the truth behind the unfolding

events.



Chapter 39

In Chapter 39, Stone Barrington confronts Allison Manning about her plan to flee St. Marks on a fast yacht to avoid her impending trial and possible execution for her husband's murder. Stone warns her that escaping would make her appear guilty, jeopardize her public support, and result in a life as a fugitive. Allison, however, believes the trial is rigged against her and insists she has no other choice. She argues that the yacht's speed and international waters will ensure her safety, but Stone counters that extradition and legal battles would drain her resources and freedom.

Allison's desperation is evident as she tearfully defends her decision, stating that living as a fugitive is preferable to dying on the island. Stone, an officer of the court, refuses to aid her escape, emphasizing his ethical obligations. When Allison pleads with him to stay, he rejects her, fearing her actions endanger them both. Their tense exchange highlights Allison's fear and Stone's frustration, as he realizes he cannot dissuade her from her reckless plan.

The situation escalates when Stone spots police approaching the marina, forcing him to quickly hide Allison's luggage and improvise a cover story. Allison plays along, offering drinks to the officers while Stone attempts to deflect suspicion. Colonel Buckler, the lead officer, questions them about the chartered yacht, but Stone and Allison deny any involvement, insisting the yacht is for another passenger. The colonel remains skeptical, placing Allison under restricted movement but lacking concrete evidence.

The chapter ends with a standoff, as Allison defiantly claims she looks forward to her trial and acquittal. The encounter underscores the high stakes of her situation and the mounting pressure from authorities. Stone's efforts to protect Allison clash with her determination to escape, leaving both characters in a precarious position as the police close in. The tension sets the stage for further confrontation in the unfolding legal and

personal drama.



Chapter 40

Stone and Allison discuss the urgent need to remove a chartered motor yacht from English Harbour to avoid suspicion from local authorities. Allison reveals she arranged the charter using a satellite phone, surprising Stone with her resourcefulness. She contacts the broker, Fred, instructing him to have the yacht depart at 9 PM for Guadeloupe. Stone emphasizes the importance of timing, planning to dine publicly with Allison during the yacht's departure to create an alibi. Their conversation highlights the tension and strategic maneuvering to outwit Colonel Buckler, who suspects Allison of attempting to flee St. Marks.

To further mislead authorities, Stone stages a phone call to the St. Marks airport, pretending to be Mr. Chapman, a fictitious charterer. He angrily cancels a supposed landing request, reinforcing the illusion that the yacht's departure is unrelated to Allison. This ruse aims to divert attention and provide cover for their plans. The pair then prepare for dinner at the Shipwright's Arms, ensuring they are seen relaxed and unconcerned. Their actions demonstrate a calculated effort to manipulate perceptions and undermine Buckler's suspicions.

At the restaurant, Stone and Allison maintain their facade, engaging in casual conversation with Thomas, the bartender, who informs them of Buckler's presence. The yacht departs as planned, observed by Buckler and Sir Winston, the minister of justice. Stone's satisfaction is evident as the timing aligns perfectly with their alibi. Sir Winston's cryptic remark about the "lovely evening" hints at his awareness, but Allison's composed demeanor reinforces their innocence. The scene underscores the high-stakes game of deception playing out in plain sight.

The chapter concludes with Stone and Allison seated at their table, reflecting on the success of their plan. Allison's compliance with Stone's instructions—avoiding boats and the airport—shows her commitment to their strategy. Stone's cautionary

reminders highlight the ongoing risk, while Thomas’s witty remark about lying to Sir Winston adds a touch of levity. The interplay of tension, strategy, and subtle humor captures the chapter’s essence, leaving readers anticipating the next move in their intricate dance with authority.



Chapter 41

The chapter opens with Stone and Allison enjoying an intimate dinner, reminiscing like old friends and lovers. Their conversation flows easily, aided by champagne and cognac, as they outlast the other patrons. The mood shifts when Stone asks Allison about her future plans, prompting her to reveal she's sold her house and may move to New York. Their exchange becomes more personal as Allison probes Stone about his relationship with Arrington, leading to a candid discussion about infidelity and intentions. The tension is palpable, yet their connection remains strong, underscored by mutual attraction and unresolved emotions.

As the conversation deepens, Allison reflects on her seduction of Stone, recalling the moment she decided to pursue him during the inquest into her late husband's death. She shares how her loneliness and acceptance of widowhood fueled her desire, praising Stone as the best lover she's ever had. Stone, flattered but conflicted, acknowledges his own frustrations with Arrington's absence, which partly explains his involvement with Allison. Their dialogue reveals a complex dynamic—Allison's boldness contrasts with Stone's lingering sense of honor, even as he indulges in the affair.

The chapter takes a sensual turn as Allison and Stone return to the yacht, engaging in a night of passionate lovemaking. Allison's uninhibited desire and skillful intimacy leave Stone both exhilarated and exhausted. Their physical connection is described in vivid detail, highlighting the intensity of their relationship. The morning after, Allison's playful affection and Stone's admiration for her dominance underscore the temporary yet consuming nature of their bond.

The tone shifts dramatically when Stone, retrieving a duffel bag, stumbles upon a critical discovery in the yacht's engine room. A misplaced spear gun and a missing spear trigger his investigative instincts, suggesting foul play in Paul Manning's death.

The chapter ends on a cliffhanger, as Stone’s realization hints at a darker truth beneath the surface of his affair with Allison, leaving the reader questioning her innocence and the events leading to Manning’s demise.



Chapter 42

Stone Barrington grapples with conflicting emotions as he represents Allison Manning, a client he knows is guilty but with whom he shares a personal connection. Despite his professional duty to defend her, his cop instincts trouble him, especially since she faces a capital charge. Their conversation reveals Allison's reasons for not using a satellite phone after her husband's death—technical difficulties and pride in her self-reliance—which Stone advises her to frame carefully for the jury. He emphasizes the need to rehearse her testimony to present her innocence convincingly, though he insists he won't alter her story, only refine its delivery.

