



Human Resources

Short stories by Eliza Cucchiara, Levanah Cohen, Grant Keo, and Thorne Englander

Part One - Eliza Cucchiara

2026

Bennet_Ask

August 9th, 2026

Untitled...

In response to the recent backlash against our movement: we see you, and we acknowledge you, but we urge you to see the bigger picture. I understand that no one wants to participate in the required testing, but it is wildly unfair to continue to rely on animals to risk their well-being for humankind. We are reaping the benefits of these experiments- we can't force another species to do the dirty work.

Let's unite as a society in recognizing the sacrifices that are made, and the life-changing progress they are necessary to promote. We—

Bennet shut his laptop and set it on the closed toilet lid. He looked around the bathroom with a sigh and thoughtfully sipped from his wine glass. In one fluid motion, he drained its contents and sank back into the warm water. His glass balanced precariously on the edge of the tub, he blew at the bubbles and walked himself through his day.

The news had been a blow to his movement. It didn't make them look good- that's for sure, but if he believed in their mission statement (and he was confident that he still did) this didn't change a thing. It was his job to get the world to see this development from his perspective, to make them understand that while it might seem inequitable, it was giving those

who were not active participants in society a way to play their part in bettering the world. It was an opportunity to be a part of something important. Something bigger. An honor, really. Already, he was three blog posts in and knew that he had a long road ahead of him.

Bennet closed his eyes and slid under the water's surface- leaving just his nose and mouth as islands in a sea of bubbles, and breathing reassurance back into his lungs. He was good. He was right. They would see. He sat up and reached for the plug.

* * *

Bennet ate dinner with his towel around his waist. At a quarter to nine, he changed into shorts, fed Paddington, poured himself more wine, and stretched out on the couch. The living room was smaller than the kitchen, but its large windows made him feel like he was in the woods they faced, so he spent most of his time on its leather daybed. The walls were charcoal gray and lined with evenly-spaced abstract paintings that he'd bought at the art show last spring. Paddington lay with his head resting against Bennet's knee- his brown coat made him almost invisible against the leather, but his shiny black nose stood out like a button on the fabric. Above the armchair closest to the fireplace was a framed newspaper clipping reading,

July 12, 2024 Supreme Court Rules Animal Testing Illegal: Animal Activists Celebrate

His face smiled from the bottom right corner.

Bennet remembered that day. He remembered all the days that had come before it, too. The protests, the walkouts, the awfully politically awkward Thanksgiving dinners, and, finally, the hearings. He remembered waiting to hear the decision, the frustration when it got delayed,

and then delayed again. Mostly, he remembered the celebration. The afterward. The hugging, and screaming, and champagne drinking.

At first, he volunteered weekly. Every Saturday he and his friends would walk to the hospital and give their blood or their time. But then he was more needed elsewhere, so he switched to bi-weekly. Monthly. Every quarter. Twice a year. Eventually, he stopped going all together. This is the problem, he would tell anyone who would listen; the testing is absolutely vital, but some people are too important to society to give up their time or risk their health. Anyone can take a pill, but only some can engineer a bridge, or plan a social movement.

He supposed that was the basis for this morning's decision, and he stood by his opinions, even if it would hurt the movement's reputation. Already it had shaken the voters. It had been easy to promote animal cruelty as wrong, to paint their ethics as correct- but now they were talking about complex moral issues without an easy good and bad.

This much gray area was going to be hard to market.

He'd watched the news drop on MSNBC. "The CDC has just released that medical corporations have been granted permission to perform experiments on incarcerated individuals, and the government is strongly encouraging the unemployed to participate in testing, where they will be offered financial compensation."

"This is clearly targeted at low-income communities," a CNN reporter had said, brow furrowed. Bennet forced himself to sit through the entire show and now, hours later, their words swirled through his head.

"Complex laws meant to confuse desperate people."

“The government disguising another attempt to get the homeless off the streets”

“Money will be too much for impoverished families to refuse”

“What we need is criminal justice reform”

“People selling their health away”

“In simple terms,” he read in the New York Times, “these new laws will give corporations the power to subject those in American prisons to any form of experiment that they believe will help advance medicine. While unemployed or impoverished individuals are not forced to report for testing, they will face tax inflation, loss of medicare, eviction, or termination if they refuse. Homes will quickly become reliant on the pay they will receive from these experiments. Voters are arguing that while on paper citizens have an option, in reality, desperate families will soon find themselves pressured into their nearest testing center. In a few years, we will see a wave of people facing health repercussions from failed experiments, with likely pricey treatments. Is the ban on animal testing worth it?”

It was after that that Bennet had written his first blog post. After he’d seen the protests on TV, he’d written his second. Now, as soon as he collected his thoughts, he would start his fourth.

Bennet’s phone rang from the coffee table. He cleared his throat loudly and clicked speakerphone.

“Bennet speaking.”

“This is Mark. I think we have a serious issue here.”

“I know, but I’ve been thinking and I’m sure it’s salvageable. Worst case scenario, we lose the most liberal votes. We can deal with that. They were never sold on us, anyway.”

“Listen, the things people are saying... Are we sure we want to salvage it?”

“We have to stand by our decisions, Mark. I don’t know about you, but this doesn’t change anything for me.” Bennet set his jaw and began to pace around the room.

