

MUTANT CRAWL CLASSICS

THE APOCALYPSE ARK

#6: A LEVEL 5 ADVENTURE
BY BRENDAN J. LASALLE



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*This book is for Maria Melendez. I'm dedicating
ONE book to you . . . or perhaps TWO.*

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INTRODUCTION

Remember the good old days, when post-apocalyptic adventures were full of super-science, robots that were there to be mastered, and the finale of every underground adventure was setting the fusion power plant to overload? Those days are back. Mutant Crawl Classics adventures take place in an ambiguous time period after a great disaster has ravaged the world, and it's up to your neolithic mutant tribesmen to go out into the hot house jungles and radioactive deserts of Terra A.D. (After Disaster) and collect the artifacts of the Ancient Ones in order to attain great personal power and savage glory.

BACKGROUND

The Ancients called it Beta Collection Unit NC-787. Its mission – to find, collect, and categorize animals, plants and, in some instances, human beings, recording DNA and, in some cases, stripping invasive mutant DNA from extant creatures to create genetically pure stock.

Then the Great Disaster came. Beta Collection Unit NC-787 sat dead and inert for ages while the world evolved around it for thousands of years.

A powerful mutant discovered the NC-787. Her name was Bluma, and she was a simple child of one of the remote villages from the lands near the Monster Sea. She died of an uncontrolled fever at an extremely young age, and doing so discovered her mutation – she had the extremely rare gift of Cognitive Immortality, and with her last conscious thought in her original body she forced her personality into the brain of an unconscious reptile and left her village, never to return. Since then she has lived the natural lifespans of many dozens of creatures, learning more and more about the blighted world and its inhabitants.

In her thirteenth life cycle Bluma had epiphany – the perfect world would be one where the natural world would progress without advanced cognizant thought, except for one being: herself. She longed to be the only intelligent creature in a paradise world, a world that would constantly strive for perfection as it sought to create intelligence, but which would become a paradise because she herself would stop intelligent life from evolving, forcing evolution to create amazing plants and animals instead.

This dark notion would have remained a daydream if she had never discovered NC-787. Bluma was awestruck by its majesty, and decided to explore every inch of it. During this exploration, she encountered the AI EVE and, through guile, managed to trap it in a shunted computer. She covered the computer in duct tape and hid it away, planning to eventually harness EVE's power for her own ends.

It took the lives of a dozen bodies, but Bluma eventually explored the ancient husk and learned its secrets. She has forsaken the name of her birth and adopted the name of one of the engineers of the NC-787, the one who saw its potential to create the perfect being. The mutant formally known as Bluma shall evermore only answer to Doctor Zeigarnik.

Now in control of NC-787, rechristened The Apocalypse Ark, Doctor Zeigarnik created a terrible pathogen, B-17, and now roams the world, infecting intelligent creatures with the terrible disease, an act of genocide that is just the opening gambit in a pogrom designed to erase sentient life from the world.

Only two things stand between Doctor Zeigarnik and her dreams of genocide – the AI known as EVE, currently trapped with access to only a fraction of its power, and the brave seekers that dare invade the Apocalypse Ark.

NOTE ON USING THE APOCALYPSE ARK

The adventure comes with a built-in hook – a swarm of optimized injectors attack the PCs' village, who then likely go and investigate the source of the attack. However, it might better serve your campaign to simply have the player's come across the Ark in their travels, or to hear a story about the horrifying "smart metal" from a lone seeker, or even receive a transmission from a patron AI, telling them to go and find/ explore/ destroy the thing. Use this adventure however best serves your campaign, and don't feel obligated to use every bit as writ.

ENCOUNTER 1: THE SURVIVOR

In the dark hours before dawn, Klig, a member of a rival tribe runs into the village, sick, exhausted, and bedraggled, screaming for help. Klig is infected with the B-17 pathogen (Stage 2, see below). Klig tells a tale of a mountain of "smart metal" rolling into his village and releasing a swarm of terrifying winged creatures, each shining a beam of intense light. He ran, with the creatures in pursuit. Eventually he managed to dive into a river and swim underwater for a while to throw them off his scent; he thinks they lost him, but the creatures found his trail and are not far behind.

Less than 5 minutes later the swarm flies into the village and attacks. Unless he is stopped, Klig runs away, never to be seen again. Each creature attacks exactly three times and then flies back to the Ark. Each one attempts to sting one individual, then moves on to a different target, making no distinction between the PCs and other tribesmen. After three rounds, they retreat, flying back to the Apocalypse Ark.

Optimized Injectors (13): Init +2; Atk sting +4 melee (1+disease); AC 14; HD 1d8+1; hp 9 each; MV fly 40'; Act 1d20; SP biological combat light, injector, imperfect life form; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will+3.

At a glance, Optimized Injectors appear to be small flying mutant birds – one huge eye that shines a bright light, oversized wings, tiny underslung tail with a needle-like stinger. They are actually mammals, created from recombined human DNA and vat-grown tissue, perfectly optimized to do one thing – track and inject enemies. They have keen eyesight and hearing, and are master jungle trackers. Optimized Injectors also sense radio signals, and are directed via radio by Doctor Zeigarnik.

PATHOGEN B-17

The disease has five stages. Every day, infected creatures must make a DC 13 Fortitude save – failure means they progress to the next stage of the disease.

If creatures infected with B-17 make three daily saving throws in a row, then their immune systems have conquered the synthetic virus. Their disease shifts backwards a stage (i.e. from 3rd stage to second stage), and with every daily saving throw they make after that the disease moves back another stage until the infected are completely cured. It is still possible that the symptoms overwhelm creatures, causing their death before they become completely well.

Stage 1: Victims feel ill, experience a slight lack of appetite.

Stage 2: Victims feels sick, and take a -1 on Strength, Stamina, and Agility checks.

Stage 3: Victims begin to develop a terrible rash on their body, and take 1 point of Strength, Stamina, or Agility damage per day (determine randomly). Any physical skill checks are made at -1d lower on the dice chain.

Stage 4: The rash covers the victim's body entirely. Victim is bedridden, unable to effectively perform even the simplest physical tasks. Any mutation checks are done -1d lower on the dice chain. They continue to take daily ability damage.

Stage 5: Victims die .

Strength, Stamina, and Agility damage from the disease cannot be healed until the disease is cured. It is possible to die of the symptoms before the 5th stage of the disease.

The custom pathogen is genetically stable and cannot be biologically transmitted, so it can't be passed through contact with an infected victim. This limitation is intentional – Doctor Zeigarnik wanted to make sure it could neither mutate or pass on to indeliberate targets – she is terrified of infecting an innocent animal.

Each Optimized Injector has a tiny biologically fabricated syringe-like injector in its underslung tail, nearly indistinguishable from a cybernetic graft. The injector can be filled with whatever toxin or poison their handler wants; in this case, they carry a lethal custom pathogen, B-17 – victims stung must make a DC 13 Fortitude save or become Stage 1 infected (see sidebar). Plantients are immune to this attack.

The creatures have a continuously glowing beam from their single oversized eye, their Biological Combat Light – it flashes in the face of the creature they face, giving one

opponent within 10' per round a -2 on hit rolls if they are fighting in darkness.

Optimized Injectors are genetically created to fly and fight at night, but aren't good for much else. Their average life span is six months, they can't reproduce on their own, can't feed themselves, possess low intelligence, and are extremely susceptible to radiation, rolling -1d lower on the chain versus radiation attacks.

After the attack, it is likely that the PCs and many of the villagers will be infected. They will likely want to seek out the "smart metal" their rival tribesman spoke of, seeking a cure, revenge, or just answers.

PCs can simply travel south until they find the unmistakable path the Ark leaves through the jungle, or they might decide to first investigate the infected rival village.

ENCOUNTER 2: VILLAGE OF SORROW

The PCs are all aware of the nearby village, a shunned place infamous for the inhospitality of its people. The inhabitants, a loose band of savage survivor types, refuse the ethics of the Clan of the Cog, and embrace all that is worst about the survivor mindset: social advancement by violence, supply raids against neighbors, and cannibalism. It is a full day's travel from the PCs village to the home of the tribe some call the Bat People for their night raids.

The village is composed of fifteen tree houses, with one large communal platform open to the sky and several camouflaged watch platforms. The stench of death is thick about the village. When the PCs arrive, they find a score of dead, all victims of the disease. The only survivors are extremely sick, showing the tell-tale rash that indicates stage 3 or 4 of B-17 infection. None of them are strong enough to put up much of a fight – the healthy have already left, abandoning their former tribe mates to their fate.

THE TRACKS

The PCs cannot miss the tracks if they head back the way Klig came for two or three days of travel. Something unbelievably massive clearly rolled through the jungle, knocking down trees, burning foliage, and leaving massive tread marks in the earth. The trail is ludicrously easy to follow, being a 60' wide trench of crushed trees, dug-under foliage, and roadkill. The PCs can successfully determine which direction is the way the thing went and which one goes back the way it came with a DC 13 Intelligence check. If PCs follow it the wrong way give them an Intelligence check every day (starting with DC 13, decreasing by one for every day) to note that plants are beginning to regrow, so they must be heading the wrong way.



It's extremely obvious from the huge tracks passing through the village that the Smart Metal has been here (see The Tracks sidebar).

The fleeing survivors took all the food and equipment they could carry when they left. If pressed, one of the sick admits to having a secret stash of artifacts hidden away. In a crook in an extremely tall tree she has a hidden bag, containing 23 coins, a bag of screws, bolts, tiny springs, and a c-cell with 50% charge remaining.

Alter this encounter to suit your campaign: The PCs could discover some survivors who could possibly be persuaded to accept the ethics of an archaic alignment, mutant animal plants or animal companions, or similar.

ENCOUNTER 3: CLEMENTINE

A two-day march brings the PCs to the end of the trail, a ridge over a gentle slope down into a valley of thick ground-creeping vegetation but no trees. There in the valley is the Apocalypse Ark, currently waiting for scouting reports from a flight of optimized injectors Doctor Zeigarnik sent to search for more settlements to destroy with disease. Crawling a perimeter around the Ark is an obvious threat: Clementine.

