

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:

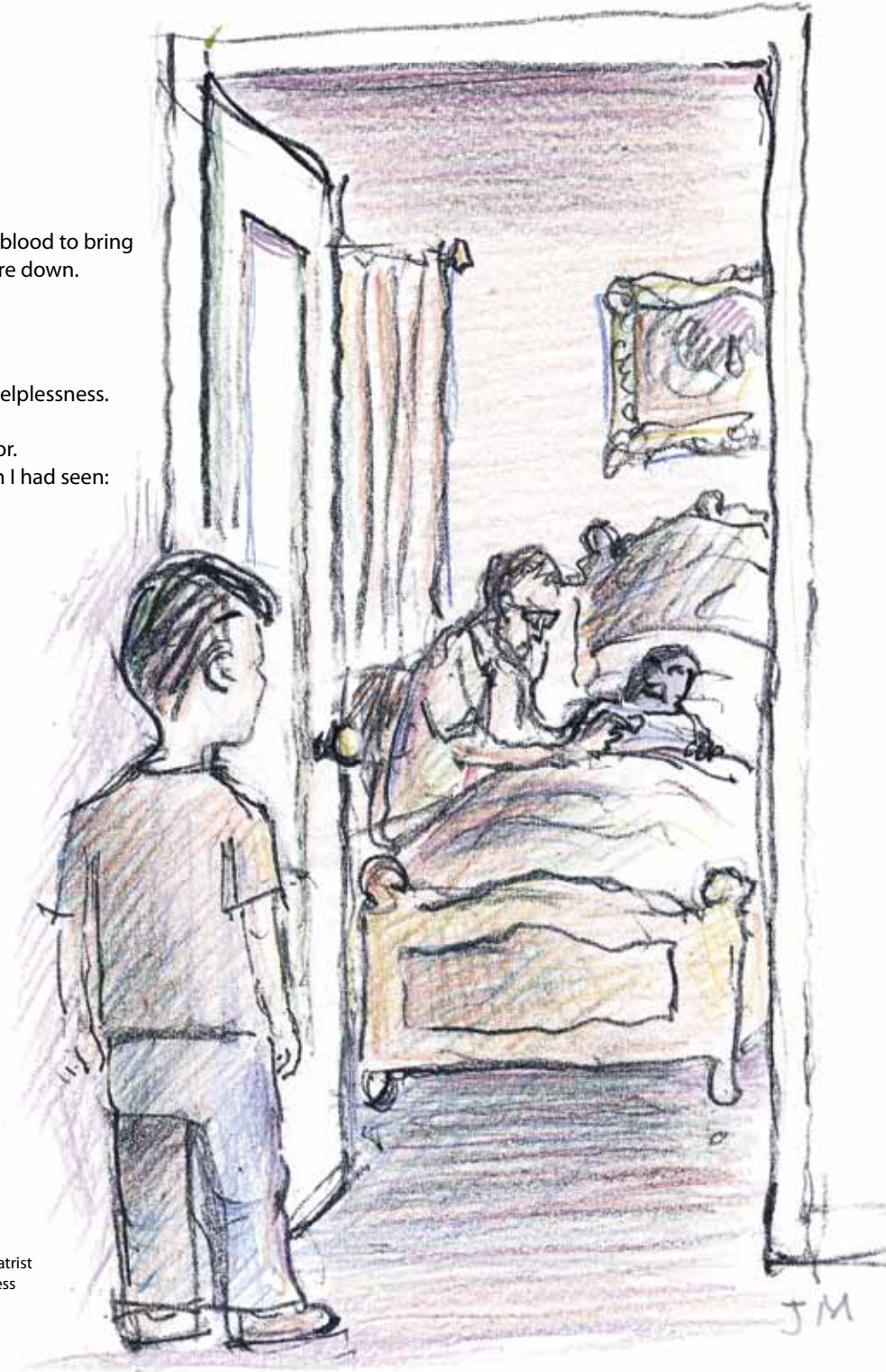
purple lips and mottled skin,
rasping sounds of labored breathing,
fluid bubbling from his mouth,
semi-conscious, eyes rolled back,
bruises where the doctor drew huge vials of blood to bring
his pressure down.

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.

Michael R. Milano, MD



Dr. Milano (A.Ω.A, Albany Medical College, 1964) is a psychiatrist living and practicing in Teaneck, New Jersey. His e-mail address is: milanovinos@aol.com.