

## ELEGY (WITH ADVERTISEMENT) STRUGGLING TO FIND ITS HERO

It was a century in which we touched ourselves in mirrors  
over and over. It was a decade of fast yet permanent  
memories. The kaleidoscope of pain

some inflicted on others seemed inexhaustible  
as the positions of *sex*, a term  
whose meaning is as hybridized as the latest orchid. Terrorism

had reached a new peak, and we gradually  
didn't care which airline we got on, as long as the pilot  
was sober, and the stash of pretzels, beer, and soft drinks

remained intact. On TV, a teenage idol has just crawled, dripping wet,  
from the top of a giant Pepsi can, or maybe I imagined it,  
flicking through channels where the panoply

of *reality shows* has begun to exorcise  
the very notion of reality, for both the scrutinized actor  
and the debilitated viewer who becomes confused and often reaches

into the pastel screen for his glass, while down Broadway  
sirens provide a kind of glamorous chorus  
for this script of history where everything is so neatly measured

in miles, pounds, or megabits. How nice it would be  
to drowse in the immeasurable. How nice  
it would be to escape.

*And there's a wobbly marble bench  
beneath an out-of-focus tree on the Web  
I like to occasion my body with.*

How brief we've become in our speed  
I think. How fast the eternal.  
How desperately

we need a clearing, a place  
beyond, but not necessarily  
of nature. *And the rain*

*was so deep the entire forest smelled of stone, then the sun  
broke, burying the long shadows  
in gold. And the wounded*

king woke in a book long since closed, and the princess  
came to in a bed so large  
she could never leave. How desperately

we need a new legend, one with a hero, tired  
though he may be. One who has used  
business to give up

business, one who has bought  
with his heart what we  
sold with ours.

Mark Irwin

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## WHEN I DIED,

I saw a man tearing down a blue house  
but inside the blue house a green house  
slowly appeared as the man motioned  
toward me, suggesting I enter, opening  
a white door where the man became  
a woman in a yellow field with snow falling  
upon so many people walking toward  
a blue house, and they were telling each other  
they had never seen anything so green,  
not even the grass under the red sky of their names.

Mark Irwin

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## PSALM

And the tide came in and the tide went out. And when the sun set  
over the burnt trees and toppled buildings, there was  
a gilded loss.

And each of us had a little book, and we began  
to gnaw on it till the words came  
or we remained

dumb and silent. And each of us had a little stick  
with which to walk, and we leaned  
on them and looked over all

we had ruined. And each of us had a little bowl  
and each began to pour its  
contents into

another, and we did this over and over until all  
the bowls had been poured and were  
empty, then we

all smiled, holding nothing, and were happy.

Mark Irwin

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