

Intelligence-Slave

by

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

CURT Herzstark (30's) a quiet, composed man. Average sized. Decently fed.

FINN Frey (14) a lean, slight Hitler Youth. Bright. Battle-tested. Poorly fed.

Karl Otto KOCH (40's) Commandant of the Buchenwald Concentration Camp. Powerful. Well fed.

BRUNO Clemens (30's) a very tall, very thin man. Very malnourished.

Fritz WALTHER (late 50's) a wealthy industrialist. Well fed.

Setting: Billroda, Germany. An abandoned salt mine, converted into a munitions factory.

Time: Winter. Towards the end of the war.

Note: "/" in the text indicates overlapping.

ACT ONE

SCENE I: CURT'S OFFICE. BILLRODA, GERMANY. AN ABANDONED SALT MINE, NOW CONVERTED TO A WEAPONS FACTORY.

At rise: We are underground. The clay walls shimmer from salt crystals. The room is lit with some dim light bulbs that are hung from the ceiling. There is a crude wooden door.

[Note: Sometimes the characters use candles or lanterns instead of electric lights.]

There are some wooden bunks in the room.

Curt Herzstark (30's), a thin man in striped prisoner clothing sits at a simple makeshift desk in a corner of the room. There is a crude drafting table next to him. He wears a yellow Star of David on his shirt sleeve. He is working on drawings at the table with an impossibly short pencil. On his desk sits a series of neat black metal cylinders. They look like squat camera lenses with cranks on top. He needs glasses, but doesn't have them.

In the center of the room, sits Fritz Walther (50's), a German industrialist in a dusty grey suit. He looks worn, though decently fed. He wears an armband with a Swastika on it.

There is a freshly opened bottle of cognac next to him. It's three-quarters-empty. There is a modest gramophone sitting on the floor next to him. It spins soundlessly. His eyes are closed.

WALTHER

I still hope the Germans win. (Beat.) Yes. (Eyes open. Beat.) I do.

Curt looks up.

CURT

(deadened)

Right.

Funny, yeah?

WALTHER

He takes a drink.

CURT
(as in "seems quite natural")
I don't think so.

Walther pours another.

WALTHER

No, it's funny. Every time I listen to it, I still hope the Germans win.

Walther goes to the gramophone and lifts the pin.

WALTHER (cont'd)

I know they lose, but still ... I hope they win.

He sets the pin down. A scratchy excited voice of a teenage boy comes on. The voice speaks in German. It is in the crowd at an athletic event. It is providing a running play-by-play of the event. The voice becomes more and more excited and then suddenly ... calamity! Groans in the crowd. The team has lost.

The recording suddenly cuts out. The record spins like it does at the top of the scene.

WALTHER (cont'd)

Germany takes Silver in Field Hockey.

He takes a drink.

CURT

Silver is excellent.

WALTHER

Excellent. (Beat.) Can you believe he did it?

CURT

Clever.

WALTHER

Took the recorder straight out of my office.

CURT

Yes. Right.

WALTHER

I used it to record contract negotiations. He took it all the way to the playing field, a group of his friends, all good boys, ran wires to a field radio battery. Twelve minutes of recording time per battery.

CURT

Such fidelity, as well.

WALTHER

Right?! He was always very interested. Always paid attention when the engineers gave their presentations. Can you imagine my ... how I felt, when I came home to find this record in my study? We always loved field hockey. Erwin Keller was one of our neighbors. It's true. He played horseshoes with us in the summertime. We said we would go to the match together, but I was away ... somewhere ... I don't even remember and ... I come home to find this ...

He takes the record out of the machine and holds it up to the light. He runs his fingers across the grooves.

He puts the record in a sleeve. He reads a note that is written on the sleeve.

He holds it up and shows it to Curt.

Beat.

CURT

They don't permit me glasses.

WALTHER

It says, "You were there with me."

Pause.

Walther rubs his eyes. He puts the sleeve in his briefcase.

WALTHER (cont'd)

Then boom, right away, he turns seventeen. Ha-ha. An age ago.

He looks at his watch. He takes another drink.

WALTHER (cont'd)

You have children, Herzstark?

CURT

No.

Walther toasts and drinks.

WALTHER

Thank God.

Curt goes back to work.

WALTHER (cont'd)

I'm sorry. I shouldn't have ...

CURT

No. No. You're right. The lucky of us were captured as bachelors.

Walther pours another drink, holds it out to Curt.

WALTHER

Hey, come on. When's the last time you had a drink?

CURT

No, thank you, Herr Walther.

WALTHER

What's the harm? Who's to know?

CURT

We've had barely a crumb here for the last month. I think cognac would burn my insides apart. Can't risk it. (Beat.) *Would you bring some bread next time?*

WALTHER

Bread? Bread is something my wife actually keeps track of these days. Frau Walther counts the loaves as though they were gold bars. She'd count my cognac if she knew it existed, but my hiding space, you must excuse me, is something I'm not even going to share with a prisoner three hundred meters below! Ha-ha! Prost!

He toasts Curt, taps his glass on the table and sips his drink.

WALTHER (cont'd)

It's not so bad to be down here, you know? You should be grateful that they moved your factory down here.

CURT

(deadened)

I'm grateful.

WALTHER

Things are not good up top. They bomb us every night. And bread! ... bread.

(MORE)

WALTHER (cont'd)

(Beat.) You know the Americans bombed the zoo in Stuttgart and not even the tigers were safe from the people. People are hungry. No. Things are not so good up top.

CURT

We don't hear much.

WALTHER

No. Not down here.

He takes another sip.

WALTHER (cont'd)

People come to my office. Last week. Friends from the industry. They sit. They drink my coffee and they say, "How has it come to this? Things were good for a time. The briefest of times. We stood up again. How have we come to this?" Smart men, Herzstark. Wealthy men. Business men. I tell you, they'll never do my accounting. You're a math man, you tell me, if three rats are having at a bit of rotten cheese, only enough for two, I mean survival, only enough for two to survive, what's the fastest way to share that cheese? Make three mouths two. You'd better believe that two of those rats will be at the throat of the third, and if they are real rats, they'll eat their brother down to the bones. Rats don't care.