“I was with you when it was just about the animals, but now people’s lives are on the line. These are real, serious inequalities we’re talking about- I can’t stand behind you knowing that.”

Bennet closed his eyes and rubbed his temples. “What are you saying?”

“My brother’s in jail, Bennet. He might have messed up, but he doesn’t deserve to be treated like an animal. He’s scared they’re going to come for him, and I’m worried that he should be.”

“So, what, we go back to forcing everything on animals? We’ve created enough problems for them. I know this complicates things but this could bring down the movement- you can’t give up on me.”

“When it comes down to it, these are people and animals are just animals. If we endorse the protesters soon we could reverse this whole law and go back to the way things used to be-”

“Animals are just animals? What happened to you?”

“Nothing happened to me. It got too real, and I’m worried about my brother-”

“This is crazy, Mark. You’re confused but I’m not going to let you confuse me. I believe in our cause, and I’m not losing that.” Bennet slammed the phone down on the couch and ran his hand through his hair. He stood up and opened the window, letting the crisp air wash over his body and sting his lungs. His phone dinged from across the room, and he sighed softly and lifted it from the couch cushion.

Just think about it . -Mark

He had thought about it. He'd thought about it his entire adult life, and he wasn't going to change his mind because things got a little complicated, or because Mark got a little uncomfortable. Everyone had to make sacrifices, and he decided then and there that he refused to let his go to waste. No, he couldn't bring himself to give up. He wouldn't. Bennet smiled at himself, rubbed Paddington behind the ear, and reached for his laptop.

"This was all for you, buddy," he said as he fed him a cracker from the tin on the coffee table, "all for you."

Bennet_Ask

August 9th, 2025

The Fight Goes On!

After the Supreme Court's decision, there has been speculation of reverting to Animal testing as the primary form of medical experimentation. Today, I speak for the entire Anti-Animal Testing movement when I say that we refuse to let that happen. If the country continues along the current trajectory, so be it. If it reforms the testing system, so be it; but our nation needs to move forwards, and asking animals to carry our burden is not progress. We will not sit and watch voters force animals back into the positions that they have so recently escaped. We are united. We are strong. We will not succumb to the social pressures, and we will continue to give the animals a voice.

Annotations:

Annotation #1 - In 50-100 words, describe a technique you use in this piece. Why did you make that choice, and what impact does it have on the reader's understanding of the story? Make sure to quote a phrase or sentence from your writing. Bonus points for explaining how another author influenced your choice!

In my story, I included a lot of background information about what has been going on in the world. I made this choice because my section of our story comes first chronologically, so I needed to be the one to explain the situation in our version of the world and how it came to be that way. This way, I could set the reader up for my group mates' stories, and make sure that they understood what was going on. For example, after it was revealed that animal testing is illegal, I wrote, "Bennet remembered that day. He remembered all the days that had come before it, too." and explained what had led up to this moment in time. My use of this technique was influenced by Robert Silverberg's story, *Caught in the Organ Draft*. I saw how a lot of his story being written in hindsight helped the reader understand many past events, and tried to incorporate that into my story.

Annotation #2 - In 50-100 words, describe a technique you use in this piece. Why did you make that choice, and what impact does it have on the reader's understanding of the story? Make sure to quote a phrase or sentence from your writing. Bonus points for explaining how another author influenced your choice!

Another technique that I chose was to make my story limited, so that the reader could only hear Bennet's thoughts. I chose to do that because I wanted it to be clear that Bennet had a very specific perspective of current events, and I wanted the reader to be able to see how narrow his view of the world was. I also wanted the reader to understand that his close mindedness was flawed, and to develop ideas about this world and about Bennet's flaws from only seeing his biased reaction on the news. For example, I wrote, "While it might seem inequitable, it was giving those who were not active participants in society a way to play their part in bettering the world. It was an opportunity to be a part of something important. Something bigger. An honor, really." Most readers would disagree with this mindset, and hearing him rationalizing the news like this tells them a lot about Bennet's character. This technique was influenced by Ken Lio's use of limited narration. I liked how in *The Perfect Match*, Lio made it so that while the reader could see that the main character Sai was living in a dystopia, Sai couldn't because he had a biased perspective. Similarly, I made my story so that the reader could see things about the world that Bennet was too close-minded to see.

Annotation #3 - In 50-100 words, describe a technique you use in this piece. Why did you make that choice, and what impact does it have on the reader's understanding of the story? Make sure to quote a phrase or sentence from your writing. Bonus points for explaining how another author influenced your choice!

I chose to use small details that reveal larger information about the world in my story. For example, I wrote, “His glass balanced precariously on the edge of the tub, he blew at the bubbles and walked himself through his day.” I wanted this detail of my character drinking wine in the bathtub to help the reader to see that while my character was dealing with a sensitive topic, he was living a luxurious life and was isolated from the people he talks about throughout the story, and to see the issue with that. This choice was influenced by Octavia Butler’s *Speech Sounds*. In that story, she used show not tell to describe her character's life through small details, which I tried to mirror in Bennet’s story.

