I Was Her Teacher

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In the first grade trash bucket
the little monkey girl
peeled gum off crumpled papers.
She ate it knowingly,
like a raven pulling string and glue
up out of the marsh.

“Too damn skinny,”

everyone on the bayou said.
That monkey girl in the trash bucket
with a head full of lice.

“The authorities should just take her,”

the mothers all whispered to me
at PTA meetings.

It was her daddy who stayed
made the news with his tree climbing ways,
luck out in the big hurricane.
He’s famous now,
she thinks, as he pushes her
face down in the mud, curses her,
praises God
they still have a floor.