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How Can I Help You?

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How Can I Help You?

'How can I help you?'

'I don't know if you can, unless you've got a cigarette.'

'What's the trouble? What's brought you here?'

'The police brought me in.'

'Sorry to hear that. What's happened?'

'The neighbours must've complained again.'

'What would the neighbours be complaining about?'

'I've no idea. Maybe you should ask the police. Haven't you read what they wrote?'

'I'm more interested in hearing your story.'

'Are you really a doctor?'

'Yes, I am.'

'Then why should I tell you my story if you're not competent enough to read what the police wrote about me?'

'Would you like me to do that, then come back and ask you what's happened?'

'While you're gone, I'll head out front to find a roach to smoke.'

'You can't do that!'

'So while you muck around, I'm stuck here in emergency against my will?'

'That must be very difficult.'

'Don't patronise me! I'm here to be assessed, not patronised.'

'You really don't want to be here.'

'I'm not fucking suicidal! Who told you that?'

'I just mean to say that it must be very difficult for you.'

'I want a second opinion. I want a different doctor!'

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While this dialogue fragment is a work of fiction, it is a compound of many experiences encountered by the author as an Australian psychiatrist, who values the relational aspects of his work, while conducting assessment consultations with patients in hospital emergency departments.