

## Keith Tornheim

### Boys Will Be Boys

Down the new brick walk on West Newton Street  
the young boy came trotting by his father's side,  
two steps, or three, to match the man's longer ones.  
His father held his right hand, and in his left  
he raised aloft his trophy of the day,  
a straightish twig of greater length than his,  
the thin descendent of the caveman's club,  
the legion's golden eagle staff,  
the knight's lance and the cavalry sword,  
all the sticks that boys and men have held.

And when he is but barely grown,  
will our land's fight still rage so distantly  
that he must go to seek an enemy  
who need not meet him face to face  
to clash stick on stick  
but slays with a sniper's bullet  
and the impersonal blast of a bomb?  
And will his father, newly aged by grief,  
grasp a hand of bigger size,  
battle-blackened and inanimate,  
emptied of childhood things?

**Keith Tornheim**, a biochemistry professor at Boston University School of Medicine, has five books, *I Am Lilith*, *Dancer on the Wind*; *Spirit Boat: Poems of Crossing Over*; *Can You Say Kaddish for the Living?*; *Fireflies: Poems of Love and Family*; and *Spoiled Fruit: Adam and Eve in Eden and Beyond*. His poems have appeared in *Ibbetson Street*, *The Somerville Times*, *Boston Literary Magazine*, *Muddy River Poetry Review* and *Poetica*.