Part Two - Levanah Cohen

2035

It was a long day at work today. As I'm walking up to my apartment door, there's a sign on it that says, "EVICTION NOTICE: PLEASE PACK UP AND BE OUT BY 11:30AM, TOMORROW, 12/3/2035" What the hell. This can't be happening. If I end up out on the streets, they're going to track me down. I have no family to stay with, they all hate me, and I hate them. I have nowhere to go. Maybe I can hide somewhere at work. I think I can stay in the back storage room. It may be a risky option but it's better than being on the streets.

This work day went somewhat smoothly. But now it's over and we're closing up. So far no one knows that I'm staying here. It's getting late and it's quiet. Very quiet. Except for a siren that can be heard in the distance. I can't fall asleep, there's just too much on my mind.

I wake up just on time in the morning. I put all my stuff away and start to open up the store. And so another day starts. It's almost my lunch break when something outside the window catches everyone's attention. A police car and truck have pulled up to the curb across the street. Four police officers are looking for something. They throw a net over a bush. It's a person, they've captured a person. I've heard about this happening but I never thought that I'd see it for myself. The officers drag the person into the truck as if they're an animal. That's what the police do these days. They're assigned by the government to look for and capture anyone who's living on the streets and take them to testing. But they don't care that what they're doing is wrong because this way they get paid extra, and these days, money is everything. "Alright everyone! Just continue with what you were doing." My boss tries to distract everyone. There are more and more of these "capturings" every day.

It's another quiet and dark night. A little chilly. I fall asleep easily. Then, in the middle of the night, I hear loud footsteps. I think that maybe I'm just dreaming, but I'm not and those footsteps are getting louder and louder. I jolt awake and realize that those loud footsteps are here in the store and are

coming towards the storage room. I hear what sounds like police radio chatter. The door to the storage room bursts open with my boss and many other police officers behind him, “There he is! I knew someone was hiding in here! One of my employees who I thought I could trust!” says my boss. He’s talking to the police officers but really, he’s yelling at me.

“Please don’t take me! I had nowhere to go, I got evicted from my apartment!” The officers roll their eyes at me,

“Yeah, yeah, whatever. Let’s just take him and go.” Says one of them. It starts to rain as they shove me in the truck. As the truck drives away, I look out the window while the rain is coming down onto the dark street, the only light coming from the street lamps. I should’ve seen this coming, but at the same time, no one ever sees this coming.

The sun blinds me as they force me out of the truck. It’s sunny but cold out. That drive felt like it took forever. Where am I?

“Alright, get a move on.” says one of the police officers.

He points towards this long line of people in the distance, all walking into a large, gray building. There are trees around and green grass and it looks like something beautiful out of a movie. Even though it doesn’t look like I’m in the middle of nowhere, it sure does feel like it. The officers start taking me towards the line. I see people wearing worn down clothes and prison uniforms. It’s like they’re all in the same category of a person. They’re all worthless to the government. It’s even colder as I walk into the building. Every new person has to get processed before getting situated.

After getting processed, we go into a big room. “Welcome, everyone!” Says a man dressed in a lab coat, “You, all of you, have been chosen. You have been chosen to be tested on. But don’t be scared, please. You all will be the first ones to test out brand new medicines. Sometimes old medicines that need to be tweaked or renewed will also be tested on you. Each day, we will give you some money as a reward for being so brave during your testing experiences. You will eat your lunch, breakfast, and dinner in the cafeteria. My dear friend, Jeffrey, is coming around to give each of you a piece of paper that has your weekly schedule on it and where you will be sleeping. There may be times where you could have a

different schedule than normal, but you will find that out if an officer or someone like me, in a lab coat, approaches you and lets you know. Well then, that's it! The officer who escorted you here will take you to your room to get you situated."

So far my experience here has been very strange, even though I haven't been here for that long. It's like this place is trying to play tricks on me, especially that guy in the lab coat. It was like he was trying to make it seem like it's a big opportunity to be here. But everyone in the outside world knows what really goes on in here. I just wonder if the lab coat guy and the government know that the people know.

My first night here so far was okay, besides the screams that woke me up in the middle of the night. In the morning, a lady over the loudspeaker woke me up, "Good morning everyone! An officer is waiting for you outside of your room to take you throughout your day! Look at your schedule for what your day will be like! Have fun!" My door opens up and an officer takes me down the hall and up a few flights of stairs. We walk into the cafeteria for breakfast. It feels like I'm back in highschool, not knowing who to sit with. I sit down at an empty table to eat. All alone.

As the officer is walking me to my first testing, I notice that they switch out the officers for whenever we have to go somewhere. Maybe they do that so we don't make a connection with them or so we don't get any secret information about this place. Everything here, the meals, the officers, the pay incentive, it seems as though it's all set up this way to trick you.

I'm brought to a room that looks like a place someone would have a therapy session in. "Hello there Jamie, my name is Doctor Canes. I'll be testing with you today. To start off, I'm going to ask you some simple questions." This just feels like a regular doctor's appointment.

"What is your full name?"

"Jamie David Smith."

"How old are you and when's your birthday?"

"I'm 27 and my birthday is November 23rd, 2008."

"Where did you grow up?"

“I grew up in Iowa.”

“How was it there?”

“It was... fine.”

“Any family issues?”

“Yeah, some.”