He toasts and pours a drink. Drinks.
Pours another.

WALTHER (cont'd)

In the early days, one of my workers won the lottery to take a holiday on a cruise liner. Oh, la-la! Everyone rejoiced. He came back fat and healthy. Watched movies on the ship. A great big ship. Oh ho, isn't that their genius? Bury us in our furs and tax the grave robbers. When my neighbor's son got married, the Nazis loaned him one thousand Reichmarks for furniture. Discount furniture at the depot. You'd think they would ask where the discount came from, but no one asks until the end. Too busy packing for holiday or haggling for chandeliers. Then your cheese is gone and there you are, just two rats, just two mouths. What's to be done? Sharpen your teeth, find new cheese, or do you never sleep again in the presence of your brother? You're the math man. You tell me. Can you really do addition by subtraction?

CURT

I haven't really thought about it?

WALTHER

No.

Walther goes and checks in on what Curt is up to.

WALTHER (cont'd)

You do your math with a mechanical mind.

He takes one of Curt's devices and holds it up. Plays with it.

WALTHER (cont'd)

Addition is addition. Subtraction is subtraction. How's it all going?

CURT

Very fine, Herr Walther.

WALTHER

Koch has been asking me about it. He says he can't understand why you can't do subtraction when you can do addition and multiplication. He says subtraction should be more simple than multiplication. He wants to know if I can help you.

CURT

What do you say?

WALTHER

I say, "I don't know a thing about it. I make guns in my factory. What do I know about adding machines?" But, if you say it's so, it's so.

CURT

Thank you.

WALTHER

Was it a mistake to tell them about it? Is it a burden, or is it keeping you alive?

CURT

It's a help.

WALTHER

I'm glad.

He puts the device back down on Curt's desk.

WALTHER (cont'd)

Don't play with fire, Curt. Koch wants his machine. You give it to him.

CURT

Yes, Herr Walther.

WALTHER

Your father called me "Fritz" before the war.

CURT

I will too when the war is over.

Walther looks at his watch.

WALTHER

Okay, let's go. They're switching shifts now.

Walther puts another record on the gramophone. He plays Mozart's Requiem. He turns the volume up high. He removes a hidden compartment. He pulls out some headphones and some parts for radios. He puts them in a bag.

WALTHER (cont'd)

These are for Kogon. Radio parts. I can't get them to him anymore. He's watched too carefully up top.

CURT

Okay.

He and Curt dig at the mine's clay floor. They use makeshift shovels. Curt grabs Walther's shovel.

CURT (cont'd)

You're getting too dirty. Most of the clay in the mines is too hard to shovel, so if they see soft clay on you, they'll suspect. Then out come the dogs and the mine sweepers.

Walther begins to take his coat off.

CURT (cont'd)

No. Just make sure there is no one coming.

WALTHER

Right.

Walther goes and acts as look-out. He dusts himself off. Curt rolls up his pant legs and his shirt sleeves and digs with efficiency for such a thin man. There are numbers tattooed into his forearms. He finds what he's looking for. He opens the lid to a box and drops the bag into the box.

WALTHER (cont'd)

Those can't get wet.

CURT

Such is the world.

Curt begins to shovel the clay back in.

WALTHER

If they get wet they won't work.

CURT

We've done our best. Nothing else to be done. Get a message to Kogon, he needs to get to these sooner than later. That's all.

Curt moves his desk over the hiding place.

WALTHER

You're still-

Walther sees something.

WALTHER (cont'd)

Shit! Quickly! Quickly now! The Commandant is coming!

Quickly, Curt unrolls his sleeves and his pants. He disassembles the shovel.

WALTHER (cont'd)

Come on. Quickly.

Curt takes a ledger out and begins to make notations in it. He gestures to Walther who rushes over to him. Curt hands what looks like a receipt to Walther.

Walther positions himself behind Curt as if looking over his work.

Enter Karl Otto Koch (40's) immaculately dressed SS officer and Finn Frey (14), an angel-faced boy. Finn wears a ragged-looking shabby military uniform. Just as they /enter ...

WALTHER (cont'd)

(to Curt, overlapping Koch and Finn's entrance)

/Please, keep your ledgers clean! Last month, fingerprints on the orders delayed us for weeks!

Koch raises his arm in the Nazi Salute.

KOCH

Heil Hitler!

Walther looks up, straightens up and returns the salute, though not as militaristically.

Curt stands, head bowed.

WALTHER

Heil Hitler.

KOCH

Is there a problem?

WALTHER

No. None now that I'm filling the orders myself. Last month the messenger smudged the ledger and we got the wrong parts. Delayed us for two weeks.

KOCH

Is that true, Herzstark?

WALTHER

It was some boy on a bicycle. Hitlerjugend. I saw his hands were covered in dirt. So, now I come myself.

KOCH

Unacceptable.

WALTHER

It's a small sacrifice.

KOCH

Sabotage begins with dirty fingers. Herzstark, you'll make sure the messenger has clean hands when he fills the orders.

CURT

Yes, Commandant.

KOCH

(to Walther)

No need to come down here yourself.

WALTHER

I'll give it a week and then we'll see. Hello, Karl.

Walther and Koch shake hands. They are friends, it seems.

KOCH

Hello.

WALTHER

No more delays.

KOCH

You're right.

WALTHER

It's dirty fingers and delays that will cost us the war.

KOCH

Naturally. Naturally. My apologies.

WALTHER

(as in "It's okay.")

One's eyes can't be everywhere.

KOCH

I see he's fixed your gramophone.

Walther turns the volume down.

WALTHER

Yes. Another reason to come. His hands have always been clever.

(regarding Finn)

Who's your friend?

