

## **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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