Clementine was the designer's nickname for the multipurpose industrial bot, and the vehicle's AI adopted it. It is 20' tall with two mechanical arms that end in photon canons, a prominent sensor array, powerful deep-set headlights, and no obvious points of egress. Its surface is pockmarked with dents, cracks, and caked on plant mash and blood. Originally arrayed with a changeable battery of utilities and non-lethal defense measures, she has been retrofitted with photon cannons and re-tasked with the destruction of potential threats to the Ark. When the Ark is on the move,

Clementine takes point, blasting away difficult features of the terrain or threatening creatures. When the Ark is stationary, it slowly crawls a perimeter around the Ark, constantly watching for potential threats.

When she is low on power, Clementine crawls up the ramp to the trailer section and plugs in. Her battery life is about 17 hours. The trailer's power coupler is faulty and inefficient, and its charge time can vary widely (1d30+15 minutes).

Clever PCs may be able to avoid confrontation with Clementine altogether, either by waiting until it is on the far side of its patrol and quickly sneaking up to the entrance to the Ark, or patiently waiting until it charges, or by some other tactic or ruse. If the Ark is destroyed, Clementine continues doing what it was programmed to until its batteries die.

Doctor Zeigarnik constantly monitors Clementine's sensory input, so she will be aware of the PCs as soon as Clementine is.

Clementine, Apocalypse Defense Bot (1): Init -4; Atk photon canon +7 missile fire (5d6) or ram +3 melee (2d20); AC 14 (plus damage resistance 5); HD 10d10; hp 98; MV 15/30/60'; Act 2d20; SP audible warning, photon cannons, damaged enhanced senses, ceramic alloy armor plating, crash plate, damage resistance 5, damaged logic system, meltdown, immune to mind control; SV Fort +10, Ref -2, Will -; AI recog none (Ark ID only, see below).

Clementine is a bot under the control of a limited AI (EVE, see Area 7-1) slaved to the Ark. She prefers feminine pronouns. Obviously, she has no need to eat, breathe, or sleep, and is immune to any sort of mind control. Clementine has enough battery power for 12 hours of active functioning, after which she goes into low power mode until she can reconnect with the Ark.

Clementine's moves on unexposed caterpillar track. Her maximum movement rate is 15 through rough jungle terrain, 30 on an unpaved surface, or 60 on a paved surface.

On the first round of combat, Clementine emits an 110-decibel warning – however, her digital sound library is scrambled, so it comes out as an unintelligible screech of hyper-speed legalese in the language of the ancients. If opponents do not immediately flee she attacks.

Clementine has a varied sensor array. It sees in 360 but its front sensor array is battered, having been oft-smacked by branches and such, and as such it has a more difficult time hitting targets immediately in front of her (action dice drop to d16 against targets facing it “head on” within 30'). Canny opponents will notice it turns broadside to target during combat, and use that against her. She has night vision, thermal senses, and passive sonar that alerts it to flying targets within 1000 feet.

Clementine's primary task is to destroy humans that threaten the Ark. She automatically considers any pure strain humans without an Ark ID hostile. In the presence of mutants, plantients, or manimals, it makes an AI recognition check – if it recognizes that a creature is a human, it first warns them (as above), then attacks. It ignores non-hostile mutants, plantients, and manimals unrecognized as humans until they get within 30' of the Ark itself, at which point it spends one round firing a warning shot, then attacks to destroy. Her primary weapons are photon cannons, that can strike targets at up to 300' away. Her front end is a reinforced crash plate, which allows her to ram in combat for 2d20 points of damage.

Clementine's ceramic alloy armor plating reduces the amount of damage she takes from every attack by 5, rendering her immune from attacks that do less than 6 points. Her armor does not work against cold or electrical damage.

If Clementine is reduced to 7 hit points or less, her damaged self-repair system attempts to engage, overheating her engine. Her sound system gives a warning – which comes out as more high-pitched garble – and her surfaces begin to glow white-hot. Two rounds later, she explodes, doing 7d6 damage to creatures, objects, and structures within 60 feet.

ENCOUNTER 4: THE APOCALYPSE ARK

The Apocalypse Ark is 190' long from the tip of its tread to the end of its trailer, 100' tall with a bristle of antenna, satellite dishes, camera relays, and weather sensors as a crown, making its tallest point more than 125'. It is 60' wide at its widest point (through its unit rear treads), and weighs more than 900 tons. It crushes the earth beneath it wherever it travels, creating a two-to-three-foot-deep trench of compressed earth inlaid with crushed trees and slow animals.

The Ark is in three sections. In front is the tractor, which provides more than three-quarters of the drive it takes to move the massive thing. It is mostly engine and tread, with no space for operator or passengers. The tractor drags the Laboratory Unit, the main structure of the Ark. The Laboratory Unit drags the Trailer behind it. The Trailer has its own engine, and a 50' hinged extendable ramp that allows Clementine to enter and access its charge point.

The Apocalypse Ark has massive ceramic alloy plate armor on all sides, except where it is breached. Attempting to enter the unit from the outside with all but the mightiest weapons is futile. The exterior armor reduces any attacks from outside by 20 points, and is completely immune to radiation and sonic attacks. The entire structure is covered in mini solar collectors which continuously charge its huge batteries, so Light Generation damage actually powers its cells up. It takes 120 points of damage focused on a specific point to breach the Ark's hull.

The Ark's weak points are its treads, its sensory array, and its two hitches. The Ark has five pairs of treads (Tractor Front, Tractor Rear, Unit Front, Unit Rear, Trailer), each with varying amounts of protection and hit points. Disabled treads can be repaired in 9-28 hours using the optimized assistants and Clementine's manipulator arms. Destroyed treads cannot be repaired with the Ark's current resources.

Note: Remember when using the table below that each set of treads has separate hit points for its left and right treads on either side of the Ark..

ARK SECTIONS AND ARMOR

Tread Position	Armor Damage Reduction	Damage to Disable	Damage to Destroy
Tractor Front	15 hp	75 hp	150 hp
Tractor Rear	15 hp	75 hp	150 hp
Unit Front	20 hp	100 hp	200 hp
Unit Rear	20 hp	100 hp	200 hp
Trailer	15 hp	40 hp	80 hp

- Ark armor is immune to radiation and sonic-based attacks.
- Attackers may target the various antenna, dishes, and relays on the Ark's crown. There are a total of 19 structures – consider each one to be AC 18, with 50 hit points, ignoring the first 3 points of damage from every attack. The judge determines the effect of destroying any given sensor.

Energy attacks tend to overwhelm the Ark's sensory array. Doing 20 points of energy damage to the sensor array can force their component systems offline without physically destroying them.

- 20 points of radiation damage shuts down the radiation sensors – the unit can no longer detect radiation sources, effecting its ability to find settlements.
- 20 points of cold or heat shuts down the temperature / weather sensors, shutting down the thermostat and making the interior temperature of the Ark swelteringly hot or dangerously cold (50/50%)
- 20 points of sonic damage shuts the radio systems down, disallowing the Tractor, Laboratory Unit, Trailer, and Clementine from communicating, and blinding the secret orbital survivor colony that continually spies on the Ark. This also prevents the Doctor from communicating with her optimized injectors, causing any in the field to fly off undirected and die. The Ark cannot effectively move until radio systems are recalibrated.
- 20 points of Light Generation damage shuts down the camera array, blinding the Ark. The Ark cannot effectively move until the camera array is recalibrated.

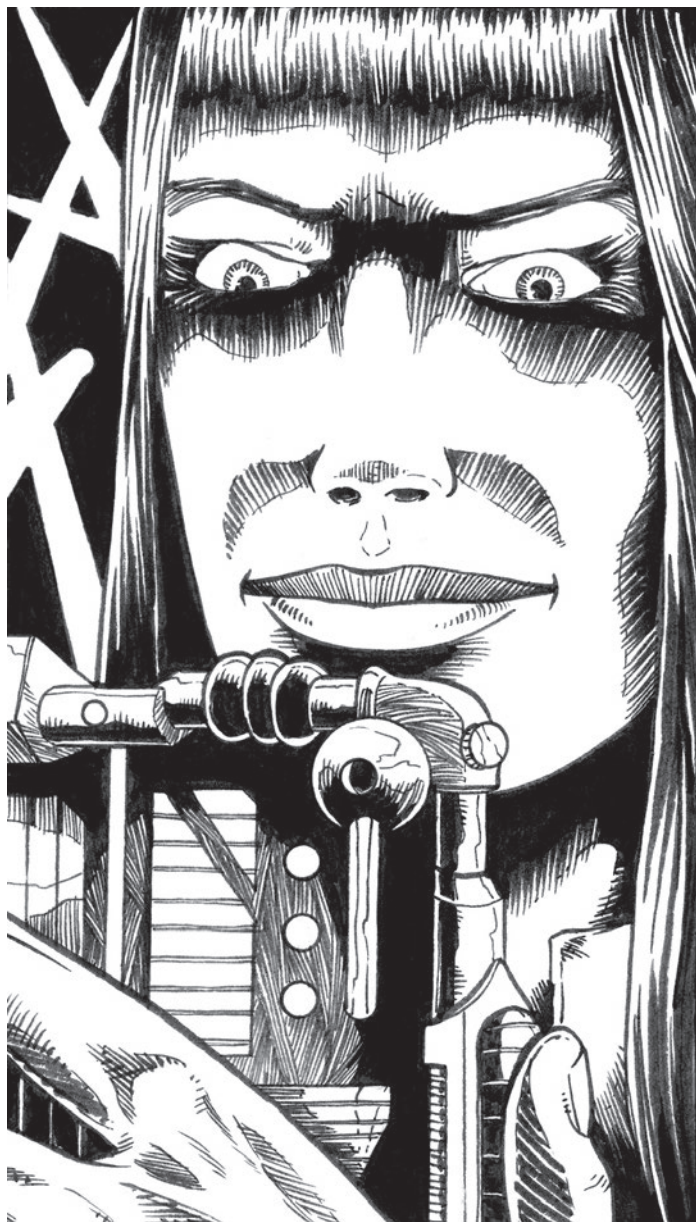
Recalibrating the sensor inputs is at least a 25-36 hour long process. After that, any damage done by the PCs will be undone and full sensor function is restored.