“Ok, great. That’s all I need to know. Now, it’s time for testing. Don’t be scared, I’m just going to inject this medicine into you, and you’re going to tell me how you feel after it. When you see me again tomorrow, you’re going to tell me if you feel any changes. If you don’t feel any different at all, then you should also tell me that. Let’s get started!”

Throughout the entire day, I’ve been sent around to so many different doctors, each of them asking me some questions and then starting the testing on me. But none of them would tell me what medicine. So far, I don’t feel any different from the injections.

The next day, when I go back to Doctor Canes, I tell him that I didn’t experience any ‘effects’.

“Very interesting.” he says, “So no body aches, dizziness, nausea?”

“Nope.”

“Ok then, let’s try again.”

I’ve been here for a few weeks now and I have finally gotten used to everything. But there are times where it feels very isolating. An officer is walking me back to my room after dinner. There’s something very off about tonight. I can hear screams in the distance. They’re very faint, but I can still hear them. We walk past a room with its door open. There’s someone on the ground, struggling to get up.

“Quick, we have to help them!”

“No, they’re fine.”

“What? They’re clearly not fine! What the hell’s wrong with you?” The officer shuts the person’s door and grabs my arm.

“Hey let go of me! Where are you taking me?”

“We’re going to see the Top Doctor” The ‘Top Doctor’? I don’t try to resist or say anything else

to the officer. My arm is starting to hurt from the grip he has on it. I just don't understand why I would need to see this 'Top Doctor'.

"Hello there, you must be Jamie. You might know me as the 'Top Doctor', but call me Steve, please. Officer, you can wait outside."

"Just now, we saw someone in their room who looked like they needed help, and the officer refused to do so. I have seen and heard other things too. I have a right to know what's going on, especially if there are people who are getting hurt in this place."

"The reason that the officer didn't help that person is for two reasons: 1. It's very important that you, our officers, and our doctors stay focused and on track throughout the day, so you must not get distracted by anything that you think is unusual. 2. I can assure you that whatever you've seen or heard are just the after effects of testing. You look a little pale. Here, have some water and the officer will escort you to your room." As I drink the water, I start to feel lightheaded. I try to stand up to go with the officer to my room but I can't. I'm very dizzy.

"Woah, woah, careful there. Why don't you sit back down." As the Top Doctor says that, everything around me starts to go dark and I become unconscious. But as I'm going, I hear the doctor say something, "We have to be more careful, we've been having too many incidents lately. At least we can deal with this one right away."

I wake up and I'm on a table in what looks like an operation room. I'm surrounded by doctors. "What's going on? What are you doing to me?" I ask them but no one responds, no one even looks at me. I realize that I can't talk. I try to scream once I see what they're doing to me. I yell at them to stop. But no one can hear me. While I'm drifting away, I find it quite funny how quickly things have escalated. Who would think that me, a random person living in Massachusetts, would end up here? It's almost as if the government's been watching me, up close. Wait-

Annotation #1 - In 50-100 words, describe a technique you use in this piece. Why did you make that choice, and what impact does it have on the reader's understanding of the story? Make sure to quote a phrase or sentence from your writing. Bonus points for explaining how another author influenced your choice!

I chose to use first person. I did this because I wanted the reader to see what it was like inside the main character's mind. I also wanted the main character to take the reader throughout the story from their perspective, "I ask them but no one responds, no one even looks at me". I was influenced by Helena Fox who wrote "How it Feels to Float". She also used first person. In that book, I felt like I was inside Biz's mind and so I was kind of trying to do a similar thing here.

Annotation #2 - In 50-100 words, describe a technique you use in this piece. Why did you make that choice, and what impact does it have on the reader's understanding of the story? Make sure to quote a phrase or sentence from your writing. Bonus points for explaining how another author influenced your choice!

In my short story, I have a lot of short sentences. I chose to do this because I want the reader to feel like they're inside Jamie's head, hearing all his thoughts, "I sit down at an empty table to eat. All alone". I'm using this quote as an example because these are two short sentences, one after another. There were times where I had a few long and descriptive sentences, but most of the time I used short sentences because I feel like that's what Jamie's thought would be like.

Annotation #3 - In 50-100 words, describe a technique you use in this piece. Why did you make that choice, and what impact does it have on the reader's understanding of the story? Make sure to quote a phrase or sentence from your writing. Bonus points for explaining how another author influenced your choice!

I had my dialogue set up in a very specific way. I did it so that it's line by line and one person is talking after another, so after each quote I don't need to say "says *name*". The impact that this has on the reader is so that the reader can actually tell that there's a conversation going on. There are only a few times where there's dialogue, but in those times, the dialogue isn't super long, but long enough to give you an idea about what's going on,

"What is your full name?"

"Jamie David Smith."

"How old are you and when's your birthday?"



Part Three - Grant Keo

2048

to anyone who knows about anatomy or chemistry or anything remotely human sicnecy medicine related im sorry

Today is the second week of clinical trials for Regeneuron. After spending the whole week begging insurance to shell out the money to give my regular patients crucial medications, beginning the trials feels like a breath of fresh air.

Instead of taking my usual commute to the lab, I quickly brewed myself a coffee and drove up to the testing facility. Thanks to the new government policies, the number of volunteers has risen so much that dormitories need to be rented out to house them all.

