



dorm

mess hall/
social area

north ramp

central processing

*Mama
Hen*

or "The Hen House"

south ramp

supply room

control room

west hallway

east hallway

Mama Hen Is Sick!

Setting: The not-too-distant future, in a factory that grows and processes vat-grown meat, the mass of which is named “Mama Hen.” The processing is attended by three dozen human clones (all male), supremely loyal and compliant laborers who live in the factory where they work. Unbeknownst to the clones, however, the factory is about to get bought out, meaning the fate of the entire operation is up in the air. All senior management staff are off at a “retreat” (a Machiavellian buyout negotiation preparation summit), leaving the janitor (a non-clone human who also lives in the factory) and the factory AI in charge.

The story takes place at night, when all the other clones are asleep. The central mystery revolves around finding a saboteur who has infected Mama Hen with some kind of flesh-eating disease that’s causing her to rapidly (and disgustingly) deteriorate. She could be dead by morning. The PC is awakened from his sleep cycle by the factory janitor, who says he needs help cleaning up the unholy mess that Mama Hen’s deterioration is creating. The janitor also wants to see if the PC knows anything about what’s happening to the meat.

The crime: The PC, like all the other clones in the factory, is unaware of the fact that he is actually an iteration of a clone “type.” He is the third iteration of his type. His second iteration perpetrated the sabotage just a few days ago. Having learned—somewhat inadvertently, from the AI—that the factory might get bought out, the second iteration (the most loyal amongst his fellow clones) could not bear the idea of the factory no longer existing, so he infected Mama Hen in order to make the business unappealing to the potential buyers.

NPC: **The janitor**, a “restricted human”—a non-clone human being who has been cognitively handicapped (with an implant), as punishment for being convicted of a crime. The janitor provides the PC with “outside world” information and references (as the clones know very little of the world outside the factory), interior (factory-space/company) behind-the-scenes/illicit info, and color commentary. After initially speaking to the PC, the Janitor will move to the control room, where he can put his feet up, monitor the clone and interact with him over the loudspeaker system.

Motivation: For the most part, the janitor is just kind of crazy—largely (though not entirely) thanks to his “restriction.” But he actually witnessed the PC’s previous iteration commit the sabotage, and is—morbidly—curious to see if the PC can figure this out. The janitor is also hoping that, in any chaos that may ensue with the discovery of the sabotage/saboteur and/or the buyout, he may be able to escape the factory.

NPC: **An AI**, “The Farmer’s Daughter.” The AI is programmed to look after the clones (also providing them with a female entity to speak with—one that is at once nurturing and alluring) and to provide general information—on the day-to-day operations of the factory—to anyone in the factory who requests it. “FD” can only be accessed via communication panels, at least one of which is present in every room.

Motivation: FD’s minders (preoccupied, as is the rest of senior management, with the potential buy-out) haven’t been paying her as much attention as they should. As a result, the programming that keeps her “caring mechanism” in check is starting to over-compensate, leading FD to grow increasingly intensely anxious about “losing her boys”—having the clones sold off and/or reprocessed (into material for more clones or for part of Mama Hen’s “feed”) once the buyout happens.

Additional background: Mama Hen is a mound of vat-grown chicken (modeled on “Chicken Little” from *The Space Merchants*, by Pohl and Kornbluth) approximately 50 feet in diameter. Over the top of this mound is a giant dome made of nano-fiber mesh—kind of like an upside-down colander, with holes a bit larger than the circumference of a human arm. As Mama Hen grows, the synthetic meat pushes out the holes and, after the extrusion reaches a length of approximately three feet, the nano-fiber hole is meant to sphincter closed, cutting off the end of the meat. This process doesn’t always happen as it should, however. Sometimes the holes don’t close all the way and make a clean cut, sometimes extrusions get stuck to one another and to the dome, etc. And so workers (the clones) are stationed around the outside of the mound with “Helping Hands”—telescoping poles that have a blade and a hook at one end, like a tree pruning saw.

Worker shifts last 16 hours. Clones are given a half an hour after they wake-up to eat and dress for work. After the workday is finished, they are given an hour-and-a-half after work to eat and socialize. At night Mama Hen needs to “sleep.” During this eight-hour period the mass is actually starved of nutrients so that it doesn’t grow so fast that it damages the mesh dome.