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The Boy on the Plane

The boy on the plane is coming home
from his grandfather's funeral—his first
exposure to the way it's done, how we comb
and scrub and manicure and dress
the body, wiping away the evidence
of life's final squalor. He stares into his lap,
while a half-dream plays along his lips.

On either side of us, the clouds
are climbing into mounded, coalescing
heaps—how voluptuous they look, viewed from the side,
their secret folds and cumulations riding
on shafts of wild, sliding
air. Yawning enormously, the boy turns and smiles
with pleasure at the girl across the aisle.

I think about old men, and of the boy
beside me, how it's almost time
for him; and of the girl he will someday
press against in a cool, darkened room.
And the heaviness I've known
before, that profound wrenching I recognize
grinds forward, and settles into place.