Stone leaves to consult Leslie Hewitt, the barrister handling the trial, but finds him unconscious in his garden. After reviving him, Stone realizes Hewitt's frailty and struggles to ensure he reviews the trial materials. Hewitt dismisses him, preferring to return to gardening, leaving Stone concerned about his preparedness for the case. This encounter highlights the challenges Stone faces in relying on an aging and seemingly unreliable colleague, adding pressure to an already high-stakes defense.

Determined to gather more evidence, Stone visits the airport to question Harvey Simpson, the mechanic who testified at the inquest. He probes whether the hangar door was left open the night before Chester's fatal crash, suggesting unauthorized access to the plane. Simpson confirms the door is rarely closed, leaving the aircraft vulnerable. Stone's line of questioning hints at his strategy to cast doubt on the circumstances of the crash, possibly implicating sabotage or negligence as part of Allison's defense.

The chapter underscores Stone's multifaceted struggle: balancing personal feelings with professional ethics, managing an unreliable co-counsel, and piecing together evidence to build a credible defense. His interactions with Allison, Hewitt, and Simpson reveal his meticulous approach to the case, even as external complications threaten to

undermine his efforts. The tension between his emotional involvement and legal obligations sets the stage for further twists in the trial.



Chapter 43

Stone meets Jim Forrester at a bar to rehearse his testimony for an upcoming trial. Stone emphasizes the importance of clarity and consistency in Jim’s answers, guiding him on how to respond to questions about his relationship with Paul Manning, the defendant. They discuss details like their college basketball connection and their reunion in the Canary Islands, where Jim observed Manning’s happy marriage. Stone carefully refines Jim’s phrasing to present a favorable impression to the jury, particularly highlighting Manning’s affection for his wife and their seemingly harmonious relationship.

The rehearsal continues as Stone prompts Jim to describe Manning’s personality and their interactions, ensuring Jim’s testimony aligns with the defense’s narrative. Jim recalls Manning’s outgoing nature and the couple’s affectionate behavior, which Stone underscores as key points for the jury. They also review the timeline of events, including Jim’s brief encounters with the Mannings before their Atlantic voyage. Stone is pleased with Jim’s account, especially the image of the couple waving and holding hands as they sailed away, leaving a positive final impression.

After concluding with Jim, Stone heads to the marina to meet Allison Manning, the defendant. As they prepare to review her testimony, Stone notices her casual attire and struggles to reconcile her appearance with the murder charges. Their conversation is interrupted when Stone reads a fax Thomas had given him earlier, which visibly unsettles him. Allison notices his distress and asks what’s wrong, but Stone’s reaction suggests the fax contains troubling information.

The chapter ends on a suspenseful note as Stone hands the fax to Allison, leaving the content undisclosed but implying it could significantly impact the case or their relationship. The scene underscores the tension surrounding the trial and the uncertainty about Allison’s innocence, while also hinting at a potential twist in the

narrative. Stone’s professionalism contrasts with his personal doubts, adding depth to the legal and emotional stakes of the story.



Chapter 44

Stone receives a fax from Arrington, revealing she has married Vance Calder in a spontaneous ceremony in Arizona. The letter explains that her feelings for Vance developed during their time working together, and she realized she wanted permanence—something she doubted Stone could offer. Arrington expresses regret for not resolving their relationship beforehand but emphasizes her happiness with Vance. She hopes they can remain friends and reassures Stone that her decision was not meant to cause him pain, acknowledging his independent nature as both a strength and a barrier to their long-term compatibility.

The news leaves Stone stunned, as he hadn’t anticipated this turn of events. Allison observes his shock and remarks that she saw it coming, noting Arrington’s lack of commitment when she canceled their planned trip to St. Marks. Stone, initially incredulous, begins to reflect on the signs he missed. Allison’s blunt assessment forces him to confront his own lack of perceptiveness about women, leaving him to grapple with the reality of the situation.

As Stone processes the letter, he questions whether his own delayed response to Arrington could have changed the outcome. He realizes their relationship had underlying issues that his letter wouldn’t have resolved. Gradually, his emotional defenses kick in, dulling the pain and allowing him to regain composure. The chapter highlights Stone’s internal struggle to reconcile his feelings with the abrupt end of their relationship.

The chapter concludes with Stone shifting his focus back to the present, particularly his professional responsibilities in Allison Manning’s case. The emotional turmoil gives way to a pragmatic acceptance, underscoring his resilience. The narrative captures a pivotal moment of personal reckoning for Stone, blending introspection with the forward momentum of his legal work.

Chapter 45

In Chapter 45, Stone prepares Allison Manning for her upcoming trial by conducting a rigorous mock interrogation. He emphasizes the importance of body language, advising her to remain composed, avoid defensive gestures, and maintain honesty. Stone switches roles between her attorney and the prosecutor, Sir Winston, to simulate courtroom dynamics. Allison struggles initially but begins to adapt, learning to answer truthfully and control her emotions. Stone warns her that the jury will detect dishonesty, urging her to treat them as trusted friends who deserve her sincerity.

The chapter highlights Stone’s strategy of throwing unexpected and provocative questions at Allison to test her reactions. When he accuses her of killing her husband with a spear gun, she initially falters but eventually responds with justified anger, which Stone praises as appropriate for the trial. He explains that Sir Winston will use similar tactics to unsettle her, and she must remain calm and truthful. Allison’s emotional outbursts during the exercise reveal her vulnerability, but Stone reassures her that genuine emotion can strengthen her credibility.

Stone probes Allison about weapons aboard the yacht, particularly knives and the spear gun, to anticipate the prosecution’s line of questioning. Allison insists she never harmed her husband, but Stone presses her on details, such as removing Paul’s belt before burying him at sea. Her tearful plea of innocence moves Stone, who commends her performance. However, Allison’s final remark—“Gotcha, didn’t I?”—suggests she may have been manipulating her emotions, leaving Stone exasperated.