I park my car in the lot across from the building's stained, matte walls and tiny windows. Looking at it makes me wish the administration was willing to shell out just a little more money to make it look less like a homeless shelter.

The familiar, comforting smell of antiseptic hits my senses as soon as I walk through the door. Security greets me with a bark to take off my shoes and pass through the metal detector. *This place is three bars short of a prison*, I think to myself as I walk upstairs to my office to prepare spreadsheets. Unsurprisingly, the amount of paperwork that needs to be done has only gone up since we transitioned straight to human testing. Animals aren't given consent forms to sign.

I head into my office and pull up my computer. As I pull up the participants' files, I start to skim through the volunteers' information. Some are lifelong chainsmokers. Alcoholics. A few of them were caught in accidents. Although I often see patients with similar issues, these subjects

struggle with holding down a job, if they aren't unemployed or homeless. All of them are in chronic pain of varying degrees.

For some reason, reading about their life stories has me thinking about my schooling and the past work I've done. I don't think about my time at fellowship much, nor do I remember much from it. Most of it was all memorization that I forgot as soon as exams were over. But none of the hours I spent studying for assessments could compare to the sleepless nights I spent thinking about the real laboratory work I've done. I can't unsee the white mices' blank red stares, or unfeel their squirming as my colleagues and I were told to snap their necks. I can't unsee their patchy, hairless bodies as we gave them autoimmune diseases and dissected them to analyze the damage. Exposing pregnant mice to various chemicals and killing them to observe the effects on their fetuses.

Some of my peers have developed deep seated phobias of rodents ever since. However, the majority of us grew calloused to our work in the lab and thought little of it. But even those of us who had stronger stomachs were frustrated when our studies ended up yielding no results, despite a hint of significant findings from animal testing. Unsurprisingly, lab animals are just too different from humans. Sure, we're both warm-blooded, we're both mammals. But no matter how one puts it, a mouse isn't a human. Nor is a human a fish, a rat, a cat, or a chimp. What happens on a lab animal is not what happens to a human being. Their heart rates, metabolism, and behaviors are completely different from ours'. The physiology simply doesn't match up.

The nervous system is no exception. It's the most complex part of the human body--and the easiest to damage. Reading about the poor souls' life stories reminds me of the weight of my work. Unlike the animals bred for science experiments, these subjects have already been damaged. They have little hope for a future as they are now. But their generous volunteering

gives them purpose. If Regeneuron works as I've calculated and is able to stimulate nerve growth, it will change their lives. It will give them a chance at living painlessly.

"Doctor?" The source of the voice knocks on my office door.

I look up from the notes. The voice is Jeff's. "Come in," I say.

Jeff walks into my office. I'm surprised he still has time to check by my office, considering how busy technicians like him are. He takes a glance at my study's abstract and raises his eyebrow. "I still can't believe you're calling it Regeneuron."

"Hey, I spent many hours thinking about the name, and I'm too proud of it to give it up."

He chuckles. "I see. I've heard many things about it." I can sense the skepticism in his tone.

"Well, I've got the details on it if you want to read them. The results will speak for themselves, I'm sure of it."

"Forgive my wording, but what made you think of such an... ambitious study? I seldom see a study that begins phase one testing so early."

I recall the participant's accounts of substance abuse and lifetimes of pain.

"Bob?" Jeff says.

"It was a shower thought," I replied. I pick up my papers. "Are we ready to begin?"

"Lead the way."

We leave my office and walk down the hallway. I glance into the different testing rooms, passing the other busy technicians fiddling with equipment. Officers chatter as they trail the nurse practitioners from room to room. It's a bustling place for such a dreary building.

Finally, we stop at the first room of the day. I open the door to find an overweight man sitting dressed in a worn down orange suit. A tag labeled "eighty-three" is sewn on his shirt. If

he's read his schedule, he should be expecting a shot with the treatment I've concocted for him. Little does he know that he's a member of the control group.

"Is this Mr. Kane Perrish I'm talking to today?" I say.

"Sure is," he replies.

"Good morning Kane, it's good to see you again. I hope Jeff's been treating you well.

How are you feeling today?"

"Better than ever, doc." He tries to stand up, but stumbles back down. He winces a little. I don't even need his file to see the toll type two diabetes has taken on him. His legs may no longer be swollen, but his nerve damage remains.

"I've been reading your report. Glad to see you've been keeping your blood sugars stable."

"Well, it's hard to overeat the slop I'm getting now." He pats his belly. "Do me a favor, can you remind the chefs how a toaster works? They really need to step up their game, I'm tired of scraping the char off the toast." Jeff laughs.

Kane eyes Jeff. "You're an easy crowd," he says, grinning. "I bet I could be a stand up comedian." He looks back down at his legs, and sighs. Kane's file notes that his retail employer is considering him unfit for physical labor.

"We'll let them know," I say. "Do you feel any difference in your legs or around the site of injection?"

"It's not as sore as it was a few days ago. Nothing else, really." *As expected*, I think to myself. *No amount of placebo can cure diabetes.*

"That's great to hear. Unfortunately, we're going to have to give you that soreness again. Do you have any questions before we continue?"

