

GRAPHIC MEDICINE

Little Stories of Big Moments—
Stories and poems written by
clinicians in 15 minutes in writing
workshops about meaningful
moments in their work and
life of practicing medicine. To
better communicate health care
experiences, our intention is to
use graphic images with simple
clinician or patient stories.
Professional artists were asked to
create a visual representation of
the story.

“Lifeboat”

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Dad ponders family photos
wondering
if he ever knew those people
they look so familiar ...
a catch in his breath
as he knows he is missing
something.

His blue-veined hands
with inflamed knuckles
submit to new love Mildred,
respond to orders
as she recounts

childhood memories
clear as yesterday
through her lungs,
trachea, larynx,
throat and lips
over and over
and over,
and again.

“Take some tea,” she insists,
over and over
and over
and again
though my cup sits full.
“No, thank you,” I say.
“No, thank you,” I persist,
until her anger surges
and she spews,
“Get out!”

Together they cling—
a tottering raft in roiling waters
Dad’s eyes scanning the horizon
anticipating trouble

but his concerns drown
in her persistent screams
to ignore my circling
lifeboat.

Papers accumulate
circulate
junk mail and bills
magazines and wills
treasured mounds of pulp
like garrisoned cargo,

they navigate the world
with a rusty compass—stuck
the pointer heading out to sea
and over and over
and over the
edge—

leaning on each other
entwined love
brittle bodies
where together they once
had a full brain
they have less now,

yet she carries enough
defiance for them both
enough to last a life
time
it is running
over and over and
over and
out. ❖

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Accompanying artwork
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Jim Roldan is a visual artist, illustrator, and educator in East Hampstead, NH.

More of his work may be seen at: www.jimroldan.com