

Beware the Barracuda

Donald Robert Wilson

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Since 9/11, when the unfathomable became reality, most Americans have come to believe anything is possible. In *Beware the Barracuda*, some of the most frightening possibilities become reality.

When an investigative reporter dies under mysterious circumstances, Senator Hamilton believes it is evidence of an economic plot to take over the government. With his assistant, Sophie Woznicki, he works to thwart the cartel of corrupt and conniving businessmen. This powerful alliance is determined to dominate the United States through its weak spot, the economy. The group becomes divided, and one faction has no qualms about using violence as a means to an end. When four major government sites are bombed on Thanksgiving Day, more rifts appear within the clandestine alliance.

Sophie attempts to recruit Brad James into the fight. Brad, like the conspirators, is the CEO of a powerful corporation. Little does Brad know, he is already fully entrenched in the subterfuge, surrounded in his personal life by some of its major players-Neptune in a sea of barracudas. Though his skepticism is not easily overcome, Brad eventually becomes convinced and plunges into the chaos, swept along on the tide of murderous businessmen, revengeful terrorists, and personal betrayals.

Beware the Barracuda is the second book by Wilson, who served in the Navy at the end of World War II and spent his professional life as a teacher and principal. His eye for detail and depth of research are clear right from the first few pages. As his characters debate the possibility of this debacle, a plethora of information is revealed from both sides of the issue. Wilson is adept at crafting a unique turn of phrase, and it is at those moments when the author's potential is most apparent. For example, he writes, "She heard a second crash as she started down the outside stairs. A bullet whined past and spat against the cement as she ran into the dim recesses of the alley."

Unfortunately, the many contrived aspects of the plot overshadow the writing. There are far too many convenient coincidences and implausible postulations to keep the story compelling. For example, according to the story, there are thousands of companies that could be involved in the conspiracy, yet two of the five participants have close ties to Brad James; one is his tennis partner, the other his wife's employer. In another instance, the hero of the story is surprised that a service would be held for him when he is presumed dead. And worse, he "had not thought about a funeral for Melanie either," his recently murdered daughter. Such expedient quirks of fate disrupt the flow of the story and damage readers' confidence.

Wilson shows glimpses of real promise, evident in the adept technical aspects of the writing. He's almost there, like the perfect word that lingers on the tip of the tongue that can't quite be grasped.

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