

Notification

by William Adler

To a KIA

Baghdad, Iraq, October 2005

In a flash you became invisible to me.
The grey-black ash framed by dun colored dust swirls,
filled
our
sky.
The flood of sound pushing away *all* sound, swallowed you.
Then that fearsome flood washed over me.
In the swelling mushroom-cloud,
where I stood, at the roadside,
watching you,
I wondered if my time was up-
this time.
But, I never said your name.

Now, the Sergeant Major will shout it out-
your name (with the others).
We'll sit, where you sat, and walk where you walked.
Amid the pale flowers, flags, and dusty tentage.
All drained of color by that common sun that god made for *us.*
Outside, the makers of your demise-
The builders, of the bomb.
And inside, the dissembling retinue,
and the *once-again* mourners.
But our sudden shock is incomparable
to the sharp stab and lingering ache
of the inevitable notification.

Lt. Col. William Adler, U.S. Army, is a military professor at the Naval War College in the College of Leadership and Ethics. He is a career infantry officer with service in mechanized and Stryker infantry formations. He has deployed to Bosnia, Kosovo, Iraq, and Afghanistan. He served as a combat advisor in Iraq in 2004 for the 7th Iraqi Army Infantry Battalion and again in Afghanistan in 2010-2011 with the 1st Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment as a battalion executive officer.