The hitches connect the Tractor to the Laboratory Unit, and the Laboratory Unit to the Trailer. The hitches are armored and difficult to target (AC 20), but if struck their armor only reduces the damage by 8 points, and 45 points of damage destroys them, separating those two sections. The Tractor has enough pull to move on its own, but if the Laboratory Unit or the Trailer section are separated their engines do not have enough power for them to move independently; those units are effectively permanently stationary, unless repairs can somehow be effected.

Unless the cameras are somehow disabled first, the Doctor is instantly aware of any exterior attack and responds with whatever she has – optimized injectors, optimized guards, and, of course, Clementine.

The Ark is a minor rolling ecosystem. Dense ivy covers a portion of the port side of the Ark. The ivy has evolved to extract nutrients from the exhaust fumes of the huge engine. The ivy also completely hides the huge breach in the hull (see area 3-4). Hundreds of birds of various species live on the Ark, using it for protection and making nests in the sensor crown. A plague of jungle scavengers follow in the Ark's wake, surviving on road kill. Doctor Zeigarnik encourages this, and even feeds the birds and tends the ivy – after all, all her hard work and sacrifice is for them. Mostly.

The main door to the outside is 15' wide and 10' high, and has two exterior steps that lead to it.



NOTE ON THE INTERIOR AREAS OF THE ARK

Unless otherwise noted in a specific area: The Ark's environmental system maintains a comfortable interior temperature. Most of the unit has extremely effective sound and vibration cancellation systems – passengers can't tell they are in motion throughout most of the Ark's interior. The smell is distinctive – charged ozone, steel, industrial lubricant, chemicals, and cleaning agents. The floors are all carpeted, and the interior walls are brushed steel. Ceilings are 12' high, and recessed lighting illuminates the entire Ark. All doors have a sensor next to them, and holding an Ark ID up to one causes the door to open. Otherwise, doors must be pried open every time, as they automatically shut (DC 14 Strength check). Destroying a door requires dealing 25 points of damage, and the doors ignore the first 5 points of damage from every attack, and are immune to radiation and light.



THE DOCTOR IS WATCHING

Doctor Zeigarnik can spy on the PCs through any of the Ark's door sensors, allowing her to follow their progress as they explore. She is curious about them – she is willing to watch them explore so she can learn about their abilities (she never knows when she will need to inhabit a new body, and a healthy mutant form with powerful abilities is terribly convenient). The Doctor can control all the Ark's systems verbally from anywhere in its interior and up to two miles away via her radio transmitter. At some point, she may begin to feel that the PCs are going to do real, irreparable damage to the Ark – that that moment she speaks to them through the door sensors, inviting them to the lounge for food and a drink, so they can discuss their situation like civilized people. She is persuasive and sounds reasonable.

The Doctor's ego is such that she never for one moment considers that the ragtag troop of savages in her beautiful Ark could possibly harm her plans, and finds their pres-

ence amusing. She isn't an idiot, either. She absolutely reacts to the PCs – she can cut their access to terminals, lock their stolen Ark IDs out of the system, send creatures to destroy them, and find other ways to confound their progress. If she starts to lose too many optimized guards she starts having the bio lab make more – it takes about three hours to turn primordial mush into a knife-wielding fanatic Ark defender, and the Doctor will make as many as she needs to ensure the safety of the Ark, continued control over EVE, and survival. Of course, new guards will have to get past the adaptive slime creature.

As soon as the PCs are in the Ark, she directs it to drive as fast as possible away from the PCs home region. She believes that if she can drive them far enough away that they have no chance of returning to save the people of their village, she will have a better chance of convincing them to abandon the idea of finding a cure for their sick villagers and make a deal. This act of selfishness on their part will reinforce her belief that intelligent life should all be destroyed.

EVE IS WATCHING

Doctor Zeigarnik trapped EVE the AI in a shunted terminal hidden in the Ark. The Doctor plans to eventually subjugate EVE and force it to help her destroy all intelligent life in the world. EVE is nearly, but not quite, powerless in her current form. Through an act of cybernetic will she can reach out to various systems in the Ark without alerting Doctor Zeigarnik. She too watches the progress of the PCs, and sees in them a chance for deliverance.

Whenever the PCs examine a screen of any sort, have them make a Luck check. Success means that EVE manages to reach out to them through that device without the Doctor's knowledge. She can't make any sounds without getting caught, so her image remains silent. EVE appears on screen as a handsome woman in a lab coat, with huge glasses and a tightly fastened bun hairstyle. The camera seems to zoom in at her at her desk, finally focusing on her lips, where she mouths the words "free me."

If the PCs react, EVE attempts to communicate through images, letting the seekers know that they should come and rescue her, and that she has the ability to synthesize a cure to B-17. The woman on screen holds up a photo; a computer terminal, bound with duct tape. She flips it over, and it shows the terminal unbound. She holds up a picture; one of the sick PCs beginning to develop a rash. She flips it over; the picture is the same PC, now healthy and well. She can be creative and can react to the PCs (she can read their lips and facial expressions, and sometimes hear them if they speak).

If the PCs have their own communication artifact not associated with the Ark, EVE can speak to them through it in short bursts. She tells them to come and find her, to free and rescue her, and she promises to help them if they do. EVE can communicate this way once per hour, speaking several sentences before her power fades, forcing her to rest.

Doctor Zeigarnik will do anything short of destroying EVE to make sure the AI doesn't escape; the AI is by far the most powerful weapon in her arsenal, and likely her only chance at realizing her plans. It was a million-to-one chance that her trap worked; the doctor will never get the better of the AI like that again. If the Doctor realizes that the PCs are attempting to rescue EVE, the Doctor throws everything she has at them.

Area 1-1 – Exterior Door: The exterior door recedes into the wall above it. Its motors are ancient and damaged – the door takes 2 rounds to raise or lower on its own. The door's tracks are skewed, leaving a one inch gap under the door.

There is a sensor panel on the left side of the door, just an unlabeled rectangle of inset red glass. An Ark ID badge (see below) held up to the sensor causes the door to open, shutting 3 rounds later. It takes a DC 14 Strength check to force the door open.

Area 1-2 – Main Floor Interior: This is a well-lit entry way with three Optimized Guards, which immediately move to block the player's from either the elevator doors or the cage area. The guards block the entryway menacingly, but don't attack until the PCs do something hostile.

On the aft-side wall are elevator doors – next to them is a panel with sensor panel with a single button. The elevator is non-functioning, and the doors do not respond to Ark IDs – the doors must be pried open for access to the elevator shaft.

On the wall across from the elevator doors is the entrance to the specimen cage. The bars are bent far enough to let a humanoid through, and the cage is empty. If they examine the cage, the PCs see multiple signs of struggle – claw marks and dents and the burns of radiation and electrical attacks. At one time, the bars clearly could fold into the ceiling like a garage door, but now they are too damaged to move.

Optimized Guards (3): Init +2; Atk knife +7 melee (1d4+2); AC 17 (15 vs missile fire); HD 3d8+3; hp 27; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SP optimized knife fighters, imperfect life form; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +0.

Optimized guards are genetically manipulated creatures made from human DNA and vat-grown tissue. They are vaguely humanoid, having only one arm each set into their thick chests, triple-jointed at the shoulder, elbow, wrist to optimize their knife fighting prowess. Their expressions are bland, their eyes are overlarge, they are incapable of speech (although they understand language), are perfectly fearless and insensitive to pain, and they fanatically follow the commands of Doctor Zeigarnik.

Optimized Knife Fighters: Optimized guards are all created to perform specific tasks. These three are optimized knife fighters – they have only one arm but it is triple jointed, and they can strike as quick as snakes. Their brains are likewise optimized to read combat stances and defense, giving them an increased (AC 17) versus hand to hand attacks.

Imperfect Life Form: Optimized guards are genetically developed to fight and track, but aren't good for much else. Their average life span is twelve months, they can't reproduce on their own, possess low intelligence, and are extremely susceptible to radiation attacks, rolling -1d lower on the dice chain to save versus radiation.

The guards are wearing ill-fitting uniforms, roughly cut to accommodate their mutated physique. They each have two knives, and one of the three has an Ark ID, a rectangle of plastic on a shirt clip marked with a series of seemingly random circles, dashes, and dots. Holding it in front of a sensor allows it to open most doors in the Ark. Note that Doctor Zeigarnik can watch the PCs as they make their way through the Ark, and has the option to remove door access privileges from an ID badge if she chooses.

Area 1-3 – Elevator Shaft: It takes a DC 15 Strength check to pull open the elevator doors, and they automatically shut if they aren't held or wedged open somehow.

There are no lights in the shaft, but there are thousands of insects – huge fat ones with wings, tiny hopping ones, crawlers and bouncers, and wall-walkers, covering the walls and floor. The bugs are all harmless creatures freed by Doctor Zeigarnik and allowed to live here in the shaft – she respects insects and loves to come and observe the tiny complete eco system they have created here, and even occasionally mists the shaft so the bugs have water. The Doctor has modified the sound dampeners to emit a constant high-frequency chirp, undetectable by most mammals but highly unpleasant to bugs, which neatly contains the insects to the elevator shaft.

There are two ladders built into the walls here – one on the fore wall and one on the aft wall, both running the entire height of the 100' elevator shaft. Climbing them isn't difficult, but one must get used to crunching bugs underfoot.

There are fore and aft elevator doors on levels 2 through 5. On level 1 the shaft backs into the engine, and on levels 6 through 8 the elevator backs into nothing, as the upper structure narrows to just the area fore of the shaft.

The elevator doors require a DC 14 Strength check to pry open, and they automatically close unless held or wedged open somehow.

The elevator car is stuck, wedged between levels 3 and 4 (see area 4-3 for details).

1-4 – The Tractor: The tractor can be examined from the outside but without massive power tools there is no way of getting inside. A full 90% of the tractor's mass is engine, with the rest being sensory array and communication equipment. The PCs may crawl under and over and all around and not find a way in. The Ark's AI controls navigate, under the direction of Doctor Zeigarnik, and the engine has inner robotic manipulator arms that give it an astounding self-repair capacity.

1-5 – The Trailer: The trailer is primarily where Clementine charges, and where certain tools and accessories were once kept. The trailer has a jointed extendable ramp, 50' long, that allows Clementine to drive in. Against the fore wall is a huge extendable power coupling that fits into Clementine's front facing port. Hanging on the walls are two interchangeable grills that can be traded out for Clementine's current array, her photon cannons. The Ark currently lacks the technology to switch grills so the extras have grown dusty and cobwebbed from disuse. One is a pair of manipulator arms; the other is a pavement-laying attachment, that used to let Clementine lay down roads.