The chapter underscores the tension between performance and authenticity in courtroom testimony. Stone’s coaching reveals the psychological warfare of a trial, where Allison must balance truthfulness with strategic composure. Her mixed responses—ranging from genuine distress to calculated theatrics—hint at the complexity of her character. Stone’s frustration at the end suggests uncertainty about

her reliability, setting the stage for a high-stakes trial where every word and gesture will be scrutinized.



Chapter 46

Stone Barrington, preoccupied with thoughts of contacting Arrington, realizes he cannot reach her as she is staying at Vance Calder’s Palm Springs house. As he approaches the Shipwright’s Arms, he notices a large man in a seersucker suit at the bar, who bears a striking resemblance to Paul Manning, a key figure in Allison’s case. Stone initially wonders if Manning’s presumed death was a mistake, but the man introduces himself as Frank Stendahl, a New Englander on vacation. Stendahl’s curiosity about the upcoming trial and Allison’s innocence raises Stone’s suspicions, though he remains outwardly polite.

Stendahl’s behavior becomes increasingly peculiar as he probes Stone and the bartender, Thomas, for details about the trial and Allison. Despite his claims of being a tourist, his aggressive questioning and lack of subtlety make Thomas doubt his authenticity. Stone, too, finds Stendahl’s interest unusual, especially given the trial’s high-profile nature. The man’s expensive Hartmann luggage and solitary presence further complicate his story, as neither aligns with typical tourist or law enforcement behavior. Stone and Thomas exchange wary observations, but neither can pinpoint Stendahl’s true motives.

After changing into casual attire, Stendahl attempts to explore the marina but is stopped by police guards. He redirects his walk toward the harbor’s edge, disappearing from view. Stone, unsettled by the encounter, asks Thomas to gather more information if Stendahl returns. Though Stone dismisses him as a potentially harmless trial enthusiast, Thomas remains skeptical, noting Stendahl’s persistent probing and unusual demeanor. The chapter ends with Stone retreating to his room, downplaying the threat but leaving the reader with lingering questions about Stendahl’s intentions.

The chapter effectively builds tension through Stendahl’s enigmatic presence and the unresolved mystery surrounding his identity. Stone’s internal conflict—balancing

caution with skepticism—mirrors the broader uncertainty of Allison’s case. The dialogue and descriptions create a sense of unease, hinting at deeper layers to the story. While Stone tries to rationalize Stendahl’s behavior, the chapter leaves room for doubt, setting the stage for potential revelations in subsequent chapters.



Chapter 47

Stone returns downstairs to find Stendahl at the bar and joins journalists Hilary Kramer and Jim Forrester at their table. Curious about Stendahl's identity, Stone asks Forrester to engage him in conversation, suspecting he might be connected to the trial. Forrester obliges and later reveals Stendahl is a life insurance salesman from Boston, dispelling Stone's initial suspicions. Meanwhile, Stone and Kramer discuss Forrester's reporting style, with Kramer noting his exceptional memory and curiosity, though she jokes about his reticence in sharing personal details.

The conversation shifts to Stone's personal life when Kramer probes his involvement in the Allison Manning case. Stone confides that his girlfriend, Arrington Carter, left him for actor Vance Calder, marrying him abruptly. Kramer recognizes Arrington's name but agrees to keep the story confidential, despite its potential as a gossip column scoop. Stone emphasizes the need for privacy, urging Kramer not to publish the news, as the Calders wish to control its release. This revelation adds a personal layer to Stone's presence in St. Marks.

Forrester returns from his interaction with Stendahl, providing a detailed account of the man's background, including his divorce and career. Stone, still skeptical, wonders if Stendahl could be Paul Manning, Allison's presumed-dead husband, given their similar build. Forrester dismisses the idea, citing differences in mannerisms and appearance. Stone muses how Manning's reappearance would simplify the trial, but Forrester reassures him Stendahl is not Manning. Kramer humorously imagines the courtroom chaos if Manning were to reveal himself, lightening the mood.

The chapter concludes with the group laughing at the absurdity of the hypothetical scenario. Stone's lingering doubts about Stendahl highlight his desperation for a resolution to the Manning case, while the banter among the characters underscores the tension between professional curiosity and personal boundaries. The interplay of

investigative intrigue and personal drama keeps the narrative engaging, blending humor with underlying stakes.



Chapter 48

On the eve of a trial, Stone and Allison choose to spend their last night together aboard a yacht rather than dining out. Allison prefers the normalcy of cooking, thawing a chateaubriand and preparing béarnaise sauce, while Stone contributes by making a Caesar salad. Their playful banter and shared tasks create a sense of intimacy, with Allison insisting on maintaining routine despite the looming trial. The meal, accompanied by a fine bottle of Opus One wine, becomes a celebration of their connection, with both savoring the food and each other’s company.

After dinner, their intimacy deepens as they retreat to the cabin, seeking solace in each other’s arms. Their lovemaking is tender and passionate, a momentary escape from their worries. Allison reflects on the possibility of this being her "last time," but the experience leaves her with no regrets. Stone, equally moved, agrees that the encounter was extraordinary. Their physical connection underscores the emotional bond they share, providing comfort amid the uncertainty of the trial.

In a spontaneous burst of energy, Allison leads Stone into a midnight swim in English Harbour, startling the guards on duty. The playful escapade reflects her defiance and desire to live fully despite her circumstances. The moonlit swim becomes a metaphor for freedom and resilience, as they laugh and revel in the moment. Returning to the yacht, they resume their intimacy, their connection strengthened by the shared adventure.

The chapter captures a night of emotional and physical closeness, blending routine, passion, and spontaneity. Allison’s serene demeanor and determination to enjoy the moment contrast with the underlying tension of the trial. Stone’s support and their mutual affection highlight the strength of their bond. The chapter ends on a note of vitality, suggesting that even in the face of adversity, life—and love—can be profoundly fulfilling.

