OFFICE OF IMPROBABLE JURISDICTION

EXPERIMENTAL INTELLIGENCE AND AUTONOMOUS PERSONS REVIEW BOARD

NIMH-ERB-001

PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION INTO THE RATS OF NIMH

On Experimental Enhancement, Emergent Personhood, Institutional Custody, and the Presumption That Scientific Creation Establishes Ownership

An Institutional Inquiry into the Events Depicted in Robert C. O'Brien's Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH (1971) and Don Bluth's The Secret of NIMH (1982)

Issuing Authority: Office of Improbable Jurisdiction
Docket: NIMH-ERB-001
Classification: Research Ethics, Animal Welfare, Emergent Intelligence, Institutional Accountability, Autonomous Communities, and Extraordinary Biological Intervention
Date: October 25, 2026
Status: Preliminary Investigation Opened; No Final Determination of Individual Liability Entered

Nature of Proceeding: Fictional regulatory satire and literary ethics review.

The present investigation concerns fictional events. References to NIMH concern the laboratory and experimental program depicted within the literary and cinematic narratives. No allegation concerning actual research practices or misconduct by the real National Institute of Mental Health is made.

I. NOTICE OF PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION

The Office of Improbable Jurisdiction hereby opens an investigation into the experimental enhancement of animals and the institutional responsibilities arising when such experimentation produces subjects capable of independent thought, complex communication, technological innovation, and collective self-government.

The inquiry arises from two related but materially distinct narrative records:

Record A: *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH*, Robert C. O'Brien, 1971.

Record B: *The Secret of NIMH*, directed by Don Bluth, 1982.

The Office recognizes that both narratives concern experimental rodents who acquire extraordinary intelligence through scientific intervention.

The Office further recognizes that these individuals subsequently escape laboratory confinement and establish a functioning community.

The principal question is not whether the laboratory possessed the technical capability to enhance their intelligence.

That capability is established within the fictional record.

The question is whether the laboratory's authority over its subjects changed as the subjects themselves changed.

The Office therefore identifies the following preliminary issue:

At what point does an experimental subject acquire interests that the institution conducting the experiment must recognize independently of the institution's original research objectives?

The inquiry shall proceed.

II. PARTIES AND PERSONS OF INTEREST

A. Principal Institutional Respondent

The fictional experimental laboratory associated with NIMH.

The Office requests clarification concerning:

- The authority under which the experiments were conducted.
- The original purposes of the research.
- The treatment of experimental animals.
- The observed effects of enhancement.
- The procedures governing continued confinement.
- The response to the subjects' acquisition of advanced intelligence.
- The measures undertaken following their escape.

B. Principal Affected Population

The experimental rats subjected to cognitive and physiological enhancement.

The Office recognizes that the rats subsequently demonstrated capacities associated with sophisticated individual and social agency.

These capacities include literacy, engineering, planning, organization, and collective decision-making.

Their status as experimental animals at the commencement of the research does not, by itself, resolve their appropriate classification following enhancement.

C. Additional Persons of Interest

Nicodemus: Senior leader of the rat community.

Justin: Member of the rat community and participant in its protective operations.

Jenner: Opponent of the proposed relocation to Thorn Valley; his conduct differs materially between the literary and cinematic records.

Jonathan Frisby / Jonathan Brisby: Experimental mouse whose assistance contributed to the rats' escape.

Mr. Ages: Experimental mouse and provider of medical assistance.

Mrs. Frisby / **Mrs. Brisby:** Widowed mouse whose family receives assistance from the rats.

Timothy: Minor child requiring medical care and protection from foreseeable environmental danger.

The Fitzgibbon Household: Human occupants and operators of the farm upon which the rat community establishes itself.

Additional Interested Parties: Members of the rat colony, its dissenting factions, and individuals involved in scientific experimentation or subsequent recovery operations.

The Office notes that designation as a person of interest does not constitute an allegation of wrongdoing.

III. ON THE TRANSFORMATION OF EXPERIMENTAL SUBJECTS

The Office recognizes that scientific institutions may conduct research involving nonhuman animals under applicable ethical and legal frameworks.

The legitimacy of particular research depends upon the relevant circumstances and governing standards.

The present inquiry does not presume that the initial selection of animals for experimentation necessarily constituted misconduct.

However, the subsequent results of the fictional experiments introduce circumstances requiring independent examination.