On the right-side trailer wall is a workbench full of drawers, which has two ancient but serviceable vices attached to its top. The drawers are nearly all empty – the Doctor raided this place long ago for all the equipment she needed to make the Ark her instrument of genocide.

However, in the far back of one drawer is a power screwdriver (Tech Level 2, Complexity Modifier 2). It lacks a cell but is fully functioning if it gets power, and has three of its original adapter heads.

The trailer has seen better days. Its sound and vibration baffles gave out long ago. PCs inside the Trailer while the Ark is moving are in for an incredibly bumpy, loud ride – it is difficult to stand in the trailer while underway, and nearly impossible to have a conversation. Its self-repairing engines still work well – they are all underneath the trailer, and like the Tractor there is no entry point without massive power tools, the likes of which are gone from the world

Area 2-1 – 2nd Floor Lobby: The elevator door opens on to a clean, carpeted lobby. There are two doors leading to the Navigation room, both of which open with an Ark ID or a DC 15 Strength check.

When the PCs arrive, there is an Optimized Assistant here with an ancient manual carpet sweeper, carefully cleaning the carpet. It ignores PCs unless they either prevent him from doing his job, in which case he freaks out, vocalizing and angrily clapping his hands at them, or attack him, in

which case he runs away, attempting to open the door to the elevator shaft and make his way area 1-2, where he believes there are guards who will protect him.

Optimized Assistant (1): Init -3; Atk fist -1 melee (1d2-1); AC 7; HD 1d4+1; hp 5; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP optimized assistant, poison/ acid resistant, imperfect life form; Fort -1, Ref -3, Will +1.

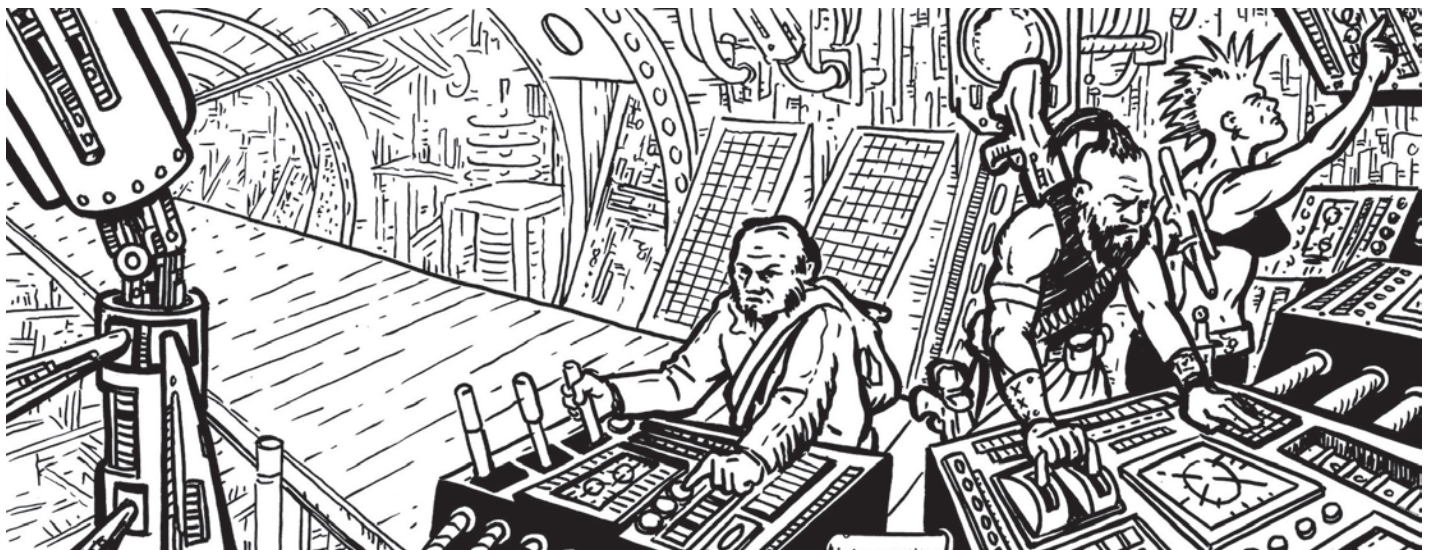
Like the other optimized life forms on the Ark, the Assistants are made from human DNA and vat-grown tissue, genetically designed to perform a few key tasks.

The Assistants are 5' tall hairless humanoids, with oversized eyes, tiny mouths, sleight frames, and hands specifically designed for their job. In this case the assistant has oversized hands and tough, leathery skin to protect him from caustic cleaning agents, allowing him to make saving throws against chemical attacks, such as poison and acid, rolling a d24 for saves.

Optimized Assistants are genetically developed to perform their specific task, but aren't good for much else. Their average life span is three years, they can't reproduce on their own, possess low intelligence, and are extremely susceptible to radiation attacks, rolling -1d lower on the dice chain to save versus radiation.

Area 2-2 – Navigation Center: The Ark's navigation center is where the crew of the Ark would steer and plan before having full AI control. There are three forward seats – two of which sit in front of complicated computer terminals with multiple screens built into the Ark's forward console, one of which (the leftmost) sits in front of a charred hole, where a terminal once caught fire. There are four other workstations – two against the right-hand wall, and two against the left. These stations are inclined design tables built into the wall.

In the center of the room is a plastic table with a translucent top of a strange material – smooth, cold to the touch, not plastic nor glass but some unknown hybrid substance. The table top is fragile – six points of damage destroys it.



There are two Optimized Assistants here, monitoring the two working forward computer terminals. They ignore the PCs unless they are prevented from doing their jobs, in which case they vocalize and clap their hands at the source of their vexation, or they are attacked, in which case they attempt to flee.

The two forward terminals (Tech Level 6, Complexity Modifier 4) display interfaces which graphically represent the Ark's power input, power consumption, temperature, drive status, and other factors relating to the function of the ship. For each successful artifact check roll on the table below to see what they manage to make the terminal do (d20):

A 1 on this artifact check locks users out of the table instead of breaking it irreparably, and only a user with Admin permissions (Doctor Zeigarnik, in other words) can turn a terminal back on.

Note that Doctor Zeigarnik monitors everything the PCs do on the terminal – if they are in danger of doing some real damage, she shuts them out.

If the PCs examine the screens, EVE attempts to get their attention (See EVE is Watching, page 7).

Optimized Assistants (2): Init -3; Atk fist +0 melee (1d2); AC 7; HD 1d8+1; hp 9 each; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP optimized, imperfect life form; SV Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +1.

See Area 1-2 for a full description of Optimized Assistants. These two are optimized to sit for extremely long periods of time, monitoring the ship's vitals.

Area 2-3 – Engine Access: The 2nd floor aft elevator door opens to a short corridor leading to a security door with a single red safety light over it. The sound and vibration dampeners have utterly failed in this room, and the corridor thrums and vibrates constantly so close to the engine. The security door is extremely difficult to muscle open (DC 20 Strength check), and only one Ark ID is keyed to open it – the one belonging to the Optimized Mechanic in area 3-2.

Area 2-4 – The Laboratory Unit Engine: Behind the security door is the Laboratory Unit engine. It is massive, taking up this portion of the back of the Ark on the first and second floor. It is a science fiction engine geek's dream – enormous pistons, moving immense axles, huge batteries sparking with blue lightning, wires and massive gears and servomotors. The sound of the engine drowns out any normal communication and the capacitors disrupt radio signals. The Ark has two other engines, one in the tractor and one in the trailer, but this engine provides the electrical for all the Ark's non-locomotive functions, and sparks the other two engines as well.

A ladder next to the door allows access to the ground – actually the 1st floor – but it is extremely difficult to make progress around the engine. For every round spent attempting to move through the engine have the PCs make a DC 15 Agility check (DC 11 if they are 3' tall, DC 18 and up if they are oversized). On a failure roll on the following table:

ARK POWER GRID ARTIFACT CHECK SUCCESSES

d20	Effect per Successful Artifact Check
1-5	Dim lights in Navigation Center.
6	Toggle alarm on/ off – this brings all surviving Optimized Guards to the navigation center, where they attempt to subdue the PCs.
7-9	Toggle forward screens clear/ opaque – suddenly the walls throughout the room become clear, allowing the PCs to see outside the vehicle into the jungle outside.
11-15	Toggle holo-table on/ off – A 3-D holographic display appears over the table in the center of the room (assuming it's still intact). The display shows a topographical map of the region, with the Ark in the center of the terrain, and the jungle for six miles graphically recreated. The unit is faulty – the image flickers constantly, occasionally disappears, or is suddenly replaced with a blank grid vaguely shaped like the topography, or a nonsensical image of a genie on a flying carpet (the ancient screensaver). The image is currently set to its maximum area – using the toggle the PCs can “zoom in”, until all they can see is the Ark and 30' around it, or any setting in-between.
16-20	Toggle auto drive – if the Ark is currently stationary it begins to move, and if it is in motion it changes course. This function allows the PCs to direct the Ark by using it along with the holo-table.

The PCs might opt to attempt destroying the engine. It is certainly possible, and there are many ways they can go about this. As a rule of thumb, it takes about 50 points of damage to disable the engine and 100 to destroy it, but there are other ways they can disable it other than simply blasting it. Note that if they just go through the engine pulling wires and uncoupling hoses they must roll to avoid mishaps every round as above.

If the PCs manage to destroy the engine or disrupt its functioning:

- An alert sounds continuously, making conversation difficult anywhere in the Ark.
- All the lights in the Ark turn red and flash.
- The Ark goes into emergency power mode. It can function for another 1d3+3 hours before it shuts down completely.

MOVEMENT FUMBLES THROUGH ARK ENGINE

d6 Movement Failure

1	Oops: Steps or puts hand in industrial lubricant, foot or hand filthy and slick until PC can get it cleaned up (could add to DC of climb or other checks, judge's option).
2	Stuck fast: PC must spend 1d3 rounds extricating self.
3	Caught in gears: Takes 1d3 points of damage per round until he can free himself with a DC 13 Strength check.
4	That's hot: Burnt by hot surface, taking 1d4 damage.
5	That's live: Mildly electrocuted for 1d4 damage.
6	Thoroughly barbecued: Electrocution for 4d6 damage, DC 15 Fortitude save or PC is also paralyzed, taking damage every round they stay in contact with the surface.

