

Codes, by Michelle-Linh Nguyen

Her knees were knobs.
They made me want to look away.

Lifting the thin cotton sheet
I check for pressure points.
Discover an IV's indent
into thin, yellow skin.

Family arrive,
Carrying a pot of violets
and a tablet checkered
with moving images.

I watch her brother strum a guitar
from 4,000 miles away

I see her as she was. Hand
against mountain rock. Hairs
levitating in the wind. Hunting,
her mom tells me, She loved to hunt with us.

Before they arrived, I listened to her wail

Mouth wide and round
the inner earth came
through her, spilling out
onto the sanitized floor

After her family read
the booklet on death,
she left us.

I was left coding and compartmentalizing
her small voice and sobs
into

Alcoholic Cirrhosis of Liver with Ascites
K70.31, click.

Despite a lengthy search
for Sister, Daughter, Best Friend
Mountain, Tundra, Hunter

I found no codes.

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