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The Nice Children

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THE NICE CHILDREN

Our parents whispered (and so it was not
One of the things we ever forgot)
That Blaine had been born in a toilet bowl,
His dumb fat ma misreading the signals.
We nice children repeated it
To his face, and he never denied
It unless a beatific smile is denial.
And anyway his knowledge of our knowledge
Only confirmed him in his choice of a role
As selfless scientist doing research on
Every little anatomy, feminine or virile.

We nicer children found him interesting as hell,
And then, like all hells, not quite bearable.
“There’s Blaine,” we’d cry, “let’s hide from him.”
And hide we would, watching through
Leaves as his smile went dim,
But never quite disappearing even when
He and his dumb fat ma moved away.

Now when I sometimes run
Into one of the nice children again
In airports or parking lots we grin
Hard and ask each other whatever happened to wild Diane
Or Bob the thief or good old Rose—
But we never ask about good old Blaine.
We’re still hiding, but what we hide from, of course,
Is that guiltless, confident smile
That plays its flat, unbuttoning light
Over the hiding place
Of nice money, nice booze,
Nice adultery, nice divorce.