KOCH

Ah! Herr Fritz Walther, General Manager of the Walther Gun Factory, may I introduce you to Finn Frey-

Finn leaps to attention and gives the Nazi Salute with gusto.

FINN

Heil Hitler!

WALTHER

(to Koch, bemused)

Heil Hitler.

KOCH

Fourteen year old Hitlerjugend and this boy's already seen action.

WALTHER

Remarkable.

KOCH

Decorated.

WALTHER

Pleased to meet you.

KOCH

(to Finn)

I want you to take a good look at these two men.

FINN

Yes, Standartenführer.

KOCH

We see it all around us, but rarely will you ever see it in such clarity. These two men are the difference between the Germans and the Jews. Do you see it?

FINN

Yes, Standartenführer.

KOCH

(not convinced)

All this time, what have you learned about the Jews?

FINN

Sir?

KOCH

Well, I'm sure you've learned that Jews are good-for-nothing vermin to be exterminated, no?

FINN

Yes.

KOCH

In fact, what do you feel just standing in the room with this Jew?

FINN

(matter-of-fact)

It is uncomfortable.

KOCH

Right. It is uncomfortable. And that's precisely the feeling that I want you to learn to understand. I want you to master it, for you are too intelligent to be uncomfortable around a Jew.

WALTHER

(chuckling)

Koch von Nietzsche.

KOCH

Really. (to Walther) And you know this too, Fritz. (to Finn) Fear of the Jews is for frothing at the mouth, rally faggots and housewives. How can any intelligent person say that a Jew is good for nothing?

Walther guffaws.

KOCH (cont'd)

(insistent)

Jews can be very useful! Can a machine talk to you?

(MORE)

KOCH (cont'd)

Can you give more than the most simple of orders to a horse? No! The right kind of Jew is very useful, yes. One can avoid discomfort if one looks at the truth and understands that a Jew is a tool, and must be used properly in the hands of a craftsman. (to Finn) You saw the factory when we came down. It must take some kind intelligence to run it, no? This Jew is clever, an intelligence-slave. He runs our factory and we are about to start making pistol parts. Herr Walther and I trust him to make parts. But we need Herr Walther to design the guns and assemble the pieces together. You've shot a Walther, right?

FINN

Yes, Standartenführer.

KOCH

You know what a marvel it is. The Walther family designed that pistol. A Jew could not have made it. That's the difference.

WALTHER

Enough already. The boy's a soldier-

KOCH

Not just a soldier. Watch this. Finn, tell me, what is three hundred ... twenty-five times ... ninety-six.

FINN

Thirty one thousand, two hundred.

KOCH

Herzstark?

Curt has done the calculation in his head as well.

CURT

Yes. That is right, Commandant.

KOCH

(to Finn)

What is ... seven hundred, seventy-seven, divided by thirty one?

Beat.

FINN

Twenty-five, point oh six four five one six one two nine oh three two two-

KOCH

Fine. That's enough. Was he right?

Curt has begun to do the calculation by hand.

A moment.

CURT

Yes, Commandant.

WALTHER

Where did you find him?

KOCH

He was on the Eastern Front making calculations for the artillery. A sergeant sent him home. "Too valuable to be blown to pieces." His mother died in last months bombing and his father fell in Danzig, God bless them, good friends of mine, so, now he's here with us.

WALTHER

(to Finn)

What is seventy-five thousands, six hundred twenty-six, point six times eleven thousand, three hundred ninety-three, point eight?

A moment.

FINN

Eight hundred, sixty one million, six hundred, seventy-four thousand, five hundred ... fifty-five, point oh eight.

Curt does the calculation.

Pause.

KOCH

Is he right?

Curt looks up.

Beat.

CURT

Yes, Commandant. It's right.

Walther claps his hands.

WALTHER

Extraordinary.

KOCH

(to Finn)

Herr Walther had a son on the Russian Front as well.

WALTHER

Yes. Major Edgar Walther.

FINN

I did not know him, Sir.

WALTHER

He fell in Bryansk.

KOCH

God bless him.

FINN

I was in Dnepropetrovsk.

WALTHER

No. You would not have met him, then. (Beat.)
Dnepropetrovsk. Such a long way from home-

KOCH

And you are here now, my boy, and I have a job for you. I need you to finish what the Jew here can't finish. Do you think you can do this? For the Führer?

FINN

Anything, Sir.

KOCH

So, you see all the devices around here?

FINN

Yes, Sir.

KOCH

This clever Jew here has made a calculator.

He picks up one of the devices.

KOCH (cont'd)

One that you can hold in your hands. Doesn't need electricity. Amazing, no?

FINN

Yes, Sir.

KOCH

That magic that's in your head, we could hold it in our hands. Wouldn't that be a wonderful thing. Every German could have it. You know, I told this Jew that if he could make this calculator, we would give it as a gift to the Führer, and the Führer might even Aryanize him. He has some Aryan blood, you know? You would think this would be incentive enough, but he still can't get the device to do subtraction. The simplest thing.

(MORE)

KOCH (cont'd)

Then I realized, of course, the Jew can't do it by himself. He needs us to complete the project for him. You think you can help us, Finn?

FINN

Yes, Sir.

KOCH

Good. That's what I thought. You'll stay here with the Jew and fix his device for him. (to Curt) You'll sleep here until the device is finished.

FINN

Sir?

KOCH

Yes. You'll sleep here, with the Jew and complete the device. I'll come for a report once a week.

FINN

Yes, Sir.

KOCH

Don't be afraid of him. Remember he is just your tool.

FINN

Yes, Sir.

KOCH

Very well. Herr Walther, are you finished here?

Walther begins to pack up his gramophone and cognac.

WALTHER

Yes. There's nothing more to say.

KOCH

Good. I've a new shipment of Belgian cigarettes that just came in. They are in my car. Would you like some for you wife?

WALTHER

I think she would like that, yes.

KOCH

Yes. I'd like to discuss a proposition with you as well.

