

Ordinary Boys

by Michelle Elvy

Jersey (*not* Jozefow), 2010 (*not* 1942)

When asked why he did it, the boy averts his eyes, fidgets. He does not lie, but he cannot face the truth. His lip trembles and he shakes when shown the photos. When asked to describe his role, he employs the passive voice and talks about others: *I was told... They insisted....* When pressed for an explanation, he refers to a chain of command: *I did what they said*. He talks about the older boys, the way he wanted to belong, the way he went along. When asked if he pulled the trigger, he nods and shrugs. When forced to talk about what really happened in the woods, he cries at the memory -- the shallow grave, the waste of life. He did not want to shoot the dog, you can tell. There is no hate in his eyes, no fanatical glint. He is not accustomed to such cruelty.

He is an ordinary boy.

