

Heckfire

Though the nuns forgave us, we taught
ourselves guilt—Farney & I only

tardy but sent to the school's furnace-
room, sentenced to Heckfire, to look at

our souls somehow burned visible but gassy
in the coals as our janitor swung the furnace-

door with his shovel, pin-holes of red going
out on his big hands. He was wronged king

or Luther to the Catholic 3rd grade,
though he stank of pee or his lunch beer

Farney dared sip a few grades later.

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Is there a kind of higher janitor for killers,
a holiest pope or mahatma to pick

up barehanded the soul's splintery blue
acetylene flame that cuts or mends metal

when the alloy for God-ness is beaten thin
& digressive to make evil?

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The CNN reporter is groomed but rigid by the wheelchair. 25 years after
his crime, the latest California killer is legally blind & dying, but his
reprieve is denied.

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Vengeance is a lazy kind of grieving
the translator says later in the HBO movie

(she's relaxed now & earnest)—
the victim's family in this tribe takes

the killer far out in a boat & leaves him
in the water—they can choose to let him

drown or begin the hard work of forgiving
him by bringing him up wet & afraid.