WALTHER

Naturally.

They begin to exit together.

KOCH

(to Finn)

You are not his nursemaid. He is your tool.

Finn nods.

WALTHER

You keep your Walther clean, Finn?

FINN

Yes, Sir?

WALTHER

Oiled?

FINN

Yes, Sir.

WALTHER

You'll maintain your tool here a little better, won't you?
It looks like he can use some bread.

Beat.

FINN

Yes, Sir.

Beat.

Koch begins to laugh. He takes a pad out of his pocket and writes something down on a piece of paper. He signs it, tears it out of the pad and hands it to Finn.

KOCH

Give this to Frau Strauss in the canteen.

He takes the paper out of Finn's hand. He folds the paper up and puts it in Finn's pocket.

KOCH (cont'd)

Let's keep it safe now, yeah?

Finn nods.

KOCH (cont'd)

Good. (turning to Walther) Fritz?

WALTHER

Yes. (to Finn) It was truly a pleasure to meet you.

Koch gives the Nazi salute.

Heil Hitler.

KOCH

Finn returns the salute.

Heil Hitler!

FINN

Koch and Walther exit.

Finn turns and looks at Curt.

FINN (cont'd)

Jew. Let me see your paper.

CURT

My paper?

Finn approaches Curt.

FINN

What is seventy-five thousands six hundred twenty-six point six times eleven thousand three hundred ninety-three point eight?

CURT
(reading from the paper)

"Eight hundred sixty one million six hundred seventy four thousand, five hundred ... fifty-"

Finn snatches the paper from Curt's hands. He looks down at the piece of paper.

Beat.

CURT (cont'd)

I knew you must be correct, Sir. I knew my calculation must have been wrong.

Finn tears the paper to shreds. He goes to Curt's drawings and picks them up. He sits down on one of the bunks and lies down with them.

FINN

Wipe your hands before you go back to work. Your fingers are covered with clay.

End of Scene.

SCENE II: CURT'S OFFICE

Curt is working at his desk. He is writing something down. There is a disassembled calculator before him. Painstakingly, he begins to assemble it. He looks at his paper and makes an adjustment to one of the calculators.

He scratches at a particular spot on the wall. It's loose. There is a small package wrapped in wax paper inside. He unfurls the package to reveal a small bit of machinery. A small metal circle. He makes an adjustment and puts the bit into the calculator he is assembling. He finishes putting the calculator together.

Curt finishes putting the machine together. He inputs some numbers with switches that are on the side of the machine. He cranks the machine twice. Looks at the result at the top of the device.

He writes something down on a piece of paper. He tries a new set of numbers. He cranks fifteen times. The answer is to his liking. He starts to laugh, but he laughs silently. He celebrates in complete silence.

The door creaks opens.

Curt stands.

Bruno Clemens enters cautiously. He is a terribly thin prisoner. Very tall. There is a green triangle on his shirt sleeve.

Beat.

CURT
Yes? Can I help you? Are you lost?

BRUNO
I'm looking for a can of sardines.

Beat.

CURT
(cautiously)
What did you say?

BRUNO
"I'm looking for a can of sardines."

CURT
For whom?

BRUNO
One of the guards above.

Bruno takes a piece of paper out of his pocket.

BRUNO (cont'd)
I'm to take this to Frau Strauss.

Bruno points to the signature.

BRUNO (cont'd)
From one of the guards in Buchenwald. Ehrich Ross.

Curt takes the paper and examines it.

BRUNO (cont'd)
You see? He has a taste for sardines.

CURT
Sardines are hard to come by.

BRUNO
I know. But, we can't control the things we want.

Beat.

Curt moves his desk aside quickly.

CURT
What's your name?

Curt rolls up his sleeves. He puts together the shovel.

BRUNO
Clemens.

CURT
Herzstark.

BRUNO
Yeah.

CURT

You were supposed to pick these up the day after Walther left them. It's been three weeks already!

BRUNO

Took us three weeks to sabotage the plumbing. They aren't sending so many workers down here anymore. I barely got on to the clean up crew.

CURT

If these radio parts are rusted through, you'll be sorry you did. Keep your eye out!

Bruno goes to the door. Curt digs.

BRUNO

Hurry, Comrade.

CURT

You don't need to tell /me.

BRUNO

(overlapping "me")

/The work crew returns for the camp very soon!

CURT

Just keep your eye out, yeah?! What's been going on upstairs? I've heard nothing. Even Koch has gone missing. He said he was going to come here once a week. Three weeks and nothing!

BRUNO

The Americans and their bombs are getting closer. Koch is very busy these days, I'm sure. Just be glad he's out of your hair.

CURT

You could have sent me a message through Walther!

BRUNO

Walther's not to be trusted.

CURT

What?!

BRUNO

That's what Kogon say.

CURT

(disdainfully)

Kogon!

BRUNO

Yes, Walther's gone off the deep end.

Curt stops digging.

CURT

Walther?

BRUNO

(impatient)

Another reason for the delay. You'll understand about it soon enough! Quickly, Comrade, before the work crew leaves!

CURT

Got it!

Curt removes the bag of radio parts from the ground. He looks in the bag.

CURT (cont'd)

Only a bit of rust.

Bruno takes the bag.

BRUNO

Good.

He hands Curt a piece of paper.

BRUNO (cont'd)

Sign this.

CURT

(examining the paper closely)

What ... (a realization) more transfers?

BRUNO

We need you to vouch for these men.

Beat.

CURT

(annoyed)

Roth's a teacher.

BRUNO

Yeah. Roth's a school teacher.

CURT

Posner's a lawyer. I can't-

BRUNO

He's not going to be anything much longer if we don't get him out of Buchenwald. None of them. Don't bother to read it. What does it matter? Just sign it.

Curt signs the paper.

BRUNO (cont'd)

Thank you.

CURT

If they can't work the machines, they'll be shot. I'll be shot.

Curt starts to fill in his hole.

