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with its unscrupulous use of sonar. The NRDC initially won a preliminary injunction against sonar use and eventually protections in key whale breeding grounds and coastal regions. The court order allowed naval sonar exercises to continue with certain safeguards but, while Reynolds saw the Navy's concessions as a victory, more radical environmentalists saw it as a sellout on the NRDC's part.

"Reynolds wasn't surprised. He reminded himself that while some of his critics might be good at mobilizing public protests and press coverage, none of them had ever successfully sued the Navy over its use of sonar. As he'd learned over the years, the hardest part of his job was deciding when to litigate and when to cut a good-enough deal which — as in this case — was often on the table for only a brief moment."

The only problem is that the Navy had the power to write the laws in the face of continual mass strandings, public protest and even lower-court laws. It appealed all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court and won an exemption to environmental regulations, including the Endangered Species Act and the Clean Water Act, in the name of national security, which the public valued even more than sports, especially after 9/11.

"(Justice John) Roberts invoked two presidential quotations to bookend his decision. He opened his opinion with George Washington's statement: 'To be prepared for war is one of the most effectual means of preserving peace.' Twenty-four pages later, he closed with Theodore Roosevelt 'The only way in which a navy can ever be made efficient is by practice at sea, under all the conditions which would have to be met if war existed.'" So now, "having barely escaped commercial whaling, were the survivors doomed to be overrun by the ceaseless naval arms race after more and more powerful acoustic weapons? Would judges and politicians continue to defer to admirals in their 'balance of hardships' calculations until there were no more whales left to save?"

Horwitz's narrative is almost soggy with backstory and personal histories of many of the major players. From Balcomb's fourth failed marriage, which comes so abruptly, one holds out hope until the last page of the epilogue that it may be repaired, to Reynolds' engagement after the breakup of his first marriage to the scientist who dictated the date of D-Day by forecasting a two-day window of windless weather, the behind-the-scenes look at some of the nation's most well-known memories is

intriguing, if a little overwhelming. And I'm a bit uncomfortable with how Horwitz portrays women and relationships: The single professional women, such as forensic pathologist and whale and human hearing expert Darlene Ketten, come off as frigid and somewhat backstabbing; Ken's wives and girlfriends seem fickle and less committed than the whales he studies.

The book is about the struggle to protect the magnificent marine life that is so elusive it's enchanting, but the potential inferences that can be made from the character stories about women are, to say the least, a distraction.

"(Balcomb) had a couple of girlfriends who moved in and out of Smuggler's Cove, seasonally, like the whales. Balcomb acknowledged, with a smile, that he wasn't sure whether the women were coming to see him or the orcas." To be fair, "(Balcomb) had never shown much aptitude for the shared decision making and compromises that come with marriage. He'd always enjoyed the company of women, but until he met Diane (his fourth wife), his only true romance had been with the sea and with the whales."

The conclusion of this story — that the Navy won, and the whales lost — is frustrating. An even deeper frustration is crystallized in this line, written about the Supreme Court justices: "One woman, eight men. Their only common feature was their unassailable power to uphold or rewrite the law in the world's most powerful democracy."

It's not just that the Supreme Court has enough power to concede to Navy lobbyists; it's rather that this system is still thought of as a democracy. How is it a democracy if nine people have the sole power to change the laws? A true democracy puts the power with the people and their freely elected officials; the nine Supreme Court justices are, per the Constitution, nominated by the president, an office that is filled by the electoral college, staffed by popularly elected "electors."

Reinforcing this idea that our political system is a true democracy is one reason the environment — and the whales — is never saved. It could be why, as the author says, "Common sense is never enough to win a case in court."

And it could also be why, as Joel Reynolds says of the sign he sees on the way to court in his recurring nightmare: "Equal justice under law. But everything's warped."

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Flames in Reverse

by Mike Vance

Heart pounds in my throat.
Fear. Pain. Regret. Crippling me.
I'm driven to my knees
By ghosts who haunt the walls in my head.
Mocking, daunting, pointing at me.
The devil's teeth blood red and dripping
As he smugly smiles at me.
In the midst of the turmoil,
The hand of God reaches
Down to slap the smile off his face
Knocking out his teeth with one sure blow.
The love and power lifts me back to my feet
And wipes the tears from my face.
My pulse slows down
And my spirit grows calm
As I walk across the hot coals
Laid at my feet
Glowing hot and spitting sparks
As I walk back over the bridge of fire
Not one hair on my body singed.
I arrive safely home.

**It's a Mad Man Marlon's World!
(Untold years later in the future)**

By Mad Man Marlon

Many snakes have crawled and even surrounded my garden.
They wore disguises bearing killer smiles, laughter, even joy.
For each one that took a huge bite out of my heart, they each
vanished by their own venom.

It was beautiful!

Like a non-violent Blade, the vampire slayer, energy vampires can
only withstand my energy for long.

Like a black superman, I melt them with my heat ray vision,
yelling as they all come at me full force:

"I'm Superman, motherfucka! Now What!?"

The President of the United States (Hillary Clinton) called me and
asked me how I'm doing.

I replied, "With a due respect, you should know since you listen to
all my conversations, even when I'm awake."



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