

Christina Springer

AS IT IS WITH ALL THINGS

I knelt to stir the river.
My finger touched silt,
leaves, rocks,

reflection.
how do I know
my body did not ripple,

muddy, swirl?
Currents started.
Unfettered

the quarrel. Here.
Water bugs laugh.
Rocks screech,

*the current plagiarizes
our songs!* Trees hold
their sides. Snicker,

*water cares more about Moon
than any lump lodged in a broken
tree stump.* My chastened

finger can not stir
a river. Attaches
every voice new.

HULA HOOPS

1.

*Mama's little baby ain't right, ain't right.
Mama's little baby ain't right in the head.*

Stripped shirt mud and sweat modified to camouflage.
A strange two-headed boy laughs at lightning.
Leaps. Thunder - is personal djun-djun master.
Jumping hula hoop like rope to dead relative songs
and so long forgotten gods suffering name amnesia.

Three feet, eleven inches, Pete stood bare
knees Nettle scarlet and asphalt impact blue.
Cow lick hidden among ditch spiked hair
twigs and leaves carefully sprinkled
like barrettes in a black girl's million braids.

2.

*Jump one – two. Jump
Jump one high. Jump
Jump two low. Jump
Jump one – two. Jump.*

A serrated knife of light cuts the pine.
Hula hoop clatter spins. Two ball of twine
fists. Knees electricity locked. Bolt straight
frozen to storm's call like one film frame
of a super hero taking off. Hands clap

hallelujah. Feet stomp widdershins. Three times
 around the red and white striped hula hoop. He giggles
 dogged rain licked face, moonlight shiny.
 Yells, "Amen, Amen, I love you, Papi. I love you."
 hooks his magic circle over his arm and runs through

the picket fence to the yellow
 welcome windows of home.

3.

*Petey got his ass whopped, ass whooped, ass whooped.
 Petey got ass whooped good last night.*

Four feet, six inches. Pete hunts
 the woods for a twisted stick
 gnarled Merlin perfect,
 bark free. Wind smooth.
 Sun-loved brown and barefoot, he

is a deer now. A woodpecker
 now. A rabbit
 twitching still. Foot fall frozen.
 If the beer drinking big boys find him,
 it will be cigarette burn bad.

Wade in the water. Wade in the water....

A snake, now. Sliding on the river bank
 tapping the water's edge, a willow branch.

He sighs. Grips it virgin bride soft. Rolls upright.
 Reverently lifts it over his head, swings with medieval fury.
 Thrust. Spin. Parry. Smack.

All the way home, he kills bushes
 and trees like the tobacco spit men
 who catch him in the back
 alleys downtown. Ninja dark
 swift, he becomes shaman warrior.

4.

Pete loves his big stick, big stick, big stick.
Pete loves his stick 'cause he's sick in the head.

Incense heavy. Willow branch ornamented
 twinkling. Crystal refractions. Beads. Rocks.
 Feathers. Braided, woven, threaded
 with copper wire. Copper wire -
 stretching five feet, nine inches, Pete folds
 into his hula hoop. Centered in his candlelit
 room –Easter gaudy stick littered.

He sends his spirit walking.
 Red & white plastic holds back the shadows.
 The whispers hint. Get out.

5.

*Swing low, sweet chariot,
Comin' for to carry me home..*

When his father's hands banged open
the door to grab, slap or both, Pete smiled
safe inside his sacred red & white hula hoop.

Who could have known
Pete's energy field was too powerful
to penetrate. Or self-restraint bound
the fury scattering juju bean bright
across his father's face. No evil
penetrates the sacred hula hoop.

Knowing the unknown, Pete rose.
Stepped out of his magic circle.
Faced his father – arms Jesus trusting
wide and submitted to human
mockery of divine rage.

6

*Oooo, can't turn around.
We've come this far by faith.*

Four directions tug
his toes. Bright
bleached cotton hides
opals on his rib cage.

After his father burst
into the room, he lashed
his hula hoop with rawhide
to the backpack, jammed full
crumpled jeans and shirts.

His heart clay lump heavy. Skittery
as any gravel road. Feet agitating
gray earth bones, he walks
into the setting sun towards
a Kokopelli light life.