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Wonderland

At the end of the fourth year of wandering in the forest, the editor of a prominent medical journal once again emerged into a clearing and found the old wise man whom he had met on several previous occasions. The editor was always glad to see him since the man provided good conversation as well as insight and advice. The old man greeted him and invited him to pause and tell him about his adventures during the past year.

The editor began, *"It has been a remarkable year. While walking in the forest one day, I saw a young girl running along a path, chasing someone wearing a large hat. The person with the hat disappeared into a hole in the ground, shouting 'Alice, follow me.' 'I'm right behind you, Mad Hatter,' she said, and she followed him. I was amazed. Suddenly, another fellow with a large hat came along. He looked exactly like the first one. He beckoned me to follow him. I was astounded. 'Are you the Mad Hatter?' I asked. He said that he was indeed and that so was the first person I had seen. He said that the world is full of mad hatters, but usually we do not recognize them."*

"Remarkable," said the old man. "What did you do?"

The editor replied, *"I followed him into a large opening in the ground. There were many people there. They were rushing to and fro in a hurry. They all seemed to be going someplace, but they were going in all different directions. A strange thing happened next. There was a group that looked familiar to me when they approached me. They were mouthing pleasantries: 'How are you? Do you need any help?' I thought they were talking to me, but they just passed me by. The strange part was that after they passed me I saw that they had faces on the backs of their heads that were saying the same things they had said before, only in reverse."*

"Oh," said the old man, *"they are the two-faced people. They are all over the place. I thought you had met them before. I guess I should have told you about them, but it's the kind of thing that you do not believe until you've experienced it yourself."*

"Well, now I've experienced it, but I'm not sure that I understand any better. Although they looked familiar, I couldn't tell who they were or which face was looking at me or what they meant. It's only after you've seen their second face that you realize why you're confused. It was absolutely surreal."

"I'm afraid that you're right," said the old man. "What else did you see?"

"I saw an eight-sided room lined with mirrors. It was only large enough for one person at a time. Anyone could go in and talk, but it would look as if there were a room full of people, at least eight or nine, who were all saying the same thing. It was called a 'Committee Room.' I was told that people go into it when they want an agreement from a group but they need to be sure that the group will agree with them. I thought it was strange because I always thought the purpose of a committee was to exchange ideas and information, promote discussion and develop a consensus."

The old man said, *"Well, now you know. They do things differently in 'Wonderland.'"*

"I realize that now," the editor responded. *"Listen, I've been in this forest*

(Continued on page 7A)

Scatter

(Continued from page 3A)

four years now. I think I've had enough. I'd like to go home. I had better start looking for a way out of here."

"Yes, you've certainly 'served your time,' so to speak," the old man replied. "Look for the entrance to a cave and go into it. It will be dark at first, but continue forward. Your instincts will guide you. The darkness will continue for a while, but you should be used to that by now. You've been in this dense forest for four years. Just continue walking forward in the dark. It is a long tunnel, but you will see light. It is the light at the end of the tunnel. It will get you back to where you began."

"Thanks," said the editor. "Thanks for everything. Meeting you at the end of each year has cheered me immensely. You have helped me through my wanderings."

"I've enjoyed our little chats, too," answered the old man. "I'll miss you. Good luck."

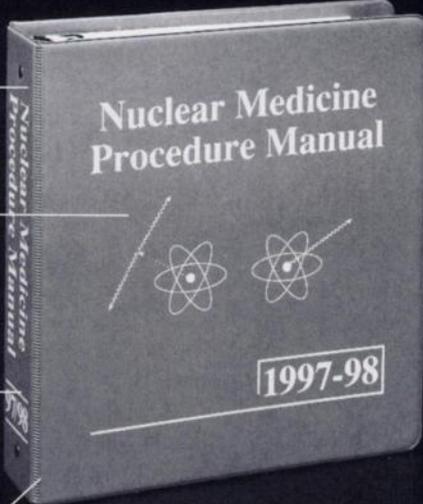
The editor walked back into the forest to look for the cave that would take him home.

Stanley J. Goldsmith, MD

Editor-in-Chief, The Journal of Nuclear Medicine

December 1997

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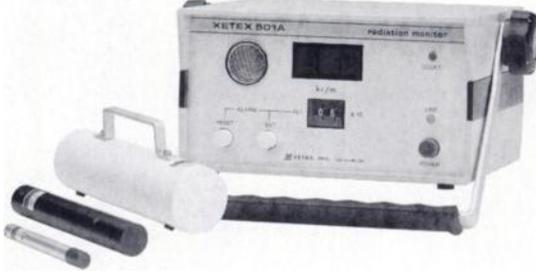
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