

A D A M G R A A F

Dujail School Reconstruction Project

No, no, I say, like this.
And near the courtyard,
I show a group of boys the key
to the removable thumb trick:
how best to hold their hands,
which knuckles to bend,
why the right forefinger should hide
where the joint appears connected.
The smallest boys squeeze to the front,
and I motion the shy ones closer, gently
fold their fingers in my hands.

That's what I was doing
when the oldest went for my trigger:
the rifle hanging barrel-down
from my vest. I slapped away
his hand and another appeared.
The two boys were still giggling
when I knocked them down,
stepped back to keep them all
in front of me.
A clear line of sight,
their skinny bodies.

Eight Years Later

March 19, 2011

After finishing this, you, reader,
might consider me a hero. But

when I woke this morning, dressed,
made coffee, and thought of you,

intending to write about the desert
on the eve of it all, I realized I have less

to tell than I once thought.
Like me, you may not understand

how I could blame so much on,
having fought so little of

the war.

ADAM GRAAF received his MFA from the University of Massachusetts Boston where was awarded an Academy of American Poets prize. He served nine years in the Army Reserve, deploying once to Kuwait/Iraq in 2003-2004. Adam's work has appeared in several publications, and he is an active member of Warrior Writers.