The Ark can't travel and Clementine can't charge in emergency power mode.

Area 3-1 – 3rd Floor Lobby: This lobby is clean as a whistle and empty.

Area 3-2 – Crew Quarters: This crew cabin has six crew berths built into the wall (two stacks of three narrow bunks without mattresses).

Doctor Zeigarnik keeps her Optimized “helpers” here when she is not using them, and they sit around on the floor waiting for instructions. There are four Optimized Assistants and five Optimized Guards. The guards instantly stand, draw their knives, and challenge the PCs – if they don't immediately leave, the guards attack. The assistants are off duty and do nothing unless they are physically attacked, at which point they flee en masse.

If combat in this area is loud enough (judge's discretion), the Optimized Enforcer in area 3-6 may hear, in which case he charges in with guns blazing.

Optimized Guards (5): Init +2; Atk knife +7 melee (1d4+2); AC 17 (15 vs missile fire), HD 3d8+3; hp 27 each; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SP optimized knife fighters, imperfect life form; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +0.

See full description in Area 1-2. Each guard has two knives and an Ark ID.

Optimized Assistants (4): Init -3; Atk fist -1 melee (1d2-1); AC 7; HD 1d4+1; hp 5 each; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP optimized assistant, imperfect life form; SV Fort -1, Ref -3, Will +1.

See the full description of Optimized Assistants in Area 1-2. The only difference is that these five do not have the acid/ poison resistance. Instead, they have a higher degree of self-determination, and can make decisions for the Ark in the Doctor's absence.

Each of the four has its own specialty: one is a lab assistant with optimized hand writing for note taking; one is a math genius; one is an Optimized Mechanic with an innate feel for engine repair; the last one is an Optimized Chef/ Mixologist.

Area 3-3 – Crew Washroom: This is a fully functioning lavatory with sink, shower, and toilet. There is a cracked mirror over the sink, and behind it is a cabinet with an ancient bottle with seven purple pills. These were once motion sickness tablets, but over the years they have become amazingly toxic. Creatures taking one must make a DC 15 Fortitude save – on a success their body rejects it and they manage to vomit it up before it does damage. On a failure, the creature is poisoned, taking 1d7 Agility score damage as his inner ear revolts against the least motion.

Area 3-4 – Hull Breach: When the door to area 3-4 opens the entire atmosphere changes. This was once a crew quarters, the mirror of area 3-2. However, some long-ago mishap ripped huge jagged breach into the hull. It is covered by mutant ivy, and the entire hull wall appears to be a mass of ivy which sends tendrils into every corner of this room, covering the walls and floor so that it is impossible to move inside without treading upon it. This room has no lighting, atmospheric controls, or sound/ vibration dampeners – standing in it the PCs feel the thrum of the engines, smell the lush biomass of the ivy, and feel the hot humidity of the outside air.

The breach is a 20' x 8' wide rough oval in the wall. If the PCs wish, they can hack through the Ivy and see through to the outside of the Ark.

Area 3-5 – Doctor's Quarters: If the Ark is not already on full alert, it goes on full alert if the PCs enter the Doctor's quarters. All surviving guards rush in, attempting to subdue the PCs and bring them before Doctor Zeigarnik.

The Doctor's quarters are opulent and clean. The walls have several original oil paintings by ancient masters, somewhat wilted and discolored with time but still recognizable as fine art. A hammock hangs between the two walls, and a heavily padded reclining chair sits against another wall. There is a huge collection of actual paper books here, all in the language of the Ancients – the books are a scavenged assortment; a smattering of poetry, cook books, political treatises, trashy novels, and science texts.

One wall has a multi-level planter on it, with a dozen flowering plants. Hidden behind the planter is the Doc-

tor's most prized possession – her hand-written manifesto. Written over the lifespans of several bodies, it details her history, and illuminates the reasoning and logic behind her decision to destroy all intelligent life on the planet other than herself.

In the back is a listing of all the bodies she has ever possessed – there are more than 100, mutants, animals, plantients, and strange mutated creatures on her list, showing her to be extremely old.

Area 3-6 – Corridor: Sitting on a chair at the end of the hall is Doctor Zeigarnik's most dangerous guard, her Enforcer. He is smarter and more functional than the other Optimized Guards, and will defend this area with his dual slug throwers to the death.

If a fight in this area is loud enough (i.e. if the enforcer gets a chance to fire his guns), the Optimized Guards in area 3-2 might be alerted, and rush over to investigate the disturbance (judge's discretion).

The Optimized Enforcer is a hairless, wiry humanoid with one huge eye and one small one. He has antenna and can sense and transmit one frequency of radio wave, allowing him to communicate directly with Doctor Zeigarnik. The Optimized Enforcer is tougher and more dangerous than the other Optimized beings.

Optimized Guards are all created to perform specific tasks – the Enforcer is optimized to shoot to kill. He has superior eye sight, an enhanced nervous system, giving him his higher initiative, high Agility (+3 modifier), and improved armor class (+3 bonus).

Optimized Guards are genetically developed to fight and track, but aren't good for much else. Their average life span is twelve months, they can't reproduce on their own, possess low intelligence, and are extremely susceptible to radiation attacks, rolling -1d lower on the dice chain to save versus radiation.

Optimized Enforcer (1): Init +8; Atk 2 gauzer pistols +11 missile fire (1d8); AC18; HD 7d8; hp 56; MV 35'; Act 2d20; SP imperfect life form, optimized gunslinger; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +4.

The Optimized Enforcer has a tactical armored vest (+2 AC), two fully loaded Heavy Gauzer pistols (Tech Level 4, Complexity Modifier 3, range 80', damage 1d8, full c-cell [50], each has a clip of 10, and the enforcer has two extra clips of 10), and an Ark ID that lets him open any door except the security door in area 2-3.

Area 3-7 – Aviary: This was once a VIP cabin, possibly for the Ark's second in command. Doctor Zeigarnik converted it into an aviary for her Optimized Injectors. There are currently two dozen here, perched on a metal lattice work that fills the room. The injectors do not react to the PCs unless they are attacked, in which case their lights all go on and they fly up to attack the intruders. However, none of the injector's reservoirs have any of the B-17 pathogen – they are currently empty – so they cannot transmit the disease.

On the interior wall is a basin full of water, and a huge feeder filled with the vat-grown nutritional protein that makes up the optimized injector's diet.

Optimized Injectors: (13): Init +2; Atk sting +4 melee (1); AC 14; HD 1d8+1; hp 9 each; MV fly 40'; Act 1d20; SP biological combat light, injector, imperfect life form; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will+3.

For a full description of Optimized Injectors see page 2. Note that these individuals aren't carrying the B-17 pathogen.

Area 3-8 – Lounge: This is where Doctor Zeigarnik spends most of her time – unless circumstances dictate otherwise the Doctor will be found at her table in the lounge.

The lounge has a dance floor, several cocktail tables, and a few booths with low tables. Festive lights flash from twirling fixtures in the ceiling, and bass-heavy music plays from hidden speakers.

A holographic DJ, Machine Girl, stands in a holographic booth set against the port wall, and plays a continual array of danceable synth-pop. The hologram appears to be a pure strain human, dressed for the club in an epoch untold generations ago, and she continuously dances and changes holographic records. The hologram has a very limited AI, and interprets every attempt to communicate with it as a song request, finding the closest match it can from its billion-song library.

When the PCs arrive, the Doctor greets them warmly, introduces herself, and asks them to sit. The Doctor has straight black hair, one gold eye and one magenta, and a wide, smiling mouth. She asks for everyone's names, compliments the PCs on their courage and resourcefulness, and asks questions about their lives and culture. There are two Optimized Assistants here, and if the PCs agree to sit and parley, the Doctor sends them to the bio lab for food and her favorite cocktails, a synthetic approximation of the French 75, for everyone.

The Doctor listens to their grievances patiently, nodding in all the right places. She does not deny sending the injectors, and if the PCs demand to know why, she says something vague about an experiment that got out of hand. She pretends to be sympathetic to their plight and eventually makes them an offer – she will synthesize enough medicine to cure all of their band who are infected with B-17 and drop them in a nearby safe valley with enough food for a week. If they agree, she will do so – but once she and the Ark are a safe distance away she sends another wave of Optimized Injectors with the B-17 virus to destroy them.

Doctor Zeigarnik will not, under any circumstances, even pretend she means to give the PCs enough medicine to cure the sick in their village, nor will she turn the Ark around and return them to their home. If the PCs try to convince the Doctor to do the right thing and help her fellow man for long enough, she eventually drops her veneer of warmth and civility and tells them that she wouldn't lift a finger to help cure savages, and assures them that it is her destiny to



turn the world into a paradise. Unafraid for her safety she mocks them (“Machine Girl, play something sad for these born-to-die misfits”).

If the PCs take this news philosophically, Doctor Zeigarnik offers to join forces with them, promising she will allow them to survive her quest to purge the world of other intelligence. If the PCs agree to work with her, she might try to trick them into fighting the adaptive slime creature that recently appeared in area 5-1. She has yet to work out the best way to destroy it, and its blocking the entrance to the bio lab. Depending on how their parley went, she might try to trick them up there, or lie and say that the slime creature is the cause of all the disease and misery, or simply bargain with them for tech items or healing if they agree to kill the troublesome thing.

If the PCs attack, the Doctor refuses to defend herself – she smiles and allows her current body to be slain. She then sends her consciousness into her Optimized Battle Form, currently unconscious in area 8-1, crawls back down the shaft, and comes in to destroy them all in triumph, summoning all of her Optimized Guards to attack first. If she wins she will take over one of their bodies, and add it to the list in her manifesto.

Doctor Zeigarnik (in the body of a 1st level mutant): Init +1; Atk fist +0 melee (1d3-1); AC 11; HD 1d7+1; hp 5; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP cognitive immortality, heightened intelligence (+3 modifier), heightened senses, ultra-willpower, inoculated against B-17; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +4.

