

1989

Childhood

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CHILDHOOD

Blaring bell tells
of sun, freedom, and jumping rope.

On the sun-baked blacktop
six knees scraped and scabbed
form a circle.

Six equally grubby fists
shove into the center
like pins drawn to a magnet.

"Let me, let me,"
a voice whines.

"Oh, let her," I say.

"Fine, fine,"
mutters another.

"My mother
and your mother
were hanging up clothes,
and my mother punched
your mother right
in the nose."

The rhymer continues
as she slaps
the outstretched fists
in time with the words.

"What color did she bleed?"

She stops on the fist
with the charm bracelet.

Mine.

My charms dance with happiness.

"Red," I answer.

"R-E-D"

"Okay, I'll jump
and you two turn."

"No fair, I turned last time," I say.

"Tough luck. What should we play?"

"Back-doors."

"No. Teddy bear, teddy bear."

"I want hot peppers."

Six familiar hands meet again.

"My mother and your mother
were hanging up clothes..."

Kim Izzard