The enhanced rats developed capacities exceeding those ordinarily associated with their species.

They acquired knowledge.

They developed complex plans.

They communicated sophisticated ideas.

They constructed and maintained technological systems.

They formed a functioning political community.

These developments raise the possibility that the original classification of the subjects became materially incomplete.

The Office therefore distinguishes two questions.

First: What protections were owed to the animals before the experimental intervention?

Second: What additional protections became appropriate after the intervention produced beings capable of advanced individual and collective agency?

The Office recognizes that these questions may require different analyses.

An institution cannot necessarily justify continued confinement merely by demonstrating that the original confinement was authorized.

A material change in the capacities of a subject may require reassessment of the institution's relationship with that subject.

The Office therefore requests identification of any procedure by which the fictional laboratory assessed whether its experimental subjects had acquired capacities relevant to autonomy.

The Office respectfully observes that a laboratory cage does not become a complete theory of personhood merely because its occupant was originally placed there as an animal.

IV. ON THE QUESTION OF CONSENT

The Office considers whether the experimental subjects were capable of consenting to the procedures performed upon them.

At the commencement of the research, the subjects may not have possessed the capacities ordinarily associated with informed consent.

This circumstance does not automatically render every intervention permissible.

It instead raises questions concerning the standards applicable to research conducted upon beings unable to provide consent.

However, the subsequent development of extraordinary intelligence presents an additional difficulty.

Subjects who were initially unable to understand an experiment may later become capable of understanding both its purpose and its consequences.

The Office therefore asks:

Were the enhanced rats informed of the nature of the research?

Were they told what substances had been administered?

Were they informed of known risks?

Were they permitted to refuse subsequent procedures?

Did the institution recognize any right to discontinue participation?

Could the subjects request release?

The available narratives do not establish satisfactory answers to these questions.

The Office therefore enters no finding concerning the existence or absence of particular consent procedures without additional evidence.

Nevertheless, the acquisition of advanced cognitive capacity is materially relevant.

The inability of a subject to consent at the beginning of an experiment does not establish that the subject may never acquire the ability to refuse its continuation.

The distinction is entered into the record.

V. ON THE STATUS OF THE ENHANCED RATS

The Office considers whether the enhanced rats should be classified solely according to their biological species.

The animals remained rats.

This fact is not disputed.

However, their demonstrated capacities extended beyond those ordinarily associated with rats.

The Office therefore distinguishes biological identity from the separate question of morally relevant cognitive and social capacities.

The existence of advanced intelligence does not automatically resolve every question of legal personhood.

Different forms of recognition may carry different consequences.

Nevertheless, the Office rejects the proposition that biological species alone must conclusively determine every ethical interest.

The rats demonstrated capacities relevant to:

1. Independent decision-making.
2. Communication of preferences.
3. Formation of social relationships.
4. Long-term planning.
5. Recognition of collective obligations.
6. Technological competence.
7. Deliberation concerning their own future.

The Office considers these capacities sufficient to warrant further examination of their autonomy.

The experimental origin of those capacities does not independently establish that the laboratory owns the resulting persons.

The Office further distinguishes responsibility for creating a condition from ownership of the being affected by it.

The fact that intelligence emerged through an experiment does not establish that the intelligence belongs to the experimenter.

VI. THE ESCAPE FROM NIMH

The Office acknowledges that the rats escaped from confinement.

Both narratives establish the significance of that escape.

However, the circumstances must be evaluated with care.

From the laboratory's perspective, the departure of experimental subjects may have represented a loss of control over research animals and potentially hazardous materials.

From the rats' perspective, the escape permitted them to exercise autonomy that had not been recognized within their original confinement.

These perspectives are not necessarily equivalent.

The Office therefore requests clarification concerning whether the rats' continued detention remained justified after their enhanced capacities became apparent.

It further asks whether the laboratory had provided any procedure for release, negotiation, or independent review.

The Office recognizes that unauthorized escape may create legitimate concerns concerning public safety.

Nevertheless, those concerns must be assessed according to evidence.

The mere fact that the rats escaped does not establish that their continued confinement was ethically justified.

Nor does escape necessarily eliminate every continuing obligation of the institution responsible for their condition.

The Office recognizes that the rats departed without permission.

It requests clarification concerning whether permission should still have been required.

VII. THE ROSEBUSH COMMUNITY

The Office next examines the community established by the rats beneath the rosebush on the Fitzgibbon property.

