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Salt Water: and Other Stories

Barbara Wilson
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Veteran novelist and nominee for the Lambda Library Award (If You Had A Family, 1996), Wilson has brought together nine of her best shorts in this most recent work. A brilliant feminist writer, she explores the relationships between women, society and politics without standing on a soapbox or losing the humanness of her characters.

Wilson's title story explores the passion and mystery of intrigue, obsession and romance between two women—an American professor and a Swedish-German painter—against the backdrop of an island off the Swedish coast near Goteberg. They learn the watchers dance of intimacy; a dance often performed by two people attracted to one another, but initially unable to put those feelings into words or actions. In "Is This Enough For You," Wilson deals with the opposing topic to "Salt Water"—instead of looking at the beginning, the elongated process of saying goodbye is related. She has a way of capturing in words the experiences most have had in relationships, describing the ending of a long-term relationship between a couple: "Both of them, at bottom, know that this relationship is no longer possible for them, that it has no future. But when it comes time to actually pronounce the words that will set them free of each other, the future seems less important than the past." Some stories, such as "Wood," remind one of the whisperings of a local neighborhood, while others reveal the stresses and strains that a woman can suffer when society as a whole judges without knowing her.

Wilson's stories have something to say about the realities that touch everyone's lives.

MICHELE MCDONALD (March / April 1999)

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