



Orchid Beach

Stuart Woods

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Smart, attractive, and fiercely independent, Major Holly Barker, the army brat daughter of a master sergeant, has been forced into early retirement at the age of thirty-seven as the result of a scandalous sexual harassment case. With the help of her dad, she makes the move to civilian life, becoming deputy chief of police in Orchid Beach, Florida.

But below the calm, sunny surface of this sleepy, well-to-do coastal island town lies a web of evil and deceit that escalates when a colleague and another associate are brutally gunned down. Alone, an outsider with no clues to go on, finding the killers won't be easy for Holly, and her seemingly low-key new career soon thrusts her into a dangerous game of cat and mouse. Surrounded by a staff of officers she neither knows nor trusts, Holly finds help in a most unexpected source -- Daisy, a Doberman of exceptional intelligence and loyalty who quickly becomes her inseparable companion and protector. The closer she gets to unraveling the mystery of Orchid Beach, however, the nearer Holly comes to a danger darker and more deadly than any she could have ever anticipated.

Orchid Beach Details

Date : Published (first published 1998)

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Author : Stuart Woods

Format : Kindle Edition 451 pages

Genre : Mystery, Fiction, Suspense, Thriller

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From Reader Review Orchid Beach for online ebook

Kim says

The first 100 pages I found somewhat boring. Everything worked out too neatly and conveniently. I didn't understand the characters from an emotional stand point. It was if they just said "Oh, that's sad. Let's take just a moment and now we are over it." If a good friend died then I couldn't move into their house that same day.

I have issues with Holly. The book starts out with her accusing someone of sexual harassment. Then, later she is almost raped. Another woman is raped and way too many details were provided in that little scenario. Then, she takes the insult of being called a bitch as a compliment. Meanwhile, she takes the stereotypically emotional role of a man. So the implied moral of the story here is yes you can be a woman in a position of authority but you will be victimized and you better just suck it up and take it like a man. Ugh.

I also felt the conclusion of the book was a letdown. All this mystery and intrigue were built around this exclusive place. I was expecting a bigger or perhaps more interesting secret to unfold. I also got bored with all the details of their military maneuvers. I'm glad I have finished this book. I am eager to read something better and forget this one.

Cecily Kyle says

When I first started this novel, I really was worried that I was not going to like it. The cover really didn't give me much of an impression and I had chose it just because it fit a challenge that I was working on.

Well I was pleasantly surprised with Holly Barker, I love her take no prisoners attitude. I liked that she was both soft and likable, but can lead a group of powerful people. People seem to underestimate her and it always seems to give her the advantage!! And the dog! Though dobermans are not my favourite type of dog (and I'm a cat person), I loved her, and I loved the extra dynamic she gave the story.

I can't wait to see where this series goes.

Great Read!

Kayla says

This was my first Stuart Wood book and I absolutely loved it. I was guessing all the way up to the last few chapters. I cant wait to keep reading more of his books!!!

Catten says

Stuart Woods has been knocking out suspense fiction for awhile now; I believe Orchid Beach made number 19 in the fiction category for him. If you're looking for another mystery author to add to your list, don't miss this one.

Woods has a clever way with setting, and the small island community in Florida called Orchid Beach is very tangible. As characters visit different parts of the town, the reader is given a good look at the location and its recognizable features.

The plot swerves delightfully, from a pair of almost immediate murders to a red herring or three. Everyone isn't a suspect, but you'll wonder until the very end who you can trust.

The main character is a 37-year-old retired Army major who has relocated to Orchid Beach to become the deputy police chief – and Holly is perfectly capable of handling her new duties. Her adopted, beer-retrieving sidekick, a Doberman Pinscher named Daisy, is a tough customer too.

Woods clearly does his homework and the way he explains things to his reader through his characters' conversations and observations is excellent. One doesn't feel insulted or talked down to. I was willing to overlook some of the more far-fetched parts — like the dog's heroics — in trade for a great plot and brisk pace.

But there was one area that I felt let down: The characters are flat. There's not enough warmth in the people. Holly is savvy and sharp; likeable, maybe, but not terribly lovable. Her relationship with her father seems both distant and close at the same time and left me feeling unconvinced that they could be completely comfortable with each other.

However, the book carries everything else off so well, one might be willing to overlook that in favor of a page-turner like Orchid Beach. It's certainly worth the investment of an afternoon's read.

Melissa says

This is the first book in the Holly Barker series which has potential, but I'm not convinced of it yet. What really put me off was the overwhelming theme of sex-gone-bad. When the book starts, the military police officer Holly has just lost a sexual harassment case against her boss, a General, I believe. It even got to the point where he had apparently tried to rape her. But now she's moving on...until in her new role as Deputy Sheriff (or something like that), she stumbles upon a big mystery...several of them, actually. One of them involves a woman getting killed (which would be sufficient, in my opinion, to demonstrate that the bad guys are in fact really bad "bad guys". But nope, the author has to also mention that the woman was raped and I'll stop there (though the book doesn't). Very unnecessary, but I kept reading. Later, Holly herself, despite knowing that the bad guys have a penchant for rape and murder, actually drives out to a very secluded spot where of course, someone tries to rape her! Argh! Once again, not necessary for letting me know the guy is an evil man. I'd already figured that part out, thank you very much. Other online reviews basically say the same thing.