BRUNO

I'm sure you will teach them well then.

CURT

Yeah.

BRUNO

Alright.

Bruno nods and exits.

Beat.

Quickly, Curt tidies up. Makes sure the ground looks undisturbed.

He dusts off his hands and wipes them.

He disassembles his calculator. He takes out the magic piece that makes it work. He wraps it up carefully. He hides it in the wall and patches up the hole with clay. He puts one hand over the patch. He puts his head down and breathes.

The door opens. Bruno re-enters.

CURT

What? What did you forget?

Bruno sits down very gingerly. His back aches.

BRUNO

My ham sandwich and my apple strudel. Have you seen them? I'm sure they're around here somewhere. God, this hurts.

CURT

What do you want?

BRUNO

Bath would be nice. I shoveled shit for ten hours today.

Bruno rubs his hands on the floor, caking them in clay. He stretches his back.

BRUNO (cont'd)
You'd think they were feeding you five course meals judging by how much you all shit down here.

Bruno closes his eyes and leans back again the clay wall.

CURT
You're not going back with the work crew?

BRUNO
(exhausted)
Work crew's gone already. I got to them just in time.

CURT
Then, what are you doing here?

Bruno opens his eyes. He stands up. He takes a piece of paper out of his pocket.

BRUNO
According to you, I'm down here because I'm an expert machinist. You going to teach me to work some machines?

He puts the paper back in his pocket. Bruno extends his hand.

BRUNO (cont'd)
Bruno Clemens. Kogon ordered me here.

Curt does not shake his hand.

Bruno laughs.

BRUNO (cont'd)
No, I wouldn't shake it today either.

He picks up another handful of clay and rubs it into his hands.

BRUNO (cont'd)
Seriously, you have anything to eat down here?

No response.

BRUNO (cont'd)
No matter, we'll eat soon enough.

He gets up and looks around.

BRUNO (cont'd)

Warm down here, isn't it? Closer to the guts of the world. I thought the guts of the world would be a cold place, but now I know it's warm. If I ever see my sons again, I will tell them that the guts of the world is a warm place. It's winter up top, you know? You'd never know down here. No-no-no. This is where you sleep, yeah?

CURT

Yeah.

BRUNO

You and the little ...

A chuckle. He does a half-hearted Hitler salute.

BRUNO (cont'd)

My God.

CURT

Kogon's told me nothing about this.

BRUNO

Relax, Comrade. It's been arranged.

CURT

Arranged?

BRUNO

Come on. I knew the passwords. The whole sequence. "Can of sardines." "Ehrich Ross." Like a spy novel. Ha-ha. (clandestine and serious) "*We can't control the things we want,*" Comrade. See? I'm friendly.

CURT

Why does Kogon want you here?

BRUNO

We're going to keep you safe, Herzstark, don't you worry. Did you think we were going to leave you alone down here with one of them?

CURT

He's a child.

BRUNO

(a guffaw)

Tsk-tsk. Those Hitlerjugend are scariest of all.

CURT

This one still cries at night. I don't need you here.

BRUNO

Oh, I know I'm not much to look at now, but I'm a strong man, Herzstark. The muscles are gone, but the bones remember. I'll be strong when you need it. Now, I told you to relax. It's been arranged. Your friend Walther cleared the path.

CURT

You just told me that Walther can't be trusted!

BRUNO

He can be useful. But, given the circumstances, better he doesn't know everything.

CURT

What's happened?

BRUNO

The drinking mostly. Grief. Either way, he's losing his mind. He stumbled into the Belgian bunkhouse after a night of drinking brandy with the Commandant. Koch passed out and Walther comes in and announces that he wants to strap dynamite to his chest and walk into the Commandant's quarters.

CURT

Don't be ridiculous.

BRUNO

He had a drawing of the contraption. Made a vest for himself and everything. Wore it under his coat. Drunken mess. They had to slap him to get him to wake up and leave.

CURT

You should have let him do it.

BRUNO

I thought so too. But, Kogon says, "What if he lost the nerve?" Right? The fuse ran along his body. Had to burn him before it went off. No. He'd lose his nerve. He'd be captured and tortured and it would ruin everything. We told him that if he wanted to blow something up, he would have to help us blow up the crematoriums.

CURT

And he was happy with that?

BRUNO

Seems good enough for now. But, he's not to be trusted, Herzstark. Yeah?

CURT

Yeah.

BRUNO

Aside from being a drunk, he's one of them. Helps us now because the S.S. shot his son, but, before that, he was standing in line, hands out-stretched just like the rest of them. Going to lose his hands if they lump him with Koch. Word is that the commandant is on the outs. Anyway, Walther's not to be trusted.

CURT

Yeah. The Antifascists are to be trusted. Understood, Comrade.

BRUNO

Yeah. (Beat.) The boy. He's helping you with your machine, yeah?

CURT

Look, I don't know what arrangement you've made, but I don't need you down here. I'm fine-

BRUNO

Does it work?

CURT

What?

BRUNO

You know you can never finish it. You know this, don't you? I'm here to remind you.

CURT

That's what this is about. /The calculator.

BRUNO

/They're are not going to Aryanize you. You know this, /Herzstark.

CURT

/That's why you're here.

BRUNO

And a lot of good being Aryan will be. The end is months away, but that's still enough time for them to put a bullet in your head once they take /it from you.

CURT

/It's my calculator! If making it work is the thing that keeps me alive for one more minute, that is my right.

BRUNO

How many men is that calculator keeping alive down here because it allows you to run the factory?! It's not just you anymore!

CURT

It is! All we have is ourselves!

BRUNO

You know that's not true. You have to listen to me. Please-

CURT

No. This is not a discussion.

BRUNO

You've been given a gift-

CURT

And I need to survive, just like every other man here! I'm like everyone else!

BRUNO

(venom)

Every other man?! Which of us is allowed to receive sugar in the post, sent by his mother?!

Beat.