Chapter 49

The chapter opens with Stone, Allison, and their lawyer, Sir Leslie Hewitt, arriving at Government House for Allison’s murder trial. The atmosphere is tense as Stone reviews his opening statement, though he doubts Hewitt will use it. Allison appears composed, her youthful appearance accentuated by her attire. Upon entering the courtroom, Stone feels out of place, unaccustomed to the formalities of St. Marks’ legal system. The setting is described as modest, with peeling paint and a raised gallery, evoking a sense of institutional decay. The arrival of Sir Winston Sutherland, the prosecutor, heightens the tension as the trial begins.

The judge, Lord Cornwall, enters in ceremonial robes, and proceedings commence with a request for Allison to have a chair in the dock. Stone is unsettled by the term “prisoner” used to describe her. The jury selection follows, with six jurors quickly seated, including a retired tailor as foreman. Stone is wary of some jurors, particularly a taxi driver who seems disdainful, but Hewitt reassures him about the foreman’s influence. The charges are read, starkly outlining the gravity of Allison’s situation: she faces a potential death sentence if convicted of murdering her husband at sea.

The judge outlines the trial’s structure, explaining the sequence of opening statements, witness examinations, and closing arguments. Stone remains uneasy, sensing his lack of control in an unfamiliar legal environment. Hewitt’s dismissive attitude toward Stone’s prepared statements adds to his frustration. The chapter highlights the cultural and procedural differences between St. Marks’ court and Stone’s experience in New York, emphasizing his discomfort and the high stakes for Allison. The formalities underscore the gravity of the trial, with the jury’s composition and the judge’s authority shaping the narrative.

As the prosecution prepares to deliver its opening statement, Stone’s anxiety lingers. The chapter captures the clash of legal traditions and Stone’s struggle to adapt, while

Allison’s calm demeanor contrasts with the looming threat of a death sentence. The scene sets the stage for the trial’s unfolding drama, with Stone’s unease and Hewitt’s confidence hinting at the challenges ahead. The chapter ends on a note of anticipation, leaving readers to wonder how the trial will proceed and whether Stone’s efforts will be enough to secure Allison’s acquittal.



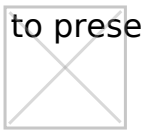
Chapter 50

The chapter opens with Sir Winston Sutherland delivering a dramatic opening statement for the prosecution, accusing Allison Manning of murdering her wealthy husband, Paul Manning, for his $12 million life insurance policy. He portrays Allison as a calculated killer who callously watched her husband drown after pushing him off their yacht. Sir Winston emphasizes Paul’s robust health and successful career, suggesting his death was no accident. He promises the jury will hear Paul’s own words from a diary and see evidence of Allison’s long-term plotting. Allison remains composed, silently denying the accusations while Stone, an observer, approves of her demeanor.

Sir Leslie Hewitt, the defense attorney, counters with a contrasting narrative. He describes Allison and Paul as a loving couple embarking on a shared adventure, arguing their transatlantic voyage demonstrated mutual affection. Hewitt attributes Paul’s death to a sudden illness, which he had neglected to treat despite medical warnings. He paints Allison as a courageous widow who single-handedly sailed the yacht to safety. Hewitt dismisses the murder charge as baseless and hints at questionable motives behind the prosecution. Stone, initially worried about Hewitt’s competence, is relieved by the strong defense opening, which balances Sir Winston’s theatrics.

The trial takes an unexpected turn when the prosecution calls Frank Stendahl, a claims investigator from Boston Mutual, as their first witness. Stendahl reveals Paul’s $12 million policy was the largest individual life insurance policy in the company’s 200-year history. He testifies that Paul was in excellent health, with no prior serious illnesses or family history of disease, undermining the defense’s illness narrative. The jury reacts visibly to the staggering insurance sum, while Stone is caught off guard by Stendahl’s testimony, realizing the prosecution’s strategy hinges on financial motive.

The chapter ends with tension mounting as Stendahl’s testimony continues, detailing Paul’s medical evaluations and robust physical condition. Stone’s unease grows, recognizing the prosecution’s effective use of evidence to challenge the defense’s claims. The unexpected witness and focus on Paul’s health and insurance policy heighten the stakes, leaving the defense scrambling to counter the narrative of premeditated murder for financial gain. The stage is set for a fierce legal battle, with both sides poised to present conflicting versions of Paul Manning’s death.



Chapter 51

In Chapter 51, attorney Stone questions Mr. Stendahl, an insurance investigator, about Paul Manning's medical history and insurance policy. Stone establishes that Manning had no prior medical records or insurance policies before his examination two years earlier. He then introduces a later medical report showing Manning’s poor health, suggesting Manning may have temporarily improved his health to secure insurance before reverting to unhealthy habits. Stone implies Manning’s wife, the beneficiary, had no motive to murder him since she claimed he died of a heart attack, not an accident, which would have doubled the payout.

Stone presses Stendahl on the double indemnity clause, highlighting the financial incentive for Manning’s wife to claim an accidental death if she had murdered him. However, since she did not, Stone argues this undermines the prosecution’s theory of premeditated murder. Stendahl concedes that a murderer would likely maximize profit, making Manning’s wife less likely to be guilty. Stone’s line of questioning shifts the narrative, suggesting the insurance company has a vested interest in proving murder to reclaim the $12 million payout.

The tension escalates as Stone confronts Stendahl about the insurance company’s bias, implying their pursuit of recovering funds clouds their objectivity. Stendahl reluctantly admits the company would seek to reclaim the money if Manning’s wife were convicted. Stone’s strategy succeeds in casting doubt on the prosecution’s motives, leaving the courtroom dynamic in his favor. The chapter ends with Stone feeling confident, as the playing field tilts toward the defense.

The prosecution then calls Captain Harold Beane of the St. Marks Constabulary, signaling a shift to police evidence. Stone braces for revelations about what the police may have discovered beyond the diary, setting the stage for further confrontation. The chapter closes with suspense, as the trial’s next phase promises to uncover new

evidence that could sway the case.