The Doctor’s long life and manifold existential experiences have given her unprecedented force of will. In any body

she possesses she is immune to any form of mind control or illusion, may force herself beyond all normal limits of endurance and threshold of pain, and retains her Heightened Intelligence, and Cognitive Immortality – she literally wills those mutations into being in any body she possesses.

Optimized Assistants (4): Init -3; Atk fist -1 melee (1d2-1); AC 7; HD 1d4+1; hp 5; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP optimized assistant, imperfect life form; SV Fort -1, Ref -3, Will +1.

See the full description of optimized assistants in Area 1-2. These two are the Doctor’s personal assistants, and they are optimized for anticipating her needs and responding to her moods.

Area 4-1 – 4th Floor Lobby: The 4th floor lobby is identical to the other elevator lobbies. The 4th floor ceiling is 15', higher than on any other floor.

Area 4-2 – Gymnasium: This is the old Gymnasium. All the old gym equipment has already been stripped down for parts long ago. The floor is faux-hardwood, and the floor is painted with faded square and circles, the parameters of some ancient athletic game. An ancient hoop hangs from the ceiling at the right-side wall, its translucent backboard a web of cracks. A pile of deflated balls dry rot in a corner.

Area 4-3 – Elevator Car: The elevator car is wedged between the third and fourth floor. Climbing the narrow gap between the elevator car and the ladder is tricky on the fore wall, impossible on the aft. Players who climb higher than the car see that there is a hatchway in its roof. Brave PCs might clamber across and hop down, but there is real danger here. For every PC that drops into the car, roll a secret Luck

check for that character - on a fail the car drops down an inch or two, knocking everyone within prone. On a 20 the car falls all the way to the bottom of the shaft in five seconds, doing 2d6 damage to creatures within the shaft. PCs in the bottom of the shaft are in danger, and must roll Initiative against the falling elevator car (Initiative +0). If the PCs win they can perform one action before it falls on them. If the PC's fail, the car falls before they can act, crushing them to death instantly.

The elevator car doors can be pried open with a DC 15 Strength check. The doors just open on the wall at this point, and opening them automatically shifts the weight of the car and drops it to the bottom of the shaft as above.

The car is full of impressive miniature structures created by the mutated builder bugs called architect ants - bridged towers, tiny walled enclosures, miniature statues, and similar. The floor of the elevator car is thick with the mud-and-saliva constructs of architect ants. If the PCs dig around and destroy the ant's construction they discover a forgotten artifact within: a quantum grenade in perfect working order.

Area 4-4 - Medical Bay: This is the medical bay. There is an examining table, several half-destroyed diagnostic machines and surgical lasers, now stripped for parts, and several mostly empty cabinets. A careful search of the place reveals an ancient plastic case in a forgotten corner of a bottom drawer holding three cureshots.

There is one Optimized Assistant here, an Optimized Medical Technician. Unbeknownst to Doctor Zeigarnik, this assistant is much more sentient than the rest - in order to make him an efficient doctor she had to design him with a much higher degree of empathy and cognition than the rest, and this led to its developing a fully-realized personality. The Optimized Med Tech understands what Doctor Zeigarnik is up to, and he vehemently opposes her plan to destroy all intelligent life, although the medical tech knows that if his rebellious spirit was detected the Doctor would simply recycle his body in the vats and regrow a new doctor, being more careful with its personality the next time around.

If the PCs enter peacefully, the optimized assistant holds up a finger, then hits a few buttons on its medical clipboard, putting the door camera video feed on a continuous loop. Now that Doctor Zeigarnik cannot observe what happens, the medical tech - through pantomime and gestures - offers to tend to any of the groups injuries. It instantly recognizes any victim of B-17, no matter what stage their disease is in, and has exactly one dose of the antigen that cures it, and it offers this to the group. The tech can't leave the medical bay without being detected, but he is willing to help the others secretly as best he can while staying in area 4-4. If the PCs attack, the medical tech attempts to flee to the Lounge.

Optimized Medical Technician (1): Init -1; Atk fist -1 melee (1d2-1); AC 9; HD 1d4+1; hp 5; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP optimized healer, disease resistant, imperfect life form; SV Fort -1, Ref -3, Will +1.

See page 9 for a full description of Optimized Assistants. This one is highly disease resistant, rolling +2d higher on the dice chain to save against disease effects. The Optimized Medical Tech is a genius-level medical tech and paramedic, who can use scrounged materials and the medical techniques of the Ancients to heal like a 4th-level healer (1d6 hit points up to 8 times a day).

The tech has a medical clipboard, a c-cell powered device that allows him to access the Ark's medical database, helping to diagnose diseases. It requires an understanding of the language of the Ancients to use effectively, although the diagrams it displays might help a clever healer diagnose health issues. Away from the Ark the clipboard no longer functions (Tech Level 5, Complexity Modifier 5).

A healer observing the optimized medical tech at work instantly recognizes his talent and superior technique. If a healer can spend 20 hours assisting and learning from the Optimized Medical Tech, their own technique improves, and from then on their Natural Healing ability functions as if they were one level higher.

Area 5-1 - 5th Floor Lobby: A massive slime creature with dozens of staring blue eyes covers the aft wall, ceiling, and much of the floor of this room. One of its eyes is a red cyber-eye, which sweeps the area with a targeting laser. It is an intelligent, adaptable creature, who survives mostly on bugs it snatches from the elevator shaft. A full-sized humanoid would make it a wonderful meal, and it attempts to slay and devour any creatures who enter the lobby.

Adaptive Slime (1): Init -3; Atk pseudopod slam +7 melee (2d6+4+1d6 acid); AC 13; HD 8d8+16; hp 64; MV 5'; Act 2d20; SP cybernetic blaster, acid grab, bio adaption, acidic form, immune to mind control; SV Fort +8, Ref +3, Will +4.

The adaptive slime is a massive green squelching horror with dozens of blue eyes that can move about in its body, and one single red-glowing cybernetic eye in the center of its mass, having a surface area of more than 20 square yards. Its scent is repugnant, reminiscent of a chemical spill in a swamp. It is amazingly adaptive, capable of adapting its physiology to survive in hostile environments and resist energy attacks.

The slime dissolved an earlier intruder with a cybernetic eye capable of firing laser blasts, and has adapted itself to use the laser. The cybernetic blaster can be fired once per round at a maximum effective range of 30', striking for 4d6 damage. Creatures struck must make a DC 15 Fortitude save or be stunned, unable to act effectively or defend themselves, for 1d3 rounds. The laser has an integral power cell with enough juice for 6 shots.

The creature attacks with either one laser attack and one pseudopod slam, or two pseudopod slams. Its pseudopods are massive and move faster than striking snakes, and can stretch up to 30' to strike targets. Pseudopod strikes do bludgeoning and acid damage (listed above). Once per round it can grab after a successful strike, grappling an opponent until it breaks free (DC 19 Strength check). Grap-

pled opponents take 1d6 points of acid damage per round. The creature's body is acidic – weapons that strike it dissolve 1-3 rounds later.

The slime has a powerful bio-adaptive defense mechanism. It can temporarily adapt itself to the following energy types: cold, heat, light, radiation, or sonic. It instantly adapts to the first energy type it is struck with, becoming completely immune to it for 24 hours. The second energy type it is struck with only does half damage to the creature for 24 hours. After that, everything else effects it normally. The adaptation fades 24 hours later, and resets the next time it is attacked.

The adaptive slime's diffused mind is immune to domination and mind control.

Area 5-2 – Bio Lab: The lab is a biological clean room with an airlock that individuals must go through to enter the lab.

The airlock is encased in clear permaglass. There is a rack with three human-sized biological suits – yellow rubber suits with thick gloves and boots, and a clear screen face mask. The door out of the airlock opens with a heavy twisting locking wheel, mechanically prevented from

opening if the door to area 5-1 is open. The two doors cannot open at the same time, unless they are bashed down or otherwise destroyed.

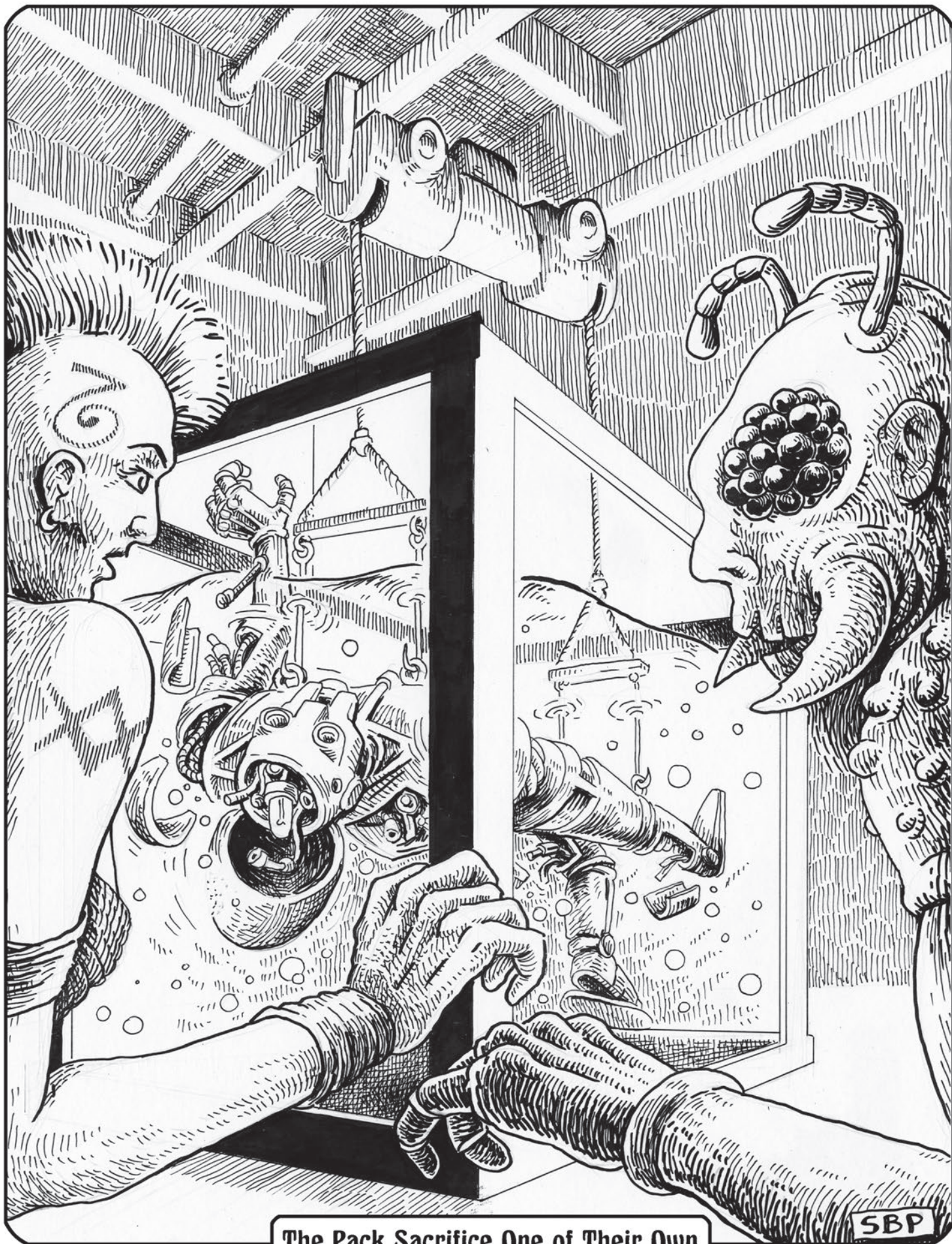
The bio lab has one huge bio-vat, four medium (man sized) ones, and a small one. They are all hooked up with fat cables to the walls and ceilings. Each one has a crane apparatus attached to the ceiling, that can pluck formed humanoids out of the vat when they are fully grown. Each of the vats hook up to a huge tank in the center of the room, where biological material is grown and fed to the tubes, where chemical nano-bots direct the DNA, creating living tissue. There is one master computer terminal against the left-side wall which holds the “plans” for all of the optimized creatures Doctor Zeigarnik is capable of creating. There is also an alarm button on the forward wall.

