

# I Became a Doctor

As my eleventh year was ending,  
I stood silent in my bedroom, watching,  
shaken by the nightlong struggle  
of my father in the vestibule of death.  
While the doctor worked to save his life,  
I looked on from one to five AM.  
This is what I saw:

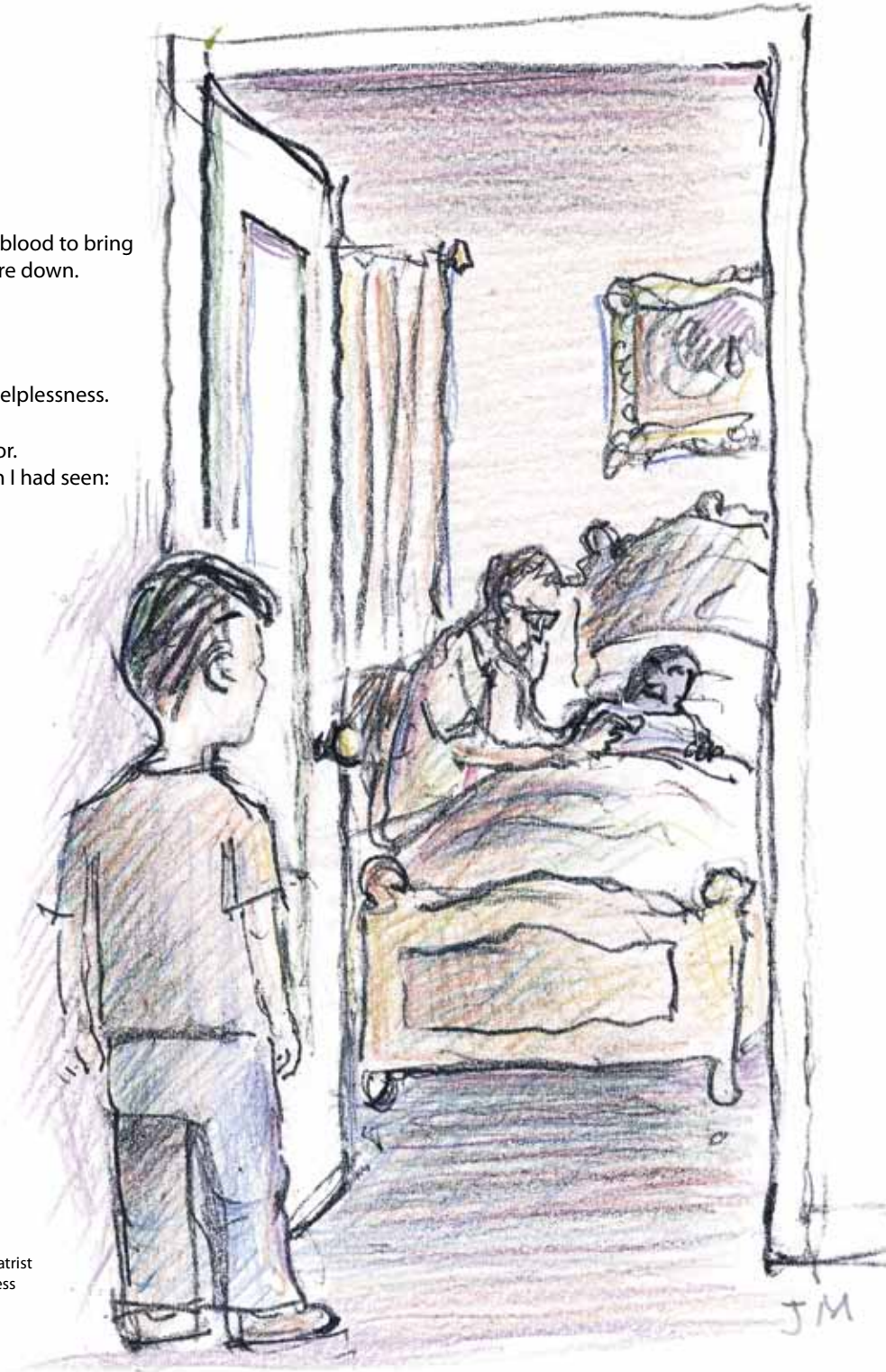
purple lips and mottled skin,  
rasping sounds of labored breathing,  
fluid bubbling from his mouth,  
semi-conscious, eyes rolled back,  
bruises where the doctor drew huge vials of blood to bring  
his pressure down.

Though he lived three years beyond that crisis,  
not yet twelve, I knew  
Our time together would be brief.  
Through that night I chewed the hated cud of helplessness.  
Neither could I swallow it, nor could I spit it out.  
At dawn I slept, a child, awakening to be a doctor.  
Then I learned new words describing that which I had seen:

cyanosis,  
dyspnea,  
pulmonary edema,  
phlebotomy,  
purpura.

Strange that merely different names  
bring me comfort, but they do.  
Words are simply kinder than the pictures.

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