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## August, Before the Third Grade

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AUGUST, BEFORE THE THIRD GRADE

It was the anniversary  
of the Sharon Tate murders.  
On the radio, something about a knife  
and a pregnant belly, swastikas, someone  
named Squeaky. They played a clip

of Manson singing the Beatles  
and the DA saying *This is a case  
of pure evil*. I worried  
about the fact that Manson

could still get out on parole because  
my mother explained to me  
about California and the death  
penalty, and how they turned  
it over and then gave  
it back. In the third grade I worried

about the kinds of things  
a small man named Charlie  
could do to you—how he might  
give you one of those names,  
Gypsy, Cappy, Snake,

might cut your forehead open  
might make you do it  
yourself while he sang you  
the White Album, the same

album my mother and I listened  
to every Saturday while we washed  
the bathroom floors til they squeaked.  
Wailing with Lennon, *Yes, I'm lonely,*  
*wanna die*, gripping the rag and scrubbing  
until all the scum was gone.