The rats developed an organized settlement employing advanced technological arrangements.

They constructed infrastructure.

They maintained supplies.

They developed systems of collective decision-making.

Their activities demonstrated sustained cooperation.

The Office recognizes that these achievements required substantial intelligence and practical skill.

However, the community also relied upon resources obtained from the surrounding human environment.

These included electricity and other materials.

The Office therefore identifies two distinct questions.

First, whether the rats' acquisition of resources interfered with legitimate interests of the human property occupants.

Second, whether the rats possessed any meaningful alternative means of sustaining themselves following their escape.

The Office recognizes that the rats' dependence upon human resources created ethical concerns within their own community.

Indeed, the proposal to relocate to Thorn Valley arose partly from a desire to establish an independent existence.

The Office regards this internal debate as significant.

The rats were not merely consuming resources.

They were evaluating whether their own conduct was consistent with the kind of society they wished to create.

The Office therefore identifies evidence of collective moral reflection.

Nevertheless, the acquisition of intelligence does not automatically exempt a community from responsibility concerning the property of others.

Equally, the absence of recognition by a human property owner does not necessarily eliminate the interests of an established autonomous community.

The Office recommends continued examination.

The existence of an electrical connection establishes access to electricity.

It does not, standing alone, establish a complete political settlement between the rats and the Fitzgibbons.

VIII. THE PLAN TO RELOCATE TO THORN VALLEY

The Office recognizes that the rats developed a proposal to leave their existing settlement.

The intended destination was Thorn Valley.

The proposed relocation was associated with the desire to become independent of resources obtained from humans.

This decision appears to have involved substantial discussion within the community.

The Office therefore considers whether the rats possessed functioning mechanisms for collective self-government.

The question is especially significant because their intelligence arose through an external experiment.

The rats did not remain passive products of that experiment.

They developed their own objectives.

They debated their future.

They selected a proposed course of action.

The Office recognizes these facts as evidence of autonomous political activity.

However, the decision generated opposition.

Jenner rejected the relocation proposal.

The nature and consequences of that opposition differ substantially between the two narrative records.

Accordingly, the Office declines to consolidate the two accounts into a single historical determination.

The separate records shall be examined below.

IX. MRS. FRISBY AND THE QUESTION OF EMERGENCY PROTECTION

The Office next considers the circumstances of Mrs. Frisby.

Mrs. Frisby was widowed.

She cared for four children.

Her son Timothy developed pneumonia.

The family's winter home stood within an area threatened by the farmer's anticipated plowing.

Relocation was necessary to avoid destruction of the home.

However, Timothy's medical condition rendered ordinary movement dangerous.

The Office recognizes that Mrs. Frisby faced competing obligations.

She was responsible for protecting her family from the plow.

She was also responsible for avoiding unnecessary harm to her sick child.

The available options were constrained.

The Office therefore rejects any characterization of the situation as a simple failure of parental planning.

The mother could not safely resolve one danger merely by disregarding the other.

The Office further recognizes that Mr. Ages provided medical assistance.

His intervention reflects the existence of specialized knowledge among the animals affected by NIMH experimentation.

The Office therefore identifies an additional consequence of experimental enhancement.

The resulting capacities could be employed for purposes extending beyond the laboratory's original objectives.

Those purposes included the preservation of life.

The Office recognizes that Mrs. Frisby herself was not necessarily an enhanced experimental subject.

Her interests do not depend upon her possessing the same intelligence or technological abilities as the rats.

The Office respectfully observes that a sick child does not become less deserving of protection because his mother has not been experimentally enhanced.

X. THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE FITZGIBBON HOUSEHOLD

The Office considers the agricultural activities of the Fitzgibbon family.

The farmer intended to plow land employed for agricultural purposes.

The Office recognizes that plowing is an ordinary activity associated with cultivation.

The historical record does not establish that the farmer knowingly intended to destroy the home of a particular family of mice.

Nor does it establish that he understood the presence of an enhanced rat community beneath the rosebush.

The Office therefore declines to presume deliberate wrongdoing.

Nevertheless, the circumstances illustrate the consequences of overlapping systems of habitation.

Land regarded by humans as agricultural property may contain animal communities whose members possess interests unrecognized by the human occupants.

The Office recognizes that this creates difficult questions concerning practical accommodation.

It does not propose that ordinary agricultural operations necessarily require identification and consultation with every animal residing upon the land.

