

The shrinks gathered around the conference table for their weekly staff meeting. They came well-prepared to discuss their most interesting cases.

“My patient talks to oranges,” said Bob.

“How odd,” said Linda.

“You won’t find any disagreement here,” said Bill

Dr. von Bent leaned his wiry little body back in his chair and stroked his van dyke. “It sounds very serious,” he declared. “Probably underscopic personality disorder.” He waited for the next case.

“Mine wears latex and high heels every night,” said Bill.

“Good for him,” said Bob.

“Wow,” said Linda.

Dr. von Bent cleaned his reading glasses. “It sounds like a classic case of psychosadomistic prevaluation,” he declared.

Everyone nodded. Dr. von Bent, who had an undiagnosable slipping disorder, slumped to the floor. Bill picked him and put him back on his chair.

Linda, who’d been chewing the top of her pen the whole time, looked at the floor. “I had to commit mine,” she said.

All the faces snapped in her direction.

“And why was that?” asked Dr. von Bent.

“Because he insulted me,” she replied. “Called me a useless waste of time and money, dangerously incompetent, and a nitwit. He also said I have a pointy little head.”

“My Lord,” said Bob.

“Gosh by golly,” said Bill

Dr. von Bent started laughing and couldn’t stop. He slapped his thighs and howled with glee. “Ho ho ho hee,” he burred. “Ho ho ho hee—ho ho ho hee—ho ho ho hee.” His face turned red and he gasped for breath. “HA!” he finally declared. “At last we have a case of the very fascinating diagnosis, tripolar disorder.”

“What’s that?” asked Bill.

“Wow,” said Linda.

Silence filled the room, along with a sliver of foreboding. Dr.

von Bent slammed his unusually small fists on the table.

“NO–NO–NO,” he shouted. He was breathing hard.

He pushed his chair back and jumped to his feet, fists still clenched.

“Silly poopheads,” he yelled, then ran from the room.

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Four patients sat in the waiting room. They waited and waited, peering down the corridor every day or so until finally, Phil woke the receptionist from a very deep slumber.

Clearly startled, she repeated herself five times. “What what what what what?”

“I need help,” said Phil.