Chapter 52

The chapter opens with Sir Winston questioning Captain Beane about his investigation into the death of Paul Manning aboard the yacht *Expansive*. The captain recounts finding Allison Manning alone on the yacht, where she claimed her husband died of natural causes, likely a heart attack. However, a search of the yacht revealed no evidence supporting her claim but uncovered a diary written by Paul Manning. The diary contained disturbing entries suggesting marital strife and fear of his wife, including a passage where she threatened him with a knife. Sir Winston presents the diary as Exhibit Number One, hinting at foul play.

Sir Winston then focuses on potential weapons aboard the yacht, noting the presence of multiple knives and a spear gun. The captain confirms the spear gun could be lethal, even fired by someone with minimal strength or skill. A dramatic demonstration shows the spear gun’s deadly potential, leaving the jury to imagine its use in Paul Manning’s death. Sir Winston enters the spear gun as Exhibit Number Two, reinforcing the prosecution’s argument that Allison Manning had the means and motive to kill her husband, as suggested by the diary’s ominous passages.

Defense attorney Stone Barrington challenges the prosecution’s narrative by questioning the captain’s conclusions. He highlights that knives and spear guns are common on yachts and points out the lack of physical evidence, such as blood, linking them to a crime. Stone also scrutinizes the diary’s authenticity, suggesting it might be Paul Manning’s notes for a thriller novel rather than a personal account. The captain admits this possibility under cross-examination, weakening the prosecution’s reliance on the diary as incriminating evidence.

The chapter concludes with Sir Winston attempting to reinforce the captain’s credibility by emphasizing his 21 years of police experience. However, Stone’s effective cross-examination has cast doubt on the diary’s significance and the murder theory. The

tension between the prosecution and defense sets the stage for further legal battles, leaving the jury to weigh the conflicting interpretations of the evidence presented.



Chapter 53

Stone and Leslie Hewitt leave the courthouse after Allison’s bail is revoked, heading to a nearby restaurant frequented by government officials. Stone, still wearing his barrister’s robe and wig, is reminded by Hewitt to keep the wig on as a matter of protocol. They discuss whether to call Allison as a witness, with Stone arguing against it due to the prosecution’s weak case. Hewitt insists she must testify, explaining that in St. Marks, refusing to take the stand could imply guilt to the jury, and the prosecution would likely call her if the defense didn’t.

Hewitt elaborates on the legal system in St. Marks, contrasting it with American jurisprudence. He explains that the presumption of innocence is nominal, and jurors often convict based on a mere probability of guilt rather than requiring proof beyond reasonable doubt. The system, shaped by figures like Sir Winston and the prime minister, favors convictions. Stone expresses frustration, longing for the American system, while Hewitt acknowledges the flaws but accepts them as part of the local legal culture.

The conversation shifts to the political landscape of St. Marks, with Hewitt revealing that the 89-year-old prime minister has held power since 1966. Sir Winston, the prosecutor, is a potential successor, and a conviction in Allison’s case could bolster his political ambitions. Hewitt hints at the corrupt nature of the government, where officials like Sir Winston benefit from their positions. Stone questions whether Sir Winston would go so far as to execute Allison for political gain, to which Hewitt responds grimly, emphasizing the dangers of unchecked ambition in a small, power-centric society.

Hewitt concludes by expressing hope that defeating Sir Winston in court could derail his political aspirations. He describes a better alternative candidate for prime minister, one without Sir Winston’s flaws, and admits his personal stake in the case. A loss for

Sir Winston would diminish his influence, relegating him to private practice and his wife’s wealth. Hewitt’s motivation becomes clear: he sees the trial as a chance to strike a blow against corruption and vanity, offering a glimmer of optimism for St. Marks’ future.



Chapter 54

The chapter opens with the defense opting not to request a dismissal of charges against Allison Manning, despite deeming the prosecution's evidence weak. Sir Leslie Hewitt emphasizes their intention to have Manning testify to prove her innocence. The judge then allows the defense to proceed, and Stone Barrington calls James Forrester as their first witness. Forrester, a journalist and acquaintance of the deceased Paul Manning, provides background on their long-standing but intermittent relationship, describing Manning as pleasant and friendly during their encounters over the years.

Forrester recounts his most recent meeting with Paul and Allison Manning in the Canary Islands, where he dined with them aboard their yacht. He testifies that the couple appeared deeply affectionate and harmonious, sharing tasks like meal preparation. Notably, Forrester reveals that Paul mentioned working on a new novel titled *Dead in the Water* and showed him a leather-bound notebook, later identified as Prosecution Exhibit One. Forrester confirms the notebook contained writing notes, not a diary, and asserts it aligned with his impression of Paul's creative process.

The defense uses Forrester's testimony to challenge the prosecution's narrative, particularly regarding the state of the Mannings' marriage. Forrester describes seeing the couple again in Puerto Rico, where they seemed equally happy before sailing away. He confirms he was the last person, aside from Allison, to see Paul alive. Under cross-examination, however, Forrester's credibility is questioned when he admits he is not an expert on marriage and is currently divorcing. The prosecution highlights his limited interactions with the couple, undermining his ability to definitively assess their relationship.

The chapter concludes with the prosecution pressing Forrester on his lack of firsthand knowledge of events aboard the yacht after it departed Puerto Rico. Forrester concedes he relies solely on Allison Manning's account, leaving room for doubt about

the accuracy of his testimony. The exchange underscores the tension between the defense's portrayal of a happy marriage and the prosecution's skepticism, setting the stage for Allison Manning's anticipated testimony.



Chapter 55

In Chapter 55, Stone methodically questions Allison Manning about her relationship with her late husband, Paul, during her courtroom testimony. Allison recounts their meeting five years prior, their courtship, and eventual marriage, painting a picture of a loving partnership. She describes their modest beginnings in a small Greenwich Village apartment and how Paul's success as a novelist improved their lifestyle, allowing them to purchase a luxurious home and a custom-built yacht. The yacht, designed for single-handed sailing, became central to their lives, and Allison emphasizes their happiness and closeness during their travels.