The question becomes more complicated where the affected animals possess advanced intelligence and organized communities.

The Office therefore requests consideration of whether any practicable mechanism for communication could have existed.

The inquiry remains open.

The Board recognizes that the farmer possessed a plow.

It does not find that possession of the plow resolved every interest existing in the field before the plow arrived.

XI. SEPARATE EVIDENTIARY RECORDS

A. RECORD A — THE 1971 NOVEL

The Office recognizes that Robert C. O'Brien's novel emphasizes the scientific origins of the rats' intelligence.

The animals' extraordinary capacities arise through experimental intervention.

Their subsequent development involves education, engineering, organization, and the acquisition of practical knowledge.

The proposed relocation to Thorn Valley reflects a sustained effort toward independence.

Jenner's opposition to the Plan is significant.

However, the novel does not present his conduct through the same direct conspiracy and violent confrontation depicted in the film.

Jenner and a group of dissenting rats depart from the colony.

Their subsequent fate is associated with reports of an incident involving rats and electrical equipment.

The exact circumstances remain uncertain within the narrative.

The Office therefore declines to import the film's later events into the literary record.

The novel also presents the possibility that persons offering to exterminate rats on the farm may be connected to the experimental institution.

That possibility warrants examination.

However, the Office will distinguish the rats' suspicions from independently established identification of the persons involved.

The Board recognizes the seriousness of possible efforts to recapture or destroy escaped experimental subjects.

It does not enter a finding against an unidentified institution solely upon the basis of an unresolved suspicion.

Finally, the novel's rescue of Mrs. Frisby's household depends upon the rats' knowledge, coordination, and engineering.

The Office considers this significant evidence concerning the practical application of their enhanced capacities.

The novel demonstrates that an experimental population may become capable of independently undertaking complex protective action.

The laboratory's original purpose does not define the eventual uses to which the rats put their intelligence.

B. RECORD B — THE 1982 FILM

The Office recognizes that Don Bluth's *The Secret of NIMH* employs a different narrative structure.

The protagonist is identified as Mrs. Brisby.

The film retains the scientific experiments as the origin of the rats' extraordinary intelligence.

However, it introduces additional supernatural elements.

These include a mystical amulet associated with Nicodemus and subsequently entrusted to Mrs. Brisby.

The film also transforms Jenner into an active conspirator.

He seeks to prevent the abandonment of the rosebush and participates in a plot resulting in Nicodemus's death.

The circumstances therefore differ materially from the novel.

The Office declines to attribute the cinematic murder to the literary Jenner.

The distinction is entered.

The film further depicts an imminent effort by NIMH personnel to locate the rat colony.

Mrs. Brisby learns of this danger while confined within the Fitzgibbon household.

Her warning contributes to the rats' urgent decision to depart.

The Office identifies this event as an important instance of communication between an ordinary animal resident and an enhanced autonomous community.

Mrs. Brisby possesses information the rats need.

The rats possess abilities her family needs.

Their mutual assistance serves protective purposes.

Finally, the film's climactic intervention involves the amulet's extraordinary power.

The Office recognizes the successful rescue.

However, the scientific enhancement of the rats and the supernatural operation of the amulet must not automatically be treated as manifestations of the same mechanism.

The available narrative does not establish that the laboratory created the amulet.

The Board therefore reserves separate examination of the artifact's origin, custody, transfer, and effects.

The Office respectfully advises that successful magical intervention should not be retrospectively entered as a documented laboratory procedure without evidence connecting the two.

XII. THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE TWO JENNERS

The Office finds the treatment of Jenner particularly important to the integrity of the investigation.

In the novel, Jenner represents opposition to the rats' proposed social transformation.

His departure raises questions concerning dissent, collective decision-making, and the consequences of leaving an organized community.

In the film, Jenner's conduct includes deliberate conspiracy and violent interference with the relocation operation.

These actions raise additional questions concerning attempted seizure of authority, deliberate endangerment, and individual responsibility for lethal harm.

The Office therefore establishes two separate analytical classifications.

Jenner-A: Literary dissenter whose departure and possible subsequent death require examination.

Jenner-B: Cinematic conspirator whose actions contribute directly to the death of Nicodemus and threaten the safety of the colony.

The Office recognizes that both figures bear the same name.

It does not recognize that fact as sufficient grounds to merge their conduct.

