

## Snips and Snails

by Dennis Payton Knight

Home-made stilts, rusty skates, treasures in a Prince Albert tobacco can.  
The fascination of unwinding the layers of a baseball.  
A boys-only clubhouse crafted of found nails and random boards.  
Venturing out at midnight to fill a can with nightcrawlers.  
Turning over rocks after a cloudburst to watch the salamanders skitter.  
That's what boys are made of.

Blazing trails through the willow bushes between the house and the Laramie River.  
Setting out on a bike ride to the Snowy Range, finding the trip all uphill,  
And turning around with dreams of someday getting a Harley.  
Zooming down the ramp from the footbridge high over the railyards in Laramie.  
Jumping backwards off the Teeter Totter at Optimist Park and needing six stitches to repair my chin.  
No crying, lesson learned.  
That's what boys are made of.

Football games on the street by day, hide-and-seek by night.  
Learning to keep a paddle ball going and manage a yo-yo, kicking a can up the street and down the alley.  
Knuckled down with your favorite shooter by a circle drawn in the dirt,  
Playing for keeps with aggies and alleys. Hey! No fudging!  
A game of mumblety-peg with the neighbor kid and his scary pocket knife and coming back for more.  
That's what boys are made of.

The heady aroma of caps in a paper roll fired in quick succession from a Roy Rogers pistol.  
Make believe battles and great performances of playing dead.  
Peashooters and spit wads. Crafting a slingshot from a willow branch.  
That's what boys are made of.

Flying kites you expect to take you around the world.  
Getting dizzy being pushed up Spruce street in an old tire.  
Floating on innertubes with red rubber patches.  
Losing your stomach on the merry-go-round and your good senses on the swing set.  
That's what boys are made of.

Mowing and raking the lawn without being asked.  
Playing jacks and hopscotch and eating sandbox pies, all to make a little sister happy.  
Sharing your Chum Gum, wax bottles, jawbreakers and cinnamon-hots.  
That's what good boys are made of.