"Just get it over with."

Jeff walks up with a syringe. "Alright, I'll be giving you your second dose," he says.

"After this, you should be free to go."

"Don't put it into my good leg, ok?"

A nurse knocks on the door. "Bobinsky?" he says.

Kane leans forward and glances at the door. Jeff looks at me. "One moment," I say.

I close the door behind me. "What's going on?" I ask.

The nurse shoves a report into my hand. "One of the subjects has been complaining of on and off pain all over his body," he says.

A shiver ran through my body. *What? Why wasn't I notified earlier?* "When did this start?"

"Come with me."

I follow the nurse into a room with a man curled in a fetal position, his mouth gaping open. "Chuck Young's symptoms became unbearable about a few minutes ago, but he was complaining of occasional sharp pain around his legs, and torso."

"How long have you known about this?"

"Just today. He ignored the irritation until I asked him about it."

This is an inconvenient development. I then look at Chuck's limbs. He had been complaining of tingling and numbness in his arms and hands following years of smoking and alcohol consumption.

"What about his extremities?"

The nurse looks down at the sticky note he was carrying. "He did not report pain there."

Very interesting.

"Did he consume any narcotics or alcohol between last week and today?"

"No."

"Are there any others reporting similar symptoms around where they do not have nerve damage?"

The nurse pauses. "Excuse me," he says, and leaves the room. The nurse pauses and calls another nurse. "Three others," he says. "They've also felt little sharp pricks in unaffected areas."

Could it be? I need to be sure. "How are the others?"

"Most are unresponsive."

Odd. They're feeling pain in the healthy areas, but fine in the damaged areas. That probably means that *Could* the issue simply be that Regeneuron is too indiscriminate?

"Doctor?" he says.

"Yes?"

"Should we pull them out of the study?" The nurse and I both glance at Chuck, still lying down. Chuck makes eye contact with us as he writhes on the leather bed. I could feel the pain every time he twitched. The nurse quickly looks away.

This issue was caused by my experimental medicine, so I have to be the one to fix it. "We cannot disrupt the results. Keep them in the study."

Annotation #1 - In 50-100 words, describe a technique you use in this piece. Why did you make that choice, and what impact does it have on the reader's understanding of the story? Make sure to quote a phrase or sentence from your writing. Bonus points for explaining how another author influenced your choice!

I chose to write from a first person perspective because my primary goal for this writing is to get the reasoning and motives of the main character. Having Bob Bobinsky describe his surroundings gives a much less objective view of the world around him. I wanted to show his explicit thoughts ("This issue was caused by my experimental medicine, so I have to be the one to fix it. 'We cannot disrupt the results. Keep them in the study.' [I said]") to allow for comparisons between what he thinks and what he does. In this case, Bob sounds much colder and collected than what he's thinking. It's a technique that I noticed in Dune and wanted to dive deeper into

Annotation #2 - In 50-100 words, describe a technique you use in this piece. Why did you make that choice, and what impact does it have on the reader's understanding of the story? Make sure to quote a phrase or sentence from your writing. Bonus points for explaining how another author influenced your choice!

A more deliberate choice for myself was to use repetition when I was trying to add emphasis. One example of my usage of the repetition of lists and similar sentence structures was when Bob was talking about the difference between animals and humans. "But no matter how one puts it, a mouse isn't a human. Nor is a human a fish, a rat, a cat, or a chimp. What happens on a lab animal is not what happens to a human being. Their heart rates, metabolism, and behaviors are completely different from ours'. The physiology simply doesn't match up." Bob listed simply all the contrasts between animals and humans to hammer home the point: animals are too different from humans to accurately test on.

Annotation #3 - In 50-100 words, describe a technique you use in this piece. Why did you make that choice, and what impact does it have on the reader's understanding of the story? Make sure to quote a phrase or sentence from your writing. Bonus points for explaining how another author influenced your choice!

A technique I tried to practice was to use sentence length to change up the pacing of the story. There were some times I wanted to slow down my plot by increasing the sentence length to provide more descriptions. The dialogue was supposed to be quick and snappy, along with quick details about what each character does as they communicate to each other. In other times, when I wanted to maximize the amount of detail when talking about the movement through the testing facility or the amount of detail I put into writing misery porn, I slowed down and used several compound sentences to slow down the pace of reading.

Part Four - Thorne Englander

Record 1A: dated July 29-30th, 2065

- The CDC wants me to keep a spoken record as I undergo the testing. So uh my name is Walter Cambels, 37 years old, uh, married to my wife, Sage. I've been unemployed for about a year now. Uh,¹ I was in jail for a bit and couldn't find much work after getting out. It's about a week until the test. *A loud thud from the background, followed by swearing.* ² Sorry, I'll finish the questionnaire when I clean this up.
- Pretty sure it's recording now, yeah it is. I'm really glad y'all could help me out like this. The pay for this is huge and it will save us from homelessness most likely. Anyway, I haven't left the country in the past year. I haven't been in contact with anybody who carries an infectious disease. Well, we had to put our dog down last month but I don't think that counts. I haven't been using drugs or alcohol. If I have any questions send them to this address, a lawyer is not permitted yeah yeah.. Alright, I think that's everything. Signing off.