Allison details their Atlantic voyage, highlighting the strength of their marriage despite the challenges of living in close quarters at sea. She emotionally recounts the tragic incident where Paul collapsed and died, leaving her to navigate the yacht alone. Her tearful testimony describes her struggle to learn sailing and celestial navigation, ultimately landing in St. Marks instead of Antigua. The jury appears moved by her account, and Stone skillfully guides her through the narrative, reinforcing her credibility as she swears to the truth of her statements.

The tone shifts dramatically when Sir Winston, the opposing counsel, begins his cross-examination. He aggressively accuses Allison of murdering Paul for financial gain, referencing his earnings and a $12 million insurance policy. Allison, visibly angered, vehemently denies the allegations, shouting her innocence. Sir Winston's line of questioning suggests a calculated attempt to undermine her credibility, implying she grew to resent Paul during their prolonged time at sea. The tension escalates as Allison struggles to maintain composure under his accusatory tone.

The chapter concludes with a stark contrast between Allison's heartfelt testimony and Sir Winston's hostile interrogation. Stone's careful preparation of Allison appears successful, as her emotional recounting of Paul's death resonates with the jury.

However, Sir Winston’s abrupt accusations introduce doubt, setting the stage for a contentious legal battle. The chapter effectively builds suspense, leaving the reader questioning the true nature of Paul’s death and Allison’s role in it.



Chapter 56

The chapter opens with Sir Winston Sutherland delivering a dramatic closing argument, portraying Allison Manning as a manipulative murderer who killed her husband, Paul Manning, for financial gain. He paints a vivid picture of her alleged crimes, emphasizing the absence of physical evidence while appealing to the jury's sense of justice. Sir Winston urges the jury to convict Allison, framing their decision as a moral duty to uphold St. Marks' zero-tolerance stance toward murder. His argument relies heavily on emotional rhetoric, suggesting Allison exploited her husband's trust and disposed of evidence in the vast Atlantic Ocean.

Sir Leslie Hewitt, the defense counsel, counters with a sharp critique of the prosecution's lack of evidence and the biased nature of the trial. He dismisses the diary presented as proof of Allison's guilt, arguing it was merely notes for Paul's novel. Hewitt highlights the absurdity of condemning Allison for commonplace items like kitchen knives and harpoons, stressing that opportunity does not equate to guilt. He appeals to the jury's conscience, reminding them of Allison's credible testimony and the absence of witnesses supporting the prosecution's claims. Hewitt's closing emphasizes the jury's responsibility to acquit an innocent woman.

The judge's charge to the jury is notably brief, instructing them to deliberate based on the evidence and reach a majority verdict. Stone Barrington, Allison's co-counsel, expresses disbelief at the judge's lack of guidance, while Sir Leslie remains pragmatic about the jury's dynamics. The chapter ends with the jury retiring to deliberate, leaving Allison and her legal team anxious about the outcome. Sir Leslie's assessment of the jury's potential biases—particularly their ties to Sir Winston—underscores the political undercurrents influencing the trial.

The tension builds as Allison joins her lawyers to await the verdict. Sir Leslie's cautious optimism hinges on the foreman, his former tailor, and the younger juror's

susceptibility to peer pressure. Stone’s frustration with the judicial process reflects the high stakes of the case. The chapter leaves readers questioning whether justice will prevail or if the trial’s outcome will be swayed by Sir Winston’s influence and the jury’s vulnerabilities. The unresolved verdict sets the stage for the next chapter’s climax.



Chapter 57

In Chapter 57, Stone reunites with journalists Hilary Kramer and Jim Forrester after a court session, where they express confidence in his defense team’s performance and question the legitimacy of the trial. Kramer criticizes the lack of evidence, comparing it unfavorably to American courts, while Stone acknowledges the unique challenges of St. Marks’ legal system. The discussion turns to the jury’s potential biases, as Stone reveals that jurors’ personal connections to Sir Winston, a powerful figure, could influence the verdict. Despite the optimism, Stone remains cautious, aware that the trial’s outcome hinges on unpredictable factors.

The group speculates about the timing of the verdict, with Stone noting that St. Marks juries typically deliver quick decisions. However, the prolonged deliberation suggests a contentious debate among jurors. Hewitt, the defense attorney, remains hopeful, interpreting the delay as a sign of thorough consideration. Meanwhile, Allison, the defendant, expresses optimism, but Stone privately worries about the possibility of a guilty verdict. The tension builds as the courtroom grows quieter, with only a few reporters remaining to witness the outcome.

The jury finally returns with a shocking verdict: Allison is found guilty of murder, causing an uproar in the courtroom. Stone attempts to reassure Allison, who is visibly stunned and pale. Hewitt immediately submits an appeal to the prime minister, hoping to delay sentencing, but the judge insists on proceeding. The courtroom atmosphere grows increasingly grim as the judge prepares to deliver the sentence, with Allison struggling to maintain composure. The abrupt verdict leaves Stone and the defense team reeling, as their hopes for an acquittal are dashed.

The chapter concludes with the judge sentencing Allison to death by hanging at sunset the following day. Allison collapses in shock, and the courtroom erupts into chaos as Stone and the bailiff rush to her aid. The abrupt and harsh sentence underscores the

brutality of St. Marks’ legal system, leaving little room for hope. Despite Hewitt’s assurances about the appeal process, the chapter ends on a bleak note, emphasizing the precariousness of Allison’s situation and the emotional toll on everyone involved.



Chapter 58

The chapter opens with Allison collapsing in court after being convicted, prompting Stone and the bailiff to rush to her aid. She is carried on a stretcher to a jail cell, where she gradually regains consciousness, feeling weak and disoriented. Stone reassures her that her appeal has been sent to the prime minister, though he privately worries about the hammering sounds outside, hinting at preparations for her execution. Allison eats a meal provided by a kind jail worker while Stone and Sir Leslie try to comfort her, though the tension in the scene is palpable.