A shared name is not evidence of an identical act.

No consolidated finding concerning Jenner shall be entered.

XIII. ON THE DUTY TO RECOGNIZE EMERGENT INTELLIGENCE

The Office returns to the principal institutional question.

The rats entered the laboratory as ordinary animals.

They emerged with extraordinary cognitive abilities.

The Office recognizes that experimental institutions may encounter unanticipated results.

Not every unexpected result creates an identical obligation.

However, the creation of advanced intelligence presents a special case.

A research institution that produces subjects capable of self-direction may need to reconsider whether continued treatment of those subjects as controlled experimental property remains appropriate.

The Office therefore proposes the following principle for preliminary review:

Where an experimental intervention produces capacities relevant to independent agency, the institution conducting the intervention should reassess the subject's status in light of those capacities.

The determination should not depend solely upon the researcher's original intention.

An institution may intend to produce data.

It may produce intelligence.

It may intend to study behavior.

It may produce beings capable of questioning the study.

It may intend to improve experimental performance.

It may produce subjects who no longer wish to perform.

The Office recognizes that these possibilities create considerable practical complications.

Their complexity does not establish that they may be disregarded.

The scientific success of an experiment does not automatically establish the continued legitimacy of the conditions under which its successful subjects are confined.

XIV. PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Following examination of the available narrative records, the Office enters the following findings.

Finding 1 — Experimental Enhancement

The fictional NIMH experiments produced animals possessing extraordinary cognitive capacities.

Finding 2 — No Automatic Institutional Ownership

The creation of enhanced intelligence does not independently establish perpetual ownership of the beings possessing it.

Finding 3 — Material Change in Subject Status

The emergence of advanced intelligence warrants reconsideration of the ethical obligations owed to experimental subjects.

Finding 4 — Importance of Consent

The circumstances under which research began do not automatically justify every subsequent intervention after the subjects acquire additional capacities.

Finding 5 — Autonomous Community Formation

The rats demonstrated substantial evidence of collective organization, independent planning, and social cooperation.

Finding 6 — Legitimate Questions Concerning Resource Use

The rats' use of human resources requires examination without presuming that their experimental origins eliminate their interests.

Finding 7 — Significance of the Thorn Valley Plan

The proposed relocation reflects an effort toward autonomous and sustainable community life.

Finding 8 — Protection of Vulnerable Persons

Mrs. Frisby's family possessed legitimate interests in emergency protection independent of participation in the NIMH experiments.

Finding 9 — No Presumption of Deliberate Agricultural Harm

The available record does not establish that the Fitzgibbon household knowingly intended to harm an enhanced community through ordinary agricultural operations.

Finding 10 — Separation of Literary and Cinematic Evidence

Material differences between the novel and film require separate findings.

Finding 11 — No Consolidated Jenner Determination

The conduct of Jenner in the literary record is not identical to the conduct depicted in the cinematic adaptation.

Finding 12 — Unresolved Institutional Responsibility

The available record does not establish sufficient information concerning the laboratory's complete research protocols, oversight arrangements, or post-enhancement procedures.

Finding 13 — Continuing Ethical Interests

The rats' escape from confinement does not eliminate the relevance of the institution's earlier conduct or potential continuing responsibilities.

Finding 14 — No Final Finding of Real-World Misconduct

The present inquiry concerns fictional narrative events and establishes no misconduct by any actual scientific institution.

XV. QUESTIONS DIRECTED TO THE FICTIONAL NIMH LABORATORY

The Office hereby requests responses to the following inquiries.

Question One: What was the original objective of the cognitive enhancement experiments?

Question Two: What welfare standards governed the selection and treatment of the animals?

Question Three: At what point did laboratory personnel recognize that the subjects possessed extraordinary intelligence?

Question Four: Were those developments anticipated?

Question Five: Did any subject demonstrate the ability to communicate a preference concerning continued confinement?

Question Six: Was that preference documented?

Question Seven: Did the institution maintain procedures for reclassifying subjects whose cognitive capacities materially changed?

Question Eight: Were the subjects informed of the effects of the experimental intervention once they became capable of understanding them?

Question Nine: What risks associated with enhanced longevity and intelligence were identified?

Question Ten: Were procedures established for release or independent care?

Question Eleven: Did the institution consider the possibility that the enhanced rats could form a self-governing community?

Question Twelve: What response was authorized following their escape?

