



The Orange Wire Problem and Other Tales from the Doctor's Office

David Watts

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Western literature has had a long tradition of physician-writers. From Mikhail Bulgakov to William Carlos Williams to Richard Selzer to Ethan Canin, exposure to human beings at their most vulnerable has inspired fine writing. In his own inimitable and unpretentious style, David Watts is also a master storyteller. Whether recounting the decline and death of a dear friend or poking holes in the faulty logic of an insurance company underling, *The Orange Wire Problem* lays bare the nobility and weakness, generosity and churlishness of human nature.

With disarming candor and the audacity to admit that practicing medicine can be a crazy thing, Watts fills each page with riveting details, moving accounts, or belly-laughs. As the stories in this work unfold, we are witness to the moral dilemmas and personal rewards of ministering to the sick. Whether the subject is the potential benefits of therapeutic deception or telling a child about death, Watts's ear for the right word, the right tone, and the right detail never fails him.

From *The Orange Wire Problem and Other Tales from the Doctor's Office*:

We were lingering in the outer office. He mentioned again, no biopsy. I knew that. And I knew there would be no chemotherapy.

Maybe it's like that Orange Wire Problem, I said.

Yes exactly, he said, and four years from now when we're all sitting around the campfire we'll remember the Orange Wire Problem. . .

And I thought to myself, my brother did that. Spoke of the time ahead as he was dying of lung cancer. Six months from now he had said, we'll be glad we did all those drug therapies—as if to speak of the future laid claim to the future.

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