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Interpersonal Conflict

Conflict Narrative

2:20 pm. The call came over the public announcement system. “All Greyhound Passengers going northbound to Mt. Vernon, Bellingham, and Vancouver BC should please board the bus at gate A1. “ Upon hearing this announcement, I gathered my luggage and headed out from the Everett main terminal out to the gate. As I exited the building, I didn’t notice the man walking beside me.

The main terminal door opened. With the wind in my face, I stepped out into the autumn air. With my cane out in front of me, I listened carefully to get a sense of where other passengers were going. *Well,* I thought, *I’ll probably get to where I need to go if I just follow the foot traffic.* Deciding to take a right, I continued forward. This whole time, the man continued to watch.

As it sometimes happens, my cane makes contact with objects as I find the best path forward. In this particular case, my cane clanged loudly against what seemed to be a metal railing. “Look out!” the man said. “Come a little to the right! To the right!” I had a pretty good idea what had happened. My cane hit the platform railing separating the pedestrian walk from the adjoining train tracks serving the Sounder and Amtrak trains. “Ma’am, come this way,” the man continued.

Pausing for a moment to get my bearings, I decided that this gentleman needed to be gently educated. Just because a blind person finds an obstacle, that doesn’t mean that said individual will run into it or somehow fall into harm’s way. Stealing myself and with the gentlest manner I possessed, I spoke up. “I got it,” I said.

Apparently, the man wasn’t convinced. Walking toward me and closing the distance between us with great speed, the man continued to admonish me of the oncoming danger. “Ma’am, you need to come this way. There’s a railing in front of you!”

I took a deep breath. Instinctively, I felt frustrated. There was no train coming, and the railing certainly prevented me from stepping anywhere near the tracks. And had I been able to get any closer to the tracks, my cane surely would have informed me as such and I would have altered my course away from them and toward the bus platform. But as it was, there was a railing, and I was certain that I needed to bear right long before the man opened his mouth. In short, I was quite capable without him.

My thoughts came to an abrupt end when the man touched my arm. “Look,” I said. “I really am fine.”

Removing his hand from my arm, the man huffed as he walked away. “You don’t need to be so rude! I was just trying to help.”

I noticed her when she walked into the terminal. She had one of those white sticks that I’ve seen in movies. She seemed to get around okay, but it was really hard to tell whether she could see or not. She found a seat and sat down. At 2:20 pm, the PA sounded and the lady at the Greyhound counter said we all should line up for the bus in front of gate A1. The lady with the stick got up and headed for the door.

I was just behind this girl. Like I said, it wasn’t easy to tell if she could see some or not since she seemed to do okay in the terminal. But at the same time, I thought that only people with no sight carried those sticks. When she walked out the door, I saw her run into the rail that separated the train tracks from the rest of the walkway. Man, I’ve never seen anything so scary! What if she’d fallen or hurt herself? Didn’t she know where she was?

“Ma’am,” I said, “You need to come a little to the right!” She didn’t seem to hear me. “Ma’am, you need to come to the right!”

She said she got it, but it didn’t look like it to me. She was still tapping the rail with her stick, so I reached out to guide her away from it. “Look,” she said, “I really am fine.”

What the hell? I’ve never met such a rude person in my life! I’d be grateful for the help if I couldn’t see. I mean, that rail was right there and she ran into it! What if a train had come? I thought I was helping her out! But, I know a lost cause when I see one. Still though, I felt like I needed to say something. “You don’t need to be so rude!” I said. “I was just trying to help.”