

Experiments

It's time to do your rounds, check in on the experiments. First is

Maternity

New mothers make incisions on their children's sternum. To be a good mother one must know their child, inside and out. They remove foreign materials, and growths; tweezers are not allowed. They dig around the bloody cavity with indelicate fingers, ignoring the wails of their child is key. They clutch at clumps of mucilage and throbbing tumors and wet, dull stones.

Husbands who lose their wives in labour are taken from the premises; the newborns volunteer themselves for further experiments.

In the case of twins, the fetuses must be terminated and fed to the Elk. Today you skip the children's wing, the rest you can see on your next round. The last time you saw them their tongues were swollen, and they dripped brain fluid from their eyes and ears. The staff collected them in pristine vials; there's never enough brain fluid.

You'll need to see the children in the transplants, *that* you have to do every day.

You take your notes and make your way to the

Procedures

Men in concrete cells draw triangles on the floor; some use chicken bones, the ones that eat the bones scrawl the shapes with fingernails, and fingertips, and bloody knuckles. No other shapes seem to be drawn by any of the subjects.

You flip through your notes. A few stick out:

'The skin on the subject's left anterior forearm is removed, to see if the pronator quadratus is tissue, or inorganic material.'

‘Patients in the [redacted] are no longer permitted to be hosed down. Hygiene needs to be monitored in relation to the developing biological abnormalities.’

On the wall of the cell where a man draws his triangles, hangs a sign for new staff, ‘The sterile conditions are a variable. Procedures can be done with rusty tools on a dirty floor.’

Next on your route is

Modification

One subject has developed an external gland capable of producing a substance similar to silk. Excretion is obtained with electrical stimulus.

The patient’s scarification has turned chitinous. This will be monitored further, you note.

The only other subject hangs from stainless steel hooks, threaded through it’s shoulder and underarm. Below its exposed ribs where the lower half of the torso used to be, grow bushels of organs on ligaments and tendons, that reach down to the floor. Among the fruiting bodies are kidneys, pancreases, various glands, lungs, and livers. Not present are any organs in the gastrointestinal tract, or additional hearts.

Finally, with hesitation, you go to

Transplants

You remember what you were told when you first arrived, “Transplants are performed with the consent of all the animals involved.”

You check the pens. Children blinded in other tests, whether chemically or traumatically, are given a new eye, either goat or horse. It’s implanted above the bridge of the nose. No patient has regained sight, although the children now stomp their feet when scared or threatened.

Finally, you see the surgeons lining the Elk's womb with the discarded eyes of blinded child patients, and other donated eyes. This is to ensure the Elk can watch its young grow, and notify the staff if it perceives any anomalies during gestation.