Stone leaves the jail to gather Allison’s personal belongings and make urgent phone calls to rally support for her appeal. He encounters journalists Hilary Kramer and Jim Forrester, who express shock at the verdict. Stone strategizes with Forrester to leverage media pressure, suggesting travel editors protest the potential harm to St. Marks’ tourism. Kramer agrees to expedite a news piece condemning the verdict, while Stone delivers a passionate quote emphasizing the injustice of Allison’s conviction and urging public outcry.

Returning to the marina, Stone uses a satellite phone to contact his colleague Bill Eggers in the U.S., outlining a frantic plan to mobilize political and media pressure. He instructs Eggers to involve the State Department, senators, and PR teams to flood the prime minister with protests, hoping to sway the appeal. Stone’s desperation is clear as he emphasizes the urgency of the situation, knowing Allison’s life hangs in the balance.

The chapter closes with Stone gathering Allison’s belongings and returning to the jail late at night, only to find the door locked. A sleepy guard reluctantly lets him in, underscoring the bureaucratic indifference surrounding Allison’s plight. The scene underscores the race against time as Stone works tirelessly to overturn the verdict, while the ominous hammering lingers as a grim reminder of what awaits if he fails.

Chapter 59

Stone, after a brief rest, begins his day by coordinating efforts to free Allison, who is imprisoned in St. Marks. He contacts Bill Eggers, who updates him on the progress made overnight, including media coverage and political outreach. The Today Show features Eggers, who shares the prime minister's fax number, sparking public outrage. Stone visits Allison in jail, where she remains surprisingly composed despite the dire circumstances. Leslie Hewitt, her local attorney, arrives with breakfast and reveals the prime minister is inundated with protests, though his response remains uncertain.

The pressure on St. Marks' government intensifies as U.S. officials, including Senator Helms and the White House, intervene. Stone remains hopeful the growing backlash will force the prime minister to reconsider Allison's execution. Meanwhile, ominous sounds from a newly constructed scaffold in the jail's courtyard hint at the impending danger. Hewitt shares a grim anecdote about a past client who was hanged, underscoring the stakes. Stone and Hewitt agree to reconvene later, clinging to the hope that public and diplomatic pressure will sway the prime minister.

Back at the marina, Stone fields calls from journalists and even the president's secretary, who confirms a diplomatic cable has been sent. The media frenzy temporarily subsides, leaving Stone to reflect on the situation with Thomas, a local ally. Their conversation turns somber as Thomas reveals the infrequency but inevitability of executions in St. Marks. Stone grapples with the reality of Allison's predicament, hoping the collective efforts will avert a tragic outcome.

The chapter culminates in a tense waiting game, with Stone balancing optimism and dread. While the international outcry grows, the prime minister's stubbornness remains a wild card. Stone's determination to save Allison is palpable, but the scaffold's presence looms large, symbolizing the urgency of their mission. The narrative leaves readers questioning whether diplomacy and public pressure will be

enough to overcome the island’s harsh justice system.



Chapter 60

The chapter opens with Stone meeting Leslie Hewitt outside the jail, both anxious for updates on Allison Manning’s impending execution. Hewitt reveals the prime minister’s office has gone silent, refusing to communicate despite their efforts. With the execution deadline set for sundown at 7:59 PM, tension mounts as they realize time is running out. Inside the jail, they join Hilary Kramer and Jim Forrester, who are equally tense, though Forrester admits his reluctance to face Allison, hinting at his emotional turmoil over the situation.

Stone and Hewitt visit Allison in her cell, where she appears calm despite the grim circumstances. She mentions being stripped of personal belongings and tries to distract herself by reading *David Copperfield*. The group sits in prolonged silence, interrupted only by a jailer who denies her request for water, signaling the execution’s imminent approach. Small talk about future plans feels hollow, and the arrival of Reverend John Wills underscores the gravity of the moment. The priest’s presence forces Stone and Hewitt to leave, granting Allison a private moment for spiritual solace.

Outside, Stone and the others wait anxiously as Hewitt attempts again to contact the prime minister, only to find the phone unanswered. Forrester’s distress grows, voicing disbelief that Allison could actually be hanged, while Kramer remains steadfast. The priest eventually emerges, noting Allison’s resigned demeanor, and invites Kramer and Forrester to see her briefly. Forrester, however, cannot bring himself to enter, leaving Kramer to deliver Allison’s gratitude for her supportive reporting.

As the clock ticks toward 7:35 PM, Allison makes practical arrangements, naming Stone as her next of kin and entrusting Hewitt with posthumous instructions. Despite Stone’s reassurances, Allison’s calm acceptance of her fate contrasts sharply with the group’s lingering hope for a last-minute reprieve. The chapter closes with an unspoken

dread, as the characters brace for the final moments, their silence echoing the uncertainty of whether the prime minister will intervene.



Chapter 61

The chapter opens with Stone and Hewitt parting ways after a surreal encounter, marked by a sense of closure and unresolved questions. Hewitt reveals that Allison has already paid Leslie’s fee and hands Stone a thick envelope, instructing him to open it aboard her yacht. Their exchange hints at deeper layers of Hewitt’s character, as Stone realizes the barrister’s senility is a ruse. The two men share mutual respect, with Hewitt implying Stone’s actions have had a lasting impact on St. Marks, though the specifics remain unclear. Their farewell is warm yet tinged with melancholy.

Stone drives away, emotionally drained, and returns to the marina, only to see Allison’s yacht departing. He boards another vessel, *Expansive*, and calls Bill Eggers to confirm Allison’s execution, which leaves him devastated. Stone delegates the press release to Eggers, their conversation brief and somber. The mention of Arrington’s relationship with Vance Calder adds another layer of personal loss, though Stone dismisses it with resigned acceptance. Exhausted, he postpones reviewing Allison’s will, highlighting his emotional and physical fatigue.

The chapter underscores Stone’s grief as he collapses into bed, finally allowing himself to weep for Allison and himself. His actions throughout the scene—driving mechanically, avoiding confrontation with the yacht’s skipper, and deferring tasks—reflect his numbness. The weight of the day’s events culminates in this private moment of vulnerability, revealing the depth of his connection to Allison and the toll of his efforts to save her. The setting, with its dim lighting and solitary atmosphere, mirrors his isolation.

