Pink cardigan

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Poetry

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We are not supposed to have
favorites. Yet,
you were mine. In a way,
you reminded me
of my own *nai nai.* It was not
the pink cardigan,
secondary hemochromatosis,
or gallstones.
But rather, the quiet shuffling
walk, familiar
tilting cadence of mandarin.

When I walked into your room,
for the first time,
your face, jaundiced, lit up.
Nurses remarking,
how they have never seen you
talk so much before.
And how could you have?
When nobody
spoke your language of home.

For two weeks, you regaled me
about grandchildren,
the wait and want of going home,
despite your
cholecystostomy draining through
your cardigans.

Last Thursday, you followed your team
in the halls,
until we stopped to talk to you.
I translated.
It is Chinese New Year soon,
it is time
for me to go home. I must make
dumplings,
usher in the new year with family.

Words piling atop each other,
splattering of
Mandarin, English. Tangled in
frustration, anger.
Our team need to round on other patients.
Here, a link
of certainties—without a bridge.
We spoke to
your daughter. You were to stay
a few more days.

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You wipe the corners of your eyes
with your pink
cardigan. I do not know enough
Mandarin to
fully convey that I understand,
that I'm sorry,
this is the way things are.

Never have I felt so
grateful,
that my parents won the fights
to keep me
going to Chinese School.
Never
has a patient lingered
so long
in my mind. And part of me
believes,
this is my *nai nai's* way
reminding
me to call home, to remember
the why of the what.