BRUNO (cont'd)

I'm sorry.

Curt sits down at his table.

CURT

I'll tell the boy that I don't want you here and he'll bring the guard.

BRUNO

Wait. Wait-wait, now wait-

CURT

I can't trust you.

BRUNO

I'm ... I'm sorry.

CURT

If I can't trust Walther, I can't trust you. Same reason.

Curt goes back to his work.

SILENCE.

BRUNO

They're going to kill me, Herzstark. I can't make it anymore. I don't know why I spoke to you like that, but, you ... please ... (Beat.) We came to Buchenwald together, do you remember? On the train from Pankraz.

(MORE)

BRUNO (cont'd)

You must not recognize me. I recognize you. I was very strong then. I was ...

He stands straighter for a moment.

BRUNO (cont'd)

We had both been beaten at Pankraz and I looked at you and I thought, "You will make it longer than this man, Bruno. You are stronger ... skinny engineer." But ... but, now, look at me. There is a guard, a little short man, and he singles me out for beating every day, from the first day! For some reason he's singled me out to torment. At first, I was not afraid of him, but ... now when he kicks me, he kicks on bone. Nothing heals. He kicks me and ... I have ... I have, so many ... nothing heals. (Beat.) I won't make trouble. I won't. Please, don't send me back.

SILENCE.

BRUNO (cont'd)

Please.

SILENCE.

BRUNO (cont'd)

Herr Herzstark-

The door opens.

Finn bursts in. His arms are laden with a satchel full of parcels. He carries a bucket that's full of water. He doesn't see Bruno.

There is three weeks of growth on top of Finn's head. He wears a pair of khaki shorts, a button down shirt and combat boots. He is sweaty. One of his eyes has been blackened.

FINN

Smells like shit down here today, huh, Curt?

CURT

(quietly)

Yeah, Finn.

FINN

Gross. Look what I got up top.

Finn begins to lay all the parcels out on the ground. He looks up at Curt.

FINN (cont'd)

Hey, you want to help me?

He sees Bruno. He leaps up and is about to salute when he realizes that Bruno is a Jew.

FINN (cont'd)

(to Curt)

Who is this?

CURT

(looking down)

He's ... a ...

Finn walks up to the men. They are taller than him.

FINN

(to Curt)

Hey, I'm talking to you. (to Bruno) Who are you?

BRUNO

Six Eight Seven Seven One. Bruno Clemens, Sir. At your service.

FINN

What are you doing here?

BRUNO

I'm a gift from Herr Walther. There is a letter with the parcels. (pointing) There, see it?

Finn takes the envelope and opens it. He reads.

BRUNO (cont'd)

Those parcels, they are from Herr Walther are they not? He sent me to cook for you, Sir.

FINN

(reading from the letter)

"... one must feed inspiration, Finn. Good food will nourish your mind to think!" (to Curt) Did you know anything about this?

Curt shakes his head.

BRUNO

Herr Walther knew me when I was a chef at the hotel in Bremen. I made him special meals when he was in Bremen for business. Is that real butter?

FINN

So, what, you're to stay here with me and Curt and cook for us?

BRUNO

My orders are to cook for you, Sir. (to Curt) When I'm not working in the factory. (to Finn) But, I will cook for anyone you say.

FINN

(to Curt)

Our own private cook. How do you like that?

Curt shrugs.

FINN (cont'd)

What do you think? Should we let him stay?

Curt shrugs.

FINN (cont'd)

(to Bruno)

Can you make potato pancakes?

BRUNO

One of my specialities, Sir. I see apples there. I can make latkes and apple sauce. Is that real butter?

FINN

Latkes?

BRUNO

Potato pancakes. Excuse me.

FINN

(to Curt)

I say he stays.

Beat.

CURT

Then he stays.

Curt sits at his desk.

FINN

Good. (to Bruno) But, we're doing important work here. I don't want you to get underfoot.

BRUNO

No, Sir.

FINN

Okay, take care of the parcels then. I want a detailed inventory from you.

He takes paper and a pencil from Curt's desk.

FINN (cont'd)

Here. Write everything down. We're going to ration what we have. We're still at war, yeah?

Bruno takes the paper and pencil.

BRUNO

Of course, Sir. Right away.

FINN

Okay. Get on with it then.

BRUNO

Yes, Sir. Ah, before I touch the food, may I wash my hands? I was clearing the sewer-lines today.

FINN

Yeah, you can use the bucket.

BRUNO

Thank you. Thank you.

Bruno goes and washes his hands. Finn finds a flake of soap near his bunk and tosses it to Bruno.

BRUNO (cont'd)

Thank you.

Bruno washes vigorously.

Finn begins to do calisthenics.

FINN

(to Curt)

Hey, that's a bit of luck, isn't it?

CURT

I would say so, yeah.

FINN

Herr Walther's pretty cool, yeah?

CURT

I think so.

Bruno goes and begins to open the parcels and inventory the items. Starving, he is amazed and in quiet ecstasy over what he uncovers.

FINN

(to Bruno)

And when you're done, find a way to keep it from the mice down here.

BRUNO

Yes, Sir.

FINN

Maybe hang it from the ceiling.

BRUNO

Mm. Good idea.

FINN

(to Curt)

I made my first invention today.

CURT

Really?

FINN

You know how you told me that if I wanted to be an inventor, I'd have to first learn by inventing from the small things up, yeah?

CURT

Yeah.

FINN

So I started small. I decided to work on a basic invention. I made a mousetrap.

CURT

A mousetrap!

FINN

We need one down here.

CURT

We do.

FINN

Want to see it?

CURT

Yeah, of course.

Finn stops his calisthenics. He takes Curt by the hand and pulls him away from the desk.

FINN

Okay, come on.

Finn sets up his mousetrap. He puts the bucket in front of a chair.