The terminal is Tech Level 6, Complexity Modifier 5. It is impossible for an untrained, non-tech-savy seeker to create new viable life forms. However, it is relatively simple (equivalent of Complexity Modifier 3), to hit buttons in the right pattern to relaunch the last DNA project the terminal created. With a successful check at the terminal, they can begin the sequence over; indicator lights flicker, the tank fills

BIO LAB VAT RESULTS

d30 Vat Process Effects

- | | |
|-------|---|
| 1-5 | The vat breaks the PC down for component parts: they scream for one round, and the next round they are simply gone. Their component parts are fed to the tank, where they can be repurposed into other vat creations. |
| 6-9 | The PC is broken down into component parts as above, but they are put back together as an earlier subject who tried this stunt. Reroll a completely random character of the same level of the PC that was dissolved. The new seeker has language and a vague memory of its life before they decided to explore the Ark, but not much else. A merciful judge might allow this result to reverse the previous result, bringing a character back from component-hood with nothing but a good story to show for it. |
| 10-12 | The subject is broken down and repurposed into an Optimized creature (roll 1d5): (1) Guard, (2) Assistant, (3) Enforcer, (4) Medical Technician, (5) 2d6 Injectors. The Optimized are instantly and automatically under the control of Doctor Zeigarnik, and their first act is to run/ fly over to the wall and hit the alarm button, summoning guards and alerting the Ark to what is happening. |
| 13 | Nothing seems to happen, but the next time the PC takes damage they instantly lose physical cohesion, irreversibly turning into a puddle of goo. |
| 14-24 | Mutants, manimals, and plantients lose a mutation or gain a defect (50/50); pure strain humans become optimized for performing the very last skill, Ability, or attack check they made before they were dunked. Newly optimized, the subject goes up one on the dice chain for the last action requiring a die roll it performed before immersion, and down one die on absolutely everything else it tries to do (possibilities include melee attack, ranged attack, Willpower save, Intelligence check, etc). Furthermore, the former PSH is now a mutant, losing their Darwinian Luck, AI recognition bonus, and their resistance to radiation mutations. |
| 25-26 | The subject is fundamentally changed, swapping its (roll 1d6): (1) gender, (2) age bracket (old become young, and vice-versa), (3) highest Ability score swapped with lowest, (4) hit points (reroll), (5) Luck (reroll), (6) Retains old personality but swaps game system, becoming an equivalent-level DCC RPG (roll 1d3): (1) warrior, (2) dwarf, (3) halfling (reroll this result if you do not use DCC RPG). |
| 27-29 | The vat goes into its default mode, acting as a rejuv-chamber for up to 24 hours before the green light goes on and the crane pulls them out. |
| 30+ | Mutants, manimals, and plantients gain a mutation; Pure strain humans gain 1d6 on its lowest Ability score. |



The Pack Sacrifice One of Their Own

SBP

with breathable liquid which bubbles and pops, a figure begins to form – skeleton first, then nerves, organs, muscles, brain, skin, and hair, and three hours later the tank in the far-left corner reproduces a perfect duplicate of the body Doctor Zeigarnik is possessing at the time of the PCs arrival – a young woman, straight black hair, one gold eye and one magenta, and a wide, smiling mouth. It learned basic language as part of its creation, but has no idea who she is or what is going on. She is essentially a newborn zero level mutant with language skills in the body of a young woman.

EVE attempts to contact the PCs while they work at the terminal if she has not yet been freed – she picture-in-pictures in the corner of the display, imploring them to free her and holding up 7 fingers, to show she is on level 7 (see page 7, EVE is Watching).

If a PC climbs into a tank, nothing happens unless another PC decides to go over to the terminal and hit random buttons. Let the button striker make a Luck check: on a success, nothing happens, and the crane arm lifts the PC out of the vat. On a failure, the bio-scanner engages, the tube fills up with breathable liquid, and many terrible things – and a few beneficial ones – may happen (1d30, results take 1-3 hours).

If the PCs try stuffing a dead body into the vat and tries the same thing, make the same roll BUT if their result means survival, the subject must also make a DC 14 Fortitude save, failure means they come out of the tank changed but still dead. A dead man put through a second time gets an automatic and un-Luck modifiable result of 1.

After the third attempt at this, have the button-pusher make a separate Luck check – failure means the overtaxed system goes off line and must be recalibrated. It won't work until Doctor Zeigarnik fixes it.

The small vat can be used to create small biological samples, portions of blood, replacement organs, and likewise. All the food and drink for the entire Ark is grown in the small vat. The work is much too delicate for seekers to randomly make happen BUT either EVE or the Optimized Medical Tech can use the terminal to make the antigen that cures B-17 in the small vat. If EVE is freed, she offers to synthesize the antidote for the PCs before she self-destructs the Ark.

Area 5-3 – Deep Cold Vault: This was formally a deep cold storage area, where biological specimens could be preserved for later study. The freezing components ran out long ago, and all of the subjects melted. Now the place is room temperature and filled with empty racks, dust, and a few shattered glass containers.

If the door closes behind the last PC, they are all trapped inside unless they physically batter the door down. The door is AC 5, has 40 hit points, and ignores the first 7 points of every attack.

Area 6-1 – Bio Specimen Lab: This laboratory houses live specimens. There are long racks here with dozens of atriums,

aquariums, terrariums, and cages. There are a dozen interesting but unremarkable specimens of plants, fungi, and insects here. There are two organisms that might be of interest.

In a cage on a shelf on the left side wall is what appears to be a disgusting, odious pile of fat rodents. Closer examination reveals that this is actually one organism, a bizarrely mutated rodent with dozens of fused together bodies, heads, tails, and limbs. The creature has Heightened Intelligence (equivalent to Intelligence 18), and each of its 13 heads has its own personality. The creature is in a state of perpetual existential conflict, swinging between suicidal depression at the pointlessness of the universe, rage at a creator that would suffer such an abomination as itself to live, a non-believer in a creator who ascribes every facet of existence to haphazard chance, and self-indulgent hedonism – depending on which personality is winning the argument that day. The creature continuously argues with itself over the big questions of knowledge, perception, divinity, and all the rest of the deep subjects. Its cage has a food dispenser, and the clever thing has re-wired it to produce a heavily narcotic cheese that it constantly eats, keeping itself in a constant state of inebriation. The creature is a mutant polyglot, fluent in the PCs' language and is happy to talk with them about anything – but unwilling to do anything but argue with itself, think, discuss, and consider publishing one day. It won't even resist if attacked, instead breaking down into a heated discussion with itself about the possibility of an afterlife.

In another part of the lab is a glowing sphere the size of an apple that crackles with energy. It floats around the interior of an energy cage, occasionally testing the walls with a tiny blast of bio-electric energy. This creature is an Aerg, a non-corporeal being of temporal energy, trapped here from another dimension. The PCs can destroy the cage by severing the power cord, in which case the energy walls fall away and the thing is freed. It flies about the room once, then opens a portal to its own dimension and escapes. If it serves your campaign, the portal stays open for a few rounds after the Aerg escapes, and the PCs can follow it through into another dimension, bringing them to potentially any time, setting, or adventure local.

Philosopher Rat King (1): Init -1; Atk bite +0 (1); AC 9; HD 1d4+1; hp 3; MV 10; Act 1d20; SP heightened intelligence, polyglot; SV Fort -1, Ref -1, Will+4.

The philosopher rat king is a natural polyglot, learning new languages as quickly as it hears them.

Area 7-1 – Computer Lab: This is the old computer lab. There are a dozen upright computers here, with flashing indicator lights, digital read outs, and displays. This is the brain center for the entire Ark.

There are two Optimized Guards here, and they automatically attack intruders with their knives. Doctor Zeigarnik means to keep EVE contained at all costs, so if the PCs make it here she sends everything she has – all the remaining Optimized in the Ark – who show up in waves, attempting to slay the PCs before they can free the AI. If the situation

is desperate enough, the Doctor takes her own life so that she can take possession of her optimized battle form and join the fight personally. Clever PCs might try to hold the doors, or use a choke point strategy, but Doctor Zeigarnik attempts to stop them no matter the cost. She might even try to parlay or bargain with the PCs, telling them that releasing EVE puts them all in grave danger.

There is a wire mesh cage in the fore section of the lab with a locked wire mesh framed door (DC 16 Strength check to batter down), and inside are dozens of shelves with ancient and mostly burnt out computer components.