Ultimately, the chapter portrays Stone’s journey from professional resolve to personal despair. Hewitt’s cryptic remarks suggest broader consequences of Stone’s involvement, leaving room for future developments. The interplay of duty, loss, and unspoken truths drives the narrative, with Stone’s emotional breakdown serving as the

poignant climax. The chapter closes on a note of unresolved sorrow, setting the stage for his return and potential reckoning with the events in St. Marks.



Chapter 62

The chapter opens with Stone waking from a vivid dream about Allison, only to find her beside him in reality. Disoriented and shocked, he struggles to reconcile his dream with her sudden presence, especially after believing she had been executed. Allison reassures him, explaining that her survival was part of a secret plan orchestrated by Leslie, who bribed the retiring prime minister to overturn her conviction. Stone is stunned by the revelation, as Leslie had kept the plan hidden to avoid interference, knowing Stone would likely oppose such a risky move. The bribe, a million-dollar cashier’s check, was discreetly included with the appeal documents.

Allison elaborates on the details, revealing that Leslie confirmed the bribe’s success during a phone call from jail, but secrecy was paramount to avoid alerting Sir Winston Sutherland, the committed prosecutor. She emphasizes the need for Stone to maintain the ruse of her death to prevent scrutiny from the press or authorities. Stone, still processing the emotional whiplash, learns that Allison was secretly transported to a motor yacht after her staged execution. She returned briefly to explain the situation and bid him farewell, as she must now disappear to avoid detection. Their reunion is bittersweet, marked by relief and lingering tension.

Before leaving, Allison gives Stone an envelope containing her “last wishes,” including legal documents transferring her yacht, *Expansive*, to him as payment for his services. She makes him promise to honor her requests as if she were truly dead, ensuring her disappearance remains convincing. Their goodbye is emotional, with Allison expressing gratitude for their time together and hinting at future reunions. Stone watches her depart on a tender, leaving him alone with the envelope and a whirlwind of emotions.

After Allison’s departure, Stone opens the envelope to find a heartfelt letter and legal paperwork finalizing the yacht’s transfer. The letter reveals Allison’s insistence on the

arrangement and her appreciation for Stone’s efforts, despite the chaos. Overwhelmed, Stone drinks brandy to calm his nerves, realizing sleep will be impossible. The chapter closes with him grappling with the surreal turn of events, the weight of Allison’s secrets, and the unexpected ownership of her yacht, leaving his future uncertain but undeniably changed.



Chapter 63

Stone begins his day by inspecting his newly acquired yacht, *Expansive*, familiarizing himself with its equipment and rigging. He notes the yacht’s simplicity despite its size and spends time repairing and adjusting the sails, including the mainsail and genoa. His work reveals a previous elegant repair, suggesting skilled prior maintenance. Satisfied with the yacht’s condition, Stone prepares for departure, only to be interrupted by the arrival of Thomas Hardy and Leslie Hewitt, who bring urgent news about a legal threat to his ownership.

Leslie informs Stone that Sir Winston Sutherland, the Minister of Justice, has filed a petition to seize *Expansive* to cover trial costs related to Allison’s case. Recognizing the immediacy of the threat, Stone springs into action, instructing Thomas to gather provisions while he prepares the yacht for a hasty departure. Amid the chaos, Stone confronts Leslie about his lack of transparency during Allison’s trial, revealing his frustration but acknowledging the favorable outcome. The tension escalates as Sir Winston arrives with a legal order, forcing Stone to leave the harbor swiftly.

With Thomas’s assistance, Stone maneuvers *Expansive* out of the harbor, narrowly evading Sir Winston’s grasp. Once at sea, Stone raises the sails, cuts the engine, and enjoys the tranquility of sailing. He expresses gratitude to Thomas, promising future hospitality in New York, and reflects on their strong friendship. As Thomas departs in the dinghy, Stone sets course for the open sea, emotionally moved by the moment but focused on the journey ahead.

Later, under the autopilot’s guidance, Stone reflects on recent events, noting inconsistencies that warrant further investigation. The next day, he contacts his secretary and enlists Bob Cantor’s help to research unresolved questions. The chapter concludes with Stone embracing his newfound freedom aboard *Expansive*, determined to uncover the truth while savoring the solitude of the sea.

Epilogue

The epilogue opens with Stone enjoying a peaceful morning in his Turtle Bay garden, reflecting on Allison's disappearance and his unanswered attempts to contact her. His secretary, Alma, delivers a substantial check from the sale of a yacht, sparking a lighthearted exchange about their newfound wealth. Stone allocates portions of the money to settle debts and taxes, humorously lamenting the latter, while considering purchasing an airplane. The scene shifts as Stone investigates his garage, only to be interrupted by an unexpected visitor—Jim Forrester, who quickly reveals himself to be Paul Manning in disguise.

Stone confronts Manning about his true identity, referencing discrepancies in his background and a yearbook photo that exposes his deception. Manning, now cornered, admits to his elaborate ruse but remains evasive about his motives. The tension escalates as Stone refuses to represent him legally, recognizing Manning's attempt to exploit attorney-client privilege. Their conversation reveals Manning's bitterness toward Allison, whom he believes thwarted his financial plans by moving funds from their shared account before her trial.

The dialogue delves into Manning's meticulous planning, including weight loss and forged identities, to evade detection. Stone deduces that Manning staged the theft of his dinghy in Las Palmas as part of his escape plan. Manning's frustration peaks as he realizes Allison may still be alive, outsmarting him just as he had intended to outsmart others. Stone taunts him about the challenges of tracking her down, given the skills Manning himself taught her.

The chapter concludes with Manning's unresolved anger and Stone's quiet triumph in unraveling the truth. The encounter underscores themes of deception and retribution, leaving Manning's future uncertain and Stone satisfied with his own investigative prowess. The epilogue ties up loose ends while hinting at the lingering consequences

of Manning's actions, maintaining the novel's suspenseful and introspective tone.

