

First code



Illustration by Claire Gilmore

They don't prepare you
For the shock of
How yielding the sternum is,
Under the base of your palm,
To the weight of your arms bearing down,
Like a diving board
Suspended in space
Bowing on catching the diver.
Where are the ribs?

They don't teach you
Where to look
On a body rudely laid bare
For you to force blood
Out of a heart gone still.
So you look at the face

The deep brown eyes,
Half-lidded and unseeing,
Entreating them
With each compression,
Wake up.
Please wake up.

They don't tell you
About the lines and the needle caps and the plastic
wraps
Strewn about the floor,
About the quiet that settles on a room,
Deafening,
Following the cacophony of a code,
After the time is called.

— Sue Dong, MD