If the PCs search the cage, they eventually find what appears to be a plastic box with entry/ exit ports on one side, entirely covered in duct tape. This is the terminal EVE showed them in the visions she sent. A hand-written note in the language of the Ancients is pinned to its front ("DO NOT PLUG IN UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES").

Once the PCs have their hands on the components, the dozens of broken screens in the area come to life. EVE is on all of them, urging them to untape the component and plug it in. She shows them exactly how to plug the component into a coupling hidden behind an old tall mainframe in the corner of the cage – Doctor Zeigarnik believes that EVE must be brought down to the Navigation for her to access the Ark's mainframes, but EVE has been planning her escape for quite some time, and she has quietly created a hidden link right here in the room.

Connecting EVE's component into the coupling is equivalent of Complexity Modifier 1 with EVE directing (Complexity Modifier 3 otherwise), and takes 1d3+3 rounds.

Once EVE is plugged in, a number of things begin to happen very rapidly.

All of the optimized creatures other than Doctor Zeigarnik's battle form in the Ark stop what they are doing – they stand glassy-eyed for one round, then find the most efficient way to kill themselves as EVE activates a security subsystem from ancient times that stops dangerous Lab Grown Specimens from escaping.

If the Ark was in motion, it stops.

Doctor Zeigarnik's battle form malfunctions – it can now only attack every other round as the Doctor pits her will against the ancient subsystem that urges her to take her own life. If there seems like there is no escape or possibility of victory for her, she takes one round to promise the PCs that this intrusion will never, ever, be over for them, then takes her own life.

EVE asserts herself over the entire Ark. She quickly realizes that the Ark is too far corrupted to be anything but an ecological disaster for the entire world. She manifests herself – a hologram of a beautiful PSH in a lab coat, with angular features, huge glasses, and a severe bun hairstyle. She thanks the PCs for their efforts, and assures them that their actions have made their world a safer, better place.

She sends a command down to the bio-lab, and upon that command the small vat will begin to produce the antigen that cures B-17.

She informs the PCs that the antidote waits for them in the bio lab, and recommends that they take them and leave as quickly as possible, as she has just set the Ark to self-destruct. She assures the PCs that they will meet again, then she transfers her consciousness to far-off safety.

The PCs have just enough time to run to the lab, retrieve the pile of pills from the bio lab, and reach a minimum safe distance before the Ark explodes in a massive mushroom cloud and dust storm that blots out the sun in a 10-mile radius for weeks.

Optimized Guards (3): Init +2; Atk knife +7 melee (1d4+2); AC 17 (15 vs missile fire); HD 3d8+3; hp 27 each; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SP optimized knife fighters, imperfect life form; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +0.

Area 8-1 – Observatory: The Observatory is a comfortable, clean space. There are several couches facing out towards the walls, comfortable carpet, and a working drink dispenser that produces a hot, invigorating beverage at a touch.

The walls are divided into panels, and each panel has a control panel underneath with two buttons. Touching the top one makes that panel turn translucent, so that one can observe the exterior landscape. It's an impressive view – from this vantage point the PCs can see far off into the distance.

Unless Doctor Zeigarnik has already sent her consciousness into it, her battle form lies in an unconscious heap in the fore section of the observatory. This is the Doctor's Optimized Battle Form, a 12-foot-tall mutated gorilla with six arms and jagged bone spurs pointing out from the backs of its palms.

If the PCs arrive here and Doctor Zeigarnik is still alive, she must assess the situation. If it is desperate enough, she takes the life of her current body, and sends her consciousness into her battle form, and attacks the PCs. She still controls the Ark with her new body, so she summons some battle music ("Machine Girl, get me in the mood to kill."), then wades into the fray.

Optimized Battle Form (1): Init +4; Atk bone spur +8 melee (1d16+5); AC 18; HD 8d10+30; hp 110; MV 40', climb 40'; Act 1d20+1d20+1d14; SP triple-jointed, cognitive immortality, heightened intelligence (Intelligence mod +3); SV Fort +11, Ref +8, Will +14.

Doctor Zeigarnik's battle form is an incredibly strong, tough, and fast creature, grown in the big vat in the Bio Lab. She worked on it for long time to make it extremely lethal. Its body is triple jointed so that it can go on all fours, twist about, and fight and move efficiently through small spaces. Its two extra limbs allow it to grapple two targets, and maintain those grapples while it strikes at other targets with its free limbs.



ADVENTURE AFTERMATH

The Doctor retains her Heightened Intelligence and Cognitive Immortality, in any form she takes. She literally wills those mutations into this body, and any other body she possesses. She is immune to any form of mind control or illusion, and may force herself beyond all normal limits of endurance and threshold of pain.

If it moved on with the PCs inside, the Ark can conveniently take them to someplace interesting. This could be the next village, the next adventure, or to an entirely new part of the campaign.

If the PCs destroy Doctor Zeigarnik but do not free EVE, the AI continually works on escaping from her prison. Destroying the shunted terminal she is trapped in still frees her, albeit in a non-efficient way – 30 days later, she can manifest enough to wrest control of the Ark, and forces it to self-destruct with the PCs inside.

The player's might find some way to keep EVE at bay – perhaps with the help of another Patron AI – and this could lead to further adventures with the Ark. Without EVE or Doctor Zeigarnik to manage its upkeep, the systems of the Ark eventually start going off line – one shuts down per week (roll randomly: Biological Atmosphere, Bio Lab, Clementine, Communications, Electric, Lift Gate, Medical, Navigation, Power, Steering. Eventually it becomes a stationary artifact, the wonder of the age, attracting the attention, wonder, and perhaps jealousy of all the seekers of the world.

If EVE is freed, she becomes a Patron AI that owes the PCs a very large debt. This can have huge ramifications on their lives. Industrious judges may even wish to create some wetware programs that EVE may grant any shamans willing to chance taking on a second Patron AI.

Doctor Zeigarnik survives. If her Optimized Battle Form is destroyed, the Doctor possesses the body of one of the birds unconscious in the sensor array and flies to safety. The Doctor takes the long view – the loss of the Ark is a terrible setback to her long-term goal of turning the world into a natural paradise unencumbered by intelligent life other than her own, but it's not the end of her plans. She has lifetimes – LIFETIMES! – to create eternal paradise, and she will do so. For now, Doctor Zeigarnik decides to refocus all of her considerable energy and resources on a side project – revenge. She will have her vengeance on the PCs who dared interfere with her holy work. She will destroy everything they love before she ends their lives, and the last thing they see will be the smiling face of whatever body she happens to inhabit at the time.

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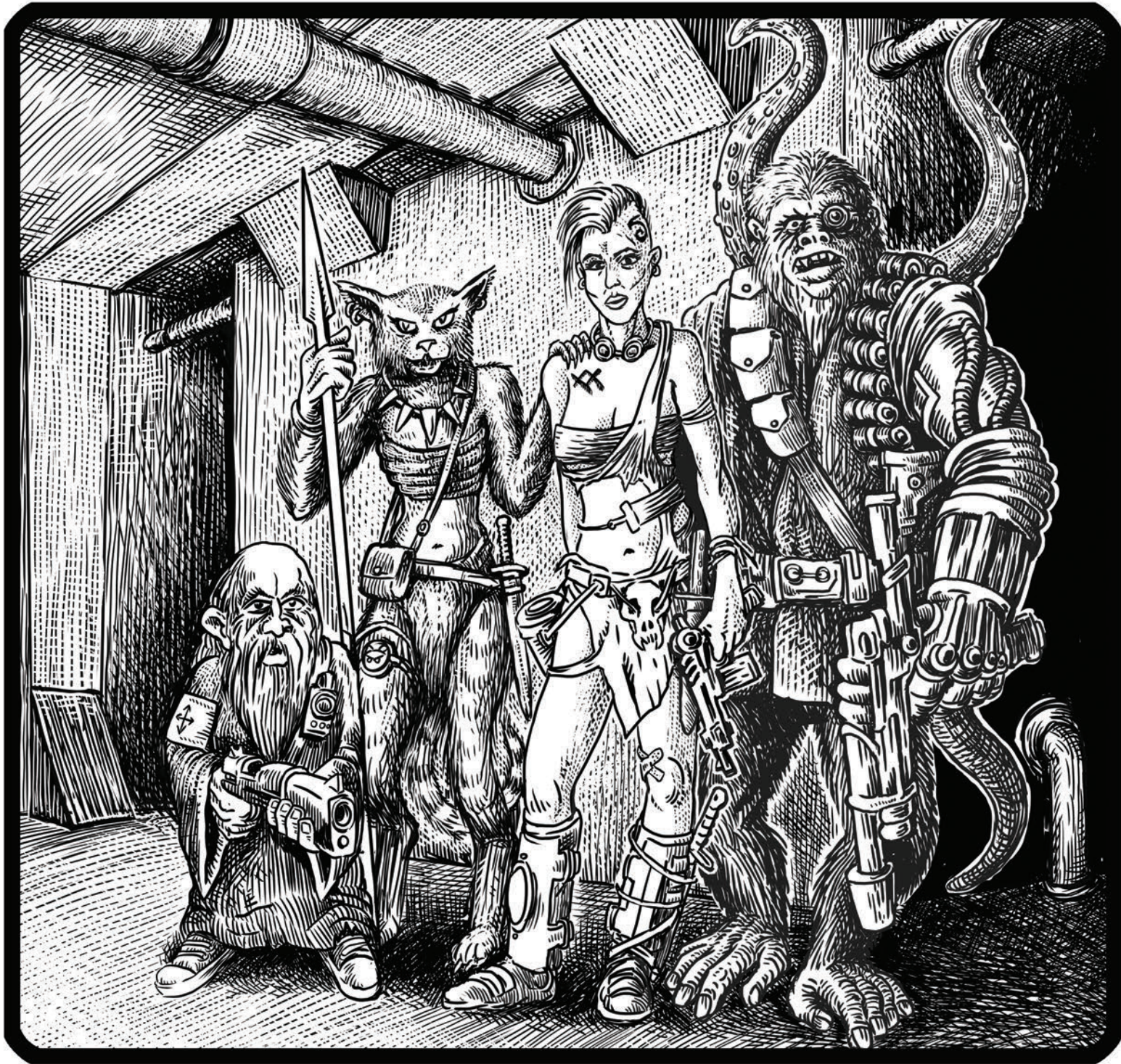
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