FINN (cont'd)

(to Curt)

I've been looking to find the wire, but there's nothing down here that's a heavy enough gauge. It either bends or it snaps. I couldn't figure it out. Twisting it to make it spring? No. My hands are too dumb, but then I thought, well, what if that mousetrap is too smart?

CURT

(smiling)

Too smart.

FINN

Just like you said, "When you can't think smart, think dumb!"

CURT

Exactly.

FINN

So I thought that there are lots of ways to kill a mouse. The wire traps break their necks, but why make so many moving parts to break the neck. Why not just drown it?

CURT

Okay.

Finn taps the bucket.

FINN

So, at first I thought that I would put some bait on a bucket, like smeared inside the bucket.

CURT

Right.

FINN

Just out of reach. And when the mouse is reaching out to get the bait, it might lose its balance and just fall in, no?

CURT

Yes, that's very good. Much more simple. But-

FINN

But, too inconsistent. I know.

CURT

Exactly. The trap is simple, but, chance is still complicated.

FINN

Right. Not much better than just waiting for a mouse to fall in a bucket on its own. So how can we make chance less complicated?

CURT

I don't know.

FINN

We are going to get the mouse over to the middle of the bucket before it falls in.

Finn goes over to his satchel and takes out a long narrow piece of cardboard.

Bruno, finished with his inventory watches Finn.

FINN (cont'd)

I got this from a trash heap. So look.

He puts the piece of cardboard on the chair. Half of it hangs over the bucket.

FINN (cont'd)

We put our bait on the end of it, right?

CURT

Alright.

Finn takes an object out of his pocket. It looks like rolled up twine. It's about the size and the shape of a mouse. It hangs from a piece of string.

FINN

So, here I am, Herr Maus, yeah?

CURT

Okay.

FINN

I see this delicious piece of cheese and I think, "That is delicious."

He begins to move his mouse across the cardboard, bit by bit.

FINN (cont'd)

"Okay, okay. So far, so good. So-far-so-good."

Closer and closer to the end.

FINN (cont'd)

Okay, and then I get to my cheese and then ...

He lets go of the string. The mouse tips over the cardboard and falls into the bucket.

FINN (cont'd)

Drowned by morning.

Beat.

CURT

(a conclusion)

I think it could really work.

FINN

You think so?

CURT

I think so. We should try it tonight.

FINN

(to Bruno)

Hey, do we have any cheese?

Bruno looks through the parcels.

BRUNO

Yes, we do.

FINN

Excellent.

BRUNO

But, mice don't like cheese.

FINN

What?! That's ridiculous.

BRUNO

Really, Sir. Mice don't like cheese.

FINN

How do you know?

BRUNO

I worked in a kitchen. We never set the traps with cheese.

FINN
What did you set them with?

BRUNO
Grains, crackers.

Finn laughs.

FINN
Stingy Jews. Give it some cheese before it drowns for
Christsakes! (to Curt) What do you say?

CURT
Yeah, we'll try cheese tonight.

Curt sorts through Finn's pile from the
trash heap.

CURT (cont'd)
And maybe we try a cardboard tube. Mice live in tunnels.

FINN
Yes, yes. That's a capital plan. Agreed.

CURT
Yeah.

FINN
Good.

CURT
I think I'll go back to work now. Is that alright?

FINN
Oh, yeah! Yeah-yeah-yeah.

Curt goes back to his desk. Finn takes
off his sweaty clothes and hangs them
up.

FINN (cont'd)
(to Bruno)
You can take these to the laundry tomorrow.

BRUNO
Yes, Sir.

Finn tidies up.

FINN
I'll show you where. Curt.

CURT
Mm?

FINN

You know, I've been thinking about why we are having so much trouble with subtractions?

CURT

Mm-hm.

FINN

It's because subtraction isn't real, isn't it?

Curt stops his work and looks up at Finn, who is busy tidying.

CURT

It's as real as addition.

FINN

I don't know. Okay. Well, it made me think about my little brother, yeah? I remember, when we were little, he had all sorts of trouble with subtraction also.

He puts a tarp down.

FINN (cont'd)

My mother would try to teach him, and he was so stupid, and one day I asked him, "Why don't you understand subtraction, Andrew?" and he says that he doesn't understand because it isn't real. "What do you mean?" I say. I show him four oranges and I take two and put them behind my back. "If I have four oranges and I take two away, how many are left?" He says, "Four. There are two behind your back." Annoying, right? So then I cut up two of the oranges and we eat them and after we are done and I throw the peels away, I ask him, "How many oranges are there on the table?" and he said, "two," but, I could tell he wasn't happy about it. And you know what? I wasn't happy about it either. I knew there were orange peels in the dust bin. Really, we had, maybe two point oh five oranges left, right, and maybe even little bit of orange juice on the table, or in the air? So, it made me realize that to teach him subtraction, I needed to teach him to trick himself, just like we all trick ourselves when it comes to mathematics. I made the situation smaller. I told him that math only happened on our kitchen table and when something was subtracted, he was to imagine that a magician came and made it disappear into nothingness and only what was on our table mattered.

CURT

Did that work?

Finn laughs.

FINN

No, he was still terrible in math. But, at least he didn't get left back a grade.

Curt laughs too.

FINN (cont'd)

But, it's making me think, you know? Subtraction needs an extra step. We need to destroy something or change it so completely that it no longer exists. If we can't do that, we have to trick ourselves into believing we have this power. So, when we do subtraction, in our minds, we put the world on a small kitchen table and trick ourselves into believing that things are gone when they are no longer on the table.

CURT

Or that there's a table at all.

FINN

Right! See? People you can trick. It's easy. But, how do you trick a machine? That's the big problem. That's what we have to contend with.

CURT

Interesting. What's your solution?

FINN

I don't quite know. I'm still working on a mousetrap!

Finn sits down on a chair in the middle of the tarp.

FINN (cont'd)

(to Curt)

My hair's too long. I need you to cut it. I hitched a ride over to the camp today and an officer got a hold of me and walloped me for it. Said I couldn't see the commandant with my hair as it is.