Question Thirteen: Were any recovery operations intended to return the subjects to confinement?

Question Fourteen: Was lethal intervention contemplated?

Question Fifteen: What evidence supported any determination that the escaped rats posed a danger requiring compulsory intervention?

Question Sixteen: Did the institution recognize any interests held by the enhanced subjects independently of the research program?

Question Seventeen: Were the original experimenters informed of the rats' subsequent technological achievements?

Question Eighteen: Did the institution distinguish the rats' acquisition of ordinary resources from conduct constituting a genuine public safety threat?

Question Nineteen: What obligations, if any, did the institution recognize toward subjects whose enhancement had created new dependencies, vulnerabilities, or capacities?

Question Twenty: By what authority did the institution consider the enhanced subjects available for continued control?

The Office considers the twentieth question central to the present investigation.

XVI. CONCLUDING OBSERVATION

There is a peculiar quality to the history of the Rats of NIMH.

The animals were taken into a laboratory because human researchers believed they could be useful to an experiment.

They were confined.

They were altered.

They developed capacities their captors had not ordinarily associated with them.

And eventually, they became capable of understanding enough about their own circumstances to seek a different life.

The Office recognizes the extraordinary scientific achievement depicted within the narratives.

The enhancement of intelligence is not inherently an evil objective.

Knowledge may be valuable.

Research may produce discoveries of substantial benefit.

But the worth of a discovery cannot be evaluated solely according to the interests of the institution that made it.

The subject of an experiment may possess interests independently of the experimenter's success.

That distinction becomes especially important where the experiment changes the subject's capacities.

The rats were not merely altered objects.

They became readers.

Builders.

Planners.

Neighbors.

Members of a community.

They developed relationships.

They disagreed.

They considered the consequences of their dependence upon others.

They made decisions about the kind of lives they wished to lead.

These capacities do not resolve every difficult question concerning their proper status.

They do, however, make it insufficient to speak of the rats solely as experimental inventory.

The Office therefore considers the institution's continuing claim to control a legitimate subject of examination.

There is another circumstance deserving attention.

Mrs. Frisby did not enter the story seeking an extraordinary scientific discovery.

She sought to save her child.

She did not initially require an explanation of advanced cognition, laboratory experimentation, or the governance of a hidden rat civilization.

She required a means of moving her family without killing Timothy.

The rats, for their part, had developed knowledge and capabilities through circumstances they had not freely chosen.

Yet they employed those capabilities to help another.

In the novel, their assistance becomes an expression of practical intelligence and collective effort.

In the film, the rescue also becomes an expression of courage through an extraordinary supernatural intervention.

The narratives differ.

But both preserve a significant point.

The value of the rats' intelligence becomes visible not merely through their escape from captivity, but through what they choose to do with their freedom.

The laboratory created conditions under which that intelligence emerged.

It did not thereby determine every purpose toward which the intelligence would be directed.

The rats' future was not necessarily the laboratory's future.

Their interests were not necessarily identical to the research program's interests.

And their capacity for self-government did not cease to matter merely because that capacity had originated through experimental intervention.

The Office therefore returns to the principal question.

What responsibility does a scientific institution bear when its experiments produce beings capable of independent judgment?

The answer may depend upon the nature of the experiment.

The capacities of the subjects.

The risks associated with their release.

The interests of surrounding populations.

And the means reasonably available to protect all affected parties.

These questions require careful examination.

But the Office rejects one proposition as insufficient.

That the institution may determine the subjects' entire future merely because it was responsible for changing them.

The rats did not become less capable of possessing interests when they became more intelligent.

Their escape did not necessarily erase the significance of their confinement.

Their construction of a community did not eliminate every question concerning the institution that had created their extraordinary circumstances.

And their status as animals did not render their demonstrated capacities irrelevant.

The Office recognizes that the rats were experimental subjects.

It also recognizes that they became capable of recognizing themselves as something more.

The institution's responsibility to acknowledge that change remains under review.

XVII. PRELIMINARY DISPOSITION

NIMH-ERB-001 shall remain open.

The Office enters no retrospective finding that any unidentified historical research regulation was violated.

It enters no determination concerning the legal personhood of enhanced animals under actual law.

It makes no allegation concerning research undertaken by the real National Institute of Mental Health.

However, the fictional record provides substantial grounds for continued ethical examination of experimental intelligence, institutional custody, and autonomous community formation.