Record 2A: dated August 2nd, 2065

- I was told to record any hesitations I had, so I guess I'm a little worried about the pay. It's a lot but it doesn't last forever. I guess Sage could take the tests, but it would be nice if you guys could get me a job. I know you're doing everything you can for us and I don't mean to be greedy.. I guess I'll ask about this when I get the tests. Signing off.

¹ Patient is prone to fillers. We've removed the majority of them from the transcript for ease of reading.

² It is assumed this is his wife.

Record 1B dated August 6th, 2065

I thought it relevant to elaborate on Mr Cambels' criminal history. His record claims he had multiple neighbors reporting domestic abuse and calling for wellness checks. They couldn't get him on that, so they stuck him with animal abuse and possession of illegal drugs. It's suggested that he fell back into his old habits near the end of our tests. - Dr Smith P.H.D: case manager for William Cambel

Record 1C dated August 6th, 2065

- The testing finished about an hour ago. Much less effort than they had me believing. It took more time to read over the waiver than the actual test. They injected me with some things and told me to keep an eye on my condition, report any changes to the log, and it'll all be good and done. The kind man at the counter also agreed to give us some of our pay ahead of time! What a kind boy. ³. Signing off.

Record 2C dated August 7-8th, 2065.

- I have a bit of a headache, my arms are a bit sore around the area of the injection as well. Sage swears there's some discoloration, but she can't see anything without her glasses. Signing off.

³ This employee was fired.

- Sage was right⁴. There's definitely a dark spot and my arm is numb. I took a Tylenol but it won't stop swelling. The headache is also worse. When I think too hard it hurts,⁵ luckily I don't need much thought to be unemployed. Signing off.

Record 3c dated May 1st, 2024

Below is a short excerpt from a scientific journal article published in the aforementioned year. I have deemed it necessary to provide a short explanation of what our tests are looking to accomplish.

What is Brain Worm Disease?

The brain is a complicated organ, however thanks to our recent influx of volunteers we are now more than able to study it. Through our new Miracle Procedure we were able to study the brain of the Philadelphia Ripper for a few hours postmortem. Amazingly enough we witnessed a foreign body germ cell receding from within his brain tissues. Our studies concluded that this infection is the cause of Sociopathy, or lack of care for other human beings. It devours the parts of the brain responsible for empathy to keep itself alive!

Below are student resources, and a video of the germ leaving the tissues of the ripper.⁶

Record 1D dated August 10th, 2065

- I went to a hospital just yesterday, they couldn't quite figure out what was going on with me. Someone said it might be cancer, but y'all told me it was a short lasting parasite? It

⁴ This recording is time stamped as 6 hours later, 1am. However I elected to keep it under 2C for ease of reading.

⁵ This is presumed to be an early sign of rapid progression within brain cells.

⁶ We now know certain dispositions make an individual more susceptible to the germ.

doesn't matter. The swelling and discoloration is creeping up my neck, and disappearing from my arm. Sage keeps joking that it's something out of a horror movie. Anyway I'm on a few pain meds, but according to your guys' documents the testing period will be over on the 15th.

Record 2D dated August 11th, 2065

- It died down mostly, the medicines I took were tylenol, NSAIDs and the occasional nyquil to help me sleep. I swear Sage can't help herself but roll all over when she's asleep. We received our half of the payment early, thanks a ton for that by the way. We have enough for some of the nicer vegetables not on sale. This has been a lifesaver really. If you ever need me to do this again I'd be glad too. *A crash is barely audible in the background.* Dammit Sage we spent a lot of money on that. Signing off.

Record 1E dated August 16th, 2065.

Dr Smith here again, the patient showed up for the collection of pay and exit exam.

Unfortunately this strain wasn't killed off on time, and we have to keep him on the program for a few more days after. Much to his protest. He will be required to make a daily check-in, and we will finish off his partnership after a month of inactivity⁷. As noted in previous experiments, sometimes violent outbursts follow a successful cerebral infiltration. Luckily our man here seems completely symptom free. I'll keep an eye on him just in case. - Dr Smith P.H.D: case manager for William Cambel

⁷ The records of the next ten days have been omitted from this document, the majority of them are short and inconsequential. Subject expresses annoyance with the additional time over the course of the next month. Those records can be found in our archive linked here

Record 2E dated August 26th, 2065

A study conducted by a group of scientists in Japan gives us the following excerpt:

“... tests on the disease show us it is much faster acting than previously determined. Our team is working on a vaccine, however we strongly recommend keeping procedures using the aforementioned disease⁸ to a minimum⁹.”

At this time Mr Cambel has exceeded the recommended testing time by Japan. Our procedure has only two weeks remaining, meaning it would be a great financial burden to end it early. - Dr Smith PHD, case manager for Walter Cambel

Record 1F dated August 31st, 2065

- I really want to stress again how much I don't like this extension, the extension pay is so much less than I expected and I don't think Sage can support us alone. It's far worse than it ever was, I have constant headaches now and am more or less confined to my bed. Nothings changed since the last time I reported in
- A sharp pain started in my head around midnight, sort of like a throbbing or banging. I'm not sure I can continue this process y'all for much longer. We're losing money this way

⁸ Clearly we are talking about brain worm disease here

⁹ Having carefully reviewed the study we found it illogical to discontinue the current partnerships around the disease.