Finn picks up a large math textbook.

CURT

Alright.

Curt gets a pair of scissors.

FINN

I've forgotten I'm a soldier. I saw his wife today, though. Frau Koch. She rode a white pony. I saw her riding in the meadow.

Finn sits down and begins to thumb through the book.

CURT

Mm.

FINN

Can you imagine if the Commandant saw me like this. He'd be ashamed of me.

BRUNO

Are you hungry now, Sir?

FINN

No I was just out doing my exercises. Hang the food from the ceiling. Let's worry about it for breakfast. It's nearly time for bed.

BRUNO

Of course, Sir. Of course.

Bruno begins to hang the food from the ceiling.

Curt begins to comb Finn's hair.

FINN

(wincing in pain)

Ow!

Finn slaps Curt across the face. It knocks Curt back.

FINN (cont'd)

Clod!

CURT

(looking down)

I'm sorry.

Finn grabs his head.

FINN

No. No. It's okay. Shrapnel. Fuck!

CURT

I didn't touch-

FINN

No. Fuck! It's fine. Just cut around it.

CURT

Okay.

FINN

No. You can cut right over it. I'm ready now.

Pause.

Come on now!
FINN (cont'd)

Finn sits back down.

Curt approaches him cautiously. He resumes cutting, very carefully.

SILENCE.

BRUNO
Your brother sounds like a very interesting boy.

FINN
What? Oh. My brother? Mm. He is ...

Beat. He laughs.

FINN (cont'd)
He's somewhere off the kitchen table.

Laughs again.

Bruno nods and resumes his work.

FINN (cont'd)
What was your name again?

Beat.

BRUNO
Clemens. Bruno Clemens, Sir. I'm sorry. I shouldn't-

FINN
(testing the name on his tongue)
Clemens.

BRUNO
Yes, Sir.

FINN
You hungry? You look starving.

Beat.

BRUNO
I can wait, Sir.

FINN
No. No. You look starving. Have something to eat.

I-

BRUNO

FINN
(dangerous)
Have something to eat! Shit. Eat. Whatever you want.

Finn stands up.

FINN (cont'd)
I'm fucking exhausted.

He checks his watch.

FINN (cont'd)
What time is it anyway? Oh! Close to lights out.

Finn takes the chair and moves it to the back of the room. He folds up the tarp.

FINN (cont'd)
(to Curt)
We can get back to this tomorrow, yeah? Yeah.

He puts the tarp away. He brushes hair off of himself and climbs into his bunk.

FINN (cont'd)
Lights out in five minutes, Curt. I don't want to hear from the guards that you're dragging your feet in the factory anymore.

CURT
Yes, Sir.

FINN
Clemens.

BRUNO
Yes, Sir.

FINN
Eat what you want, but I want you to keep a careful record.

BRUNO
Of course, Sir.

FINN
You'll give me a full report in the morning.

Finn lies down on the bed. He covers his eyes. He pulls the blanket over his head.

SILENCE.

Bruno takes a dried sausage and bites it. It's so good he almost hyper-ventilates. He takes the rest of it and puts it in his pocket.

He looks at Finn and sees that he is still under the covers. He takes the sausage out of his pocket. He offers it to Curt.

Curt takes it. He goes back to his desk. He cuts the end off of it with the scissors. He devours it.

LIGHT FADEOUT.

End of Scene.

SCENE III: CURT'S OFFICE

The set is BLACK.

FINN

(screaming in the DARK)

ANDREW! NO! NO! DON'T GO BACK! DON'T! ANDREW! THEY'LL BITE YOU! THEY'LL EAT YOU ALIVE!

A match is lit in the DARKNESS. Bruno lights a lantern. LIGHT UP on the room.

Curt is sitting in Finn's bunk. His arms are wrapped around Finn. Finn sits in bed and shakes. His eyes are wide open.

CURT

(gently)

Shhh. Shhh.

Finn thrashes.

CURT (cont'd)

Alright. It's alright, Finn.

FINN

THEY'RE BITING ME!

CURT

Alright, Finn. Alright.

Finn continues to thrash. Curt smooths his hair.

BRUNO

What's wrong? (to Finn) Are you alright, Sir?

Finn howls.

CURT

He can't hear you.

BRUNO

What's wrong with him?

FINN

ANDREW! THEY'RE EVERYWHERE!

CURT

Some kind of nightmare. Help me with his hands! Hold them down!

Bruno hesitates.

CURT (cont'd)

He won't remember it! Help me!

Bruno goes and holds down Finn's hands.

BRUNO

He's not awake? He looks awake.

CURT

No. It happens every night. See the bruises on his hands? He'll be fine.

Finn begins to settle down. He breathes in deeply.

CURT (cont'd)

Yes, yes, Finn. That's right.

SILENCE.

FINN

(to Bruno)

Who are you?

Me? BRUNO

Are you Dr. Cohen? FINN

What? BRUNO

FINN
My mother told me that if I were lost, I should go to Dr. Cohen's. That's why I've come here. 7877 Cranach Strasse, right? Next to the baker who sells the lumpy bread. (Beat.) Dr. Cohen was there when I was born. He was there when my mother was born. Are you Dr. Cohen?

Beat.

Yes, he's Dr. Cohen. CURT

Bruno nods.

Yes. BRUNO

FINN
(relaxing)
Dr. Cohen?

Yes. Hello. BRUNO

FINN
(to Bruno)
I'm Finn Frey, Sir. Where have you been? I've been waiting. It was cold.

Beat.

Just stepped out for a moment. That's all. BRUNO

I'm lost. FINN

Are you? BRUNO

FINN
Have you called my mother?

Beat. Bruno looks at Curt, who nods.

BRUNO
Yes, she's coming.

FINN
You called my mother.

BRUNO
I called your mother.

FINN
Tell her that I'm here. Tell her that I'm waiting.

Finn closes his eyes. He snorts a sob.

CURT
And