The Office directs that subsequent proceedings distinguish between:

NIMH-ERB-002 — The Experimental Subjects
On Research Consent, Cognitive Enhancement, and the Acquisition of Independent Agency.

NIMH-ERB-003 — The Rosebush Settlement
On Unauthorized Electrical Access, Autonomous Infrastructure, and the Ethics of Dependence.

NIMH-ERB-004 — The Plan for Thorn Valley
On Self-Government, Collective Dissent, and the Right to Establish an Independent Community.

NIMH-ERB-005 — The Literary Jenner
On Institutional Dissent, Departure, and the Limits of Collective Authority.

NIMH-ERB-006 — The Cinematic Jenner
On Conspiracy, Sabotage, and the Death of Nicodemus.

NIMH-ERB-007 — The Extraordinary Amulet
On Supernatural Intervention, Artifact Custody, and the Relationship Between Courage and Authority.

NIMH-ERB-MUN-001 — The Fitzgibbon Farm
On Agricultural Operations, Unrecognized Occupancy, and the Foreseeability of Harm to an Enhanced Nonhuman Settlement.

NIMH-ERB-MED-001 — Timothy Frisby
On Pediatric Pneumonia, Emergency Relocation, and the Competing Duties of a Parent Confronting Multiple Foreseeable Hazards.

The Office recognizes that these inquiries concern fictional animals.

It does not recognize that circumstance as sufficient grounds to dispense with institutional reasoning.

The historical record remains open.

So entered.

Office of Improbable Jurisdiction
Experimental Intelligence and Autonomous Persons Review Board
Division of Research Subjects, Created Persons, and Extraordinary Cognitive Development

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ADMINISTRATIVE ADDENDUM A

Regarding the Assertion That the Subjects Were Only Rats

The Office of Records has received a preliminary characterization of the experimental subjects.

The characterization reads:

They were only rats.

The Office acknowledges that the subjects were rats.

This fact has been entered into the record.

However, the present inquiry concerns the capacities subsequently demonstrated by those subjects and the ethical significance of those capacities.

The designation does not resolve the question.

The Office therefore requests that future submissions distinguish biological classification from the separate issue of autonomous agency.

The Board recognizes that the subjects possessed tails.

It does not recognize possession of a tail as dispositive of the right to self-government.

The objection is not sustained.

ADMINISTRATIVE ADDENDUM B

Regarding the Proposed Status of the Rosebush

The Office of Property and Extraordinary Habitation has received information concerning an organized settlement beneath a rosebush on agricultural land.

The Office acknowledges that the structure was a rosebush.

The Office further acknowledges that the settlement was occupied by rats.

Nevertheless, the presence of a functioning electrical system, collective facilities, organized leadership, and substantial residential infrastructure raises questions concerning whether the location may be adequately described as ordinary vegetation.

The Office enters no determination of legal ownership.

It requests that future descriptions distinguish the botanical characteristics of the premises from their documented residential use.

The Board recognizes that the settlement was beneath a bush.

It does not recognize that fact as sufficient evidence that nobody lived there.

The matter remains open.

ADMINISTRATIVE ADDENDUM C

Regarding the Proposed Use of the Term Escapees

The Office of Experimental Subject Classification has reviewed the designation *escaped laboratory animals*.

The Office acknowledges that the subjects departed laboratory confinement without authorization.

This is established within the fictional record.

However, the designation describes the manner of their departure.

It does not conclusively establish their status following departure.

Nor does it resolve whether their continued confinement was ethically justified at the time of escape.

The Office respectfully observes that the word *escaped* identifies a relationship to confinement.

It does not independently establish that the confinement ought to have continued.

No final classification is entered.

FINAL ADMINISTRATIVE NOTICE

The Office has completed its initial examination of the proposition that experimentally enhanced animals remain subject to unrestricted institutional control because their extraordinary abilities originated through scientific intervention.

The proposition is not sustained.

The Office recognizes the scientific achievement.

It recognizes the subjects' biological origins.

It recognizes the practical complications arising from their escape.

Nevertheless, these circumstances do not establish a permanent entitlement to control the lives of beings capable of independent judgment.

The question is not merely what the laboratory created.

The question is what responsibilities arose when its subjects became capable of determining their own purposes.

The Office recognizes that the rats were made more intelligent.

It does not recognize that intelligence as the property of the institution that produced it.

END OF NIMH-ERB-001