One really good part is that Holly adopts a Doberman from a murder victim (who trained the dog). This female dog's file reads across the top "Excellent Working B----" which is of course, proper terminology. Holly thinks it's an apt description for herself as well and a friendship is born.

I'm willing to give Stuart Woods' Holly Barker series another go, but if even one woman gets raped, I'm stopping, 'cause this is not the kind of trend I need in my mysteries.

Pierre Tassé says

This was a fun book to read. Stuart Woods came up with a good story line and lots of entertaining and complex plot lines. I thought the use of military/police and the introduction of Holly into his Stone Barrington series has made the web that much more interesting. I did not know the Holly Series existed but it has been around for a while.

It would do you good to read Holly #1 as you start the Barrington series. I have enjoyed both. I am anxious to see where Holly actually gets involved with Stone from the Holly perspective.

Lyndsy says

I like the main character, Holly Barker. It's nice to see him write a female lead character. Woods does an okay job building up her character, but I dislike how quickly things move for her with respect to some aspects of her personal life. It's missing a bit of development. Of course, these aren't romance novels, but if you're going to throw it in, do it right.

I also really like that her dad's a part of the books. I think it'll add some fun people dynamics to it. Parents ALWAYS complicate things.

Otherwise, the story packs the same kind of punch that all of his other series books do. I look forward to reaching the intersection of this series with the Stone Barrington books.

William says

Enjoyed this once I got used to the female narrator
Good journey that led to an unremarkable ending

Freda Malone says

Orchid Beach starts out with Holly Barker, a 38 year old female Army MP Major, charging the Provost Marshal with attempted rape. There is a quick overview of the case, and just as quickly, the Colonel is acquitted. Immediately following this story is a meeting with Holly Barker, her father, Hamilton Barker and a Vietnam army buddy of Ham's, Chet Marley. At first glance, I thought this was going to be a book about the Army and a continuous stream of attempted rape cases or rape itself. When it was detoured to Holly resigning from the Army and accepting a job offer from Chet Marley in Orchid Beach Florida, it confused me at first. What was the purpose of the court martial and attempted rape story if it wasn't going to continue. I moved on.

Holly arrives at Orchid Beach several weeks later, parks her trailer, which is now her new home and begins to look forward to her new career as the deputy chief of Orchid Beach. Little does she know that the Chief, Chet Marley has been shot in the head. I was not surprised to see Holly take charge the following morning

when she hears her Chief and boss has been shot. I instantly liked Holly Barker. She became a no-nonsense, take charge, orderly and competent lead character. As she discovers another body, that of Hank, Chet's comrade-in-arms and friend dead in his home, the mystery expands. Hank was disabled veteran and dog trainer, shot in the head with Chief Marley's very own police issued shot gun. Holly finds Daisy, Hank's dog and realizes this isn't just your ordinary dog. When she takes Daisy home with her, Daisy instantly becomes another one of my favorites.

I was relieved to see that this wasn't your typical 'damaged' cop(s) type novel. It truly focused on the mystery of the crimes and did not elaborate on police officers that were alcoholics, angry about their divorces, never seeing their kids, or corrupt. It was strictly centered on solving the crimes - Holly Barker had it all under control, with the help of Chief Marley's assistant, Jane Grey, a Defense Attorney she falls for, an FBI agent, Daisy the wonder dog and her father, Ham Barker.

I really enjoyed this book. It had some twists and turns in a few chapters but was not overwhelmingly crowded with them. I loved the location and it's description. I liked the type of villains incorporated into the story and the ending was fast paced. I would have liked to have read more about Daisy but that is a personal preference, being that I am a service dog handler and trainer.

I would recommend this book as a crime mystery with limited suspense and a lot of dog hair.

Shannon says

I liked it alot first book i read from this person

Avigail says

Well, now I understand what is the meaning to read a book in one seating. I started the book at 18:30 and finished it at 02:25. I am a slow reader, but the booked sucked me in from the first sentence.

I was browsing through a bookshelf that I usually don't look for books, but this time Orchid Beach did captivate me. It is my first Stuart Woods book, but it indeed isn't my last, and as I saw he has a lot of books. Holly is a solid female character, mainly working in a very patriarchal type of work, she is very opinionated and will put men at their place if she has to. I will give a trigger warning for violence and rape, but if you picked to read a murder mystery, you know the chances of that.

Daisy the Doberman is a very smart one, she is faithful, and I can't wait will Holly and Daisy have in the next books.

The only thing that I didn't like is the fast love interest, for me, it was fast, and that is the reason I give this book a 4.5-stars.

I liked the collaboration between Orchid Beach PD and the FBI, you don't see it so much in books, and it was an interesting one. In this book you two generations of military, the generation of Holly's father and Holly's generation.

This book was published in 1998 and I really like it.

Kristen says

In Stuart Woods's Orchid Beach, the first installment in the Holly Barker thriller series, this tale would raise your eyebrows and make you hold your breath. After Holly Barker retires from the military, she receives an offer to help out a family friend, Sheriff Chet Marley from the Orchid Beach PD down in Florida. He has some suspicious information he wanted to tell her. But when she arrives in Orchid Beach, as his deputy sheriff, she later learns that he's been shot and is in a coma. As the new sheriff in town, she has suspicions of her own in her new department, when she learns about another murder of Hank Doherty, another family friend. She adopted Doherty's dog Daisy and meets Jackson Oxenhandler, an attorney she met on the first week on the job, and the sparks fly between them. From there, her father retires from the military to join her and wants to help her out pull off a special operation. Under the close scrutiny of the city council to be the new sheriff, she learns about a secret military base on Palmetto Gardens that's closed off to the public and heavily guarded. She becomes under attack and wary of a police mole, until they learn new inside information and bring in the big guns as in the feds to shut that operation down and eliminate the man in charge for going further in a showdown you wouldn't believe in the end.

Olivermagnus says

It's been a number of years since I read this series so I decided to go back and see how Holly Barker started out. She's a major in the Army's Military Police but when she loses a sexual harassment suit she's filed against her boss, she knows her career is over. She accepts a job as Deputy Police Chief in Orchid Beach Florida under her dad's old pal Chet Marley..

When she arrives in Orchid Beach she discovers that he has been shot and is in critical condition. Holly heads out to meet Chet's close friend, wheelchair bound Hank Doherty, and finds him killed in a similar manner. She also meets one of the most amazing dogs, a Doberman Pinscher named Daisy. Holly is also met with resistance by some members of the town police and has to fight them as well as find out who shot Chet and Hank

The plot progresses quickly and the book is a fast read with likable characters. If you already read Stuart Woods novels, you'll be familiar with the style. I've grown weary of his Stone Barrington series and this was a nice change if you're not looking for anything too detail oriented.

Andrea Corley says

Title: Orchid Beach

Author: Stuart Woods

Narrator: Debra Monk

Length: Unabridged; 5 hours 29 minutes

Publisher: Harper Audio

Published: August 1998

Genres: Fiction; Mystery

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My Rating: ★★★★★

Synopsis:

New York Times bestselling author Stuart Woods delivers a riveting thriller that introduces an exciting addition to the pantheon of fictional sleuths.

Forced into early retirement at thirty-seven, smart, attractive, and fiercely independent Major Holly Barker trades in her bars as a military cop for the badge of deputy chief of police in Orchid Beach, Florida. But below the sunny surface of this sleepy, well-to-do island town lies an evil that escalates into the cold-blooded murder of one of Holly's new colleagues.

An outsider, Holly has little to go on for answers and no one to help her—except Daisy, a Doberman of exceptional intelligence and loyalty that becomes her companion and protector. The closer Holly gets to the truth, the more she knows that it'll take one smart dog with guts to sniff out this killer—before he can catch her first.

My Review:

I typically don't pick up older books to read, but it just happen to be that the end of the year was nearing and I needed to complete a challenge with a flower/plant in the title, and I came across Orchid Beach. I had never read anything by Stuart Woods before, but I must say that this was a gem of a find! Once I finished, I was already trying to figure out how to get my hands on Orchid Blues, book 2!

The narrator was a wonderful fit for Major Holly Barker, whose character I absolutely adored! I loved her carefree don't give a crap what anybody thinks attitude and her drive to get the job done as quickly and efficiently as possible! The narrator kept me entertained throughout the entire book and made it seem like the story was over in no time! She also did a great job distinguishing herself between the different characters, so as not to confuse the reader as to who was actually talking! Her reading was smooth and animated in all the right spots! I hope to hear her on the next book!

Back to the characters...there was an interesting cast of characters in this book! All of their personalities were so unique of that from anything that I've read before, and I think I enjoyed that the most! Of course, Daisy the Dog is my favorite, but Holly is a close second!

I enjoyed the writing of Woods and his style. I felt that it flowed smoothly and concisely. He is really in tune with creative writing at its best and provides the perfect amount of romance and suspense, without the romance overpowering the suspense. He has a great sense of climax and did a wonderful job of keeping the reader going until the very end.

Overall, I really enjoyed this book, and have just found myself a new author and series to follow! I've already got Orchid Blues and will be starting it soon, on audio as well! Thanks for a great book/series, Mr. Woods!

Kerry says

Because I have read a later books with this character in it (Holly Barker) it was nice to go back and read from the beginning to see what she's all about and where she came from. I have two more Holly Barker books to read before catching up to the ones I've already read. My first Holly Barker book was one where she appeared in one of the Stone Barrington character books. I'm looking forward to reading the other two Barker books now - funny how the author did that (to introduce her and hook all those Stone Barrington

fans) :)!
