

# **“A Villanelle for Dead Soldiers, in Response to Hearing Multiple Memorial Day Speeches”**

by Paul David Adkins

They did not give their lives for you, but they were taken.  
You sound as though they held them in their palms  
like change or keys, and offered them. You are mistaken.

You give your speeches, plant toy flags in the rain,  
lay wreaths, and right them when they fall.  
They did not give their lives for you, but they were taken.

Live soldiers march before the bands, and children wave  
as if to Santa holding candy canes and rubber balls  
like change or keys, to offer them. You were mistaken.

They take no issue if you shun their buddies' graves  
to grill hot dogs. But know, when you stroll the mall,  
they did not give their lives, but they instead were taken.

At home, you lift your son to bed, careful not to waken  
him. Others' sons, who knows? They may be lost  
like change or keys, unoffered. You were mistaken,

did not sense their lives like leaves were shaken  
loose though green, to fall and brown against the sunlit garden walls.  
They did not give their lives, but they were taken  
like change or keys. Not offered. You were mistaken.