Record 1G dated September 1st, 2065

- I tried my best to be understanding with the deadlines but I just can't figure out why y'all keep extending my end date! ¹⁰ I don't know what I'll do, they fired me from the trash force, and I can't even get a job with this damn thing in my head! ¹¹ I can't do it! It hurts real bad, I can't stand up to go to the hospital and Sage keeps telling me it's just one more night. That bitch wants me dead I'm sure of it! ¹² It hurts so bad it feels like somethings tearing into my skull, one more night is a lot longer than it sounds like.
- There's somebody outside my room, Sage is asleep and she makes so much noise I can hardly hear myself talk. It's one of you isn't it? Creeping around recording data for your crazy tests. I swear I've had enough of you putting these thoughts in my brain
- There you've fucked up now! They'll find the body and they'll know it was you! Then you'll get out of my head and leave these tests and leave my life!
- Look what I've done.. My wife.. Look what you made me do! I hope the blood on your hands stains everything you touch! I hope you cannot bear the weight of the crimes you have committed and... and... oh what have i done... how can I ever repay... I'm coming Sage, we'll be together again soon. ¹³

Record 2G dated September 1st, 2065

I am sure however you consumed this file you found it disturbing, however I remind you once more, Mr Cambel was a volunteer and signed up for all that followed. We've made great strides in discovering the causes and origins of this disease, and his sacrifice will most certainly not be in vain.

¹⁰ Subject is extremely loud, volume reduced in recording for ease of listening.

¹¹ Symptoms have shown an increase in or onset of auditory hallucination.

¹² An increase or onset of paranoia is expected.

¹³ We gathered a team of emergency responders to bring Mr Cambels corpse down from where he hung, it has been buried by the time you are reading this.

Our next test on the brain worm disease will commence within a week, we have our next partner lined up. Thank you to everyone who helped us here, you are the saviors of humanity. - Dr Smith

Record 1H dated September 2nd, 2065

Our study concluded yesterday. I'm adding on a final piece to this report for the sake of closure. The previous transcript was hard for all of us to read or listen to, so I think you can understand why I haven't included it here. However I am pleased to announce our project a success! With the help of Mr Cambel we now have critical data that can be used to progress our research many years ahead of its time! I have noted this record as a success in our files, and I would like to have it added to the major database, what a wonderful showing! - Dr Smith

Annotation #1 - In 50-100 words, describe a technique you use in this piece. Why did you make that choice, and what impact does it have on the reader's understanding of the story? Make sure to quote a phrase or sentence from your writing. Bonus points for explaining how another author influenced your choice!

The main technique I used was writing the story through a series of logs. I think all sorts of stories can benefit from this kind of writing, but specifically sci-fi stories benefit the most. It felt natural for a clinical study to require its participants to keep track of their condition throughout, and futuristic technology let me make it an audio log. I try to make it very clear what logs are audio, what logs are related texts and which ones are just a direct insert from one of the doctors. I use different fonts and also outright say it. I think this technique also helps me worldbuild in a smoother way than I ever could have without. For example: *"I thought it relevant to elaborate on Mr Cambels' criminal history"*. This is the first time Dr Smith interjects into the logs to clarify or give some information. It wouldn't have made sense for Cambel to talk about his own criminal past so this is a natural way of getting it in the story. Writing the story basically written to the reader lets me work in information easier. Logs usually have all sorts of dates and stuff which helps a lot for the flow of the story too. I got this technique from my free reading or something by Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness*

Annotation #2 - In 50-100 words, describe a technique you use in this piece. Why did you make that choice, and what impact does it have on the reader's understanding of the story? Make sure to quote a phrase or sentence from your writing. Bonus points for explaining how another author influenced your choice!

The major supporting stylistic choice of footnotes throughout the writing felt like an easy decision to me. The entire piece is meant to be a report about a medical study that has been read and annotated by a Dr Smith for presentation to higher ups in his field. I felt it flowed smoother if I had certain small details added via footnote instead of given in a full log by Dr Smith. "This is presumed to be an early sign of rapid progression within brain cells." is a piece of information fed directly to the reader, but it feels less like a spoon feeding and more like actual specific notes that would be taken on medical records. When reading Caught in the Organ Draft I felt slightly bogged down by information about the setting, so I did my best to try and fit it in to the story instead of have an exposition moment every page.

Annotation #3 - In 50-100 words, describe a technique you use in this piece. Why did you make that choice, and what impact does it have on the reader's understanding of the story? Make sure to quote a phrase or sentence from your writing. Bonus points for explaining how another author influenced your choice!

I had my narrator say a lot of how he feels as opposed to showing it. obviously showing how somebody feels over an audio recording would be basically impossible. While people usually don't go walking around explaining exactly how they feel I thought having references to his feelings about the overall job was actually super necessary to keep the readers clued in to his mind. "I really want to stress again how much I don't like this extension," I think it only happens twice, and mainly in this log where Cambel rants about his feelings towards the experiments the only other way I actually communicate his violent tendencies is through the criminal record and his outbursts at his wife. I got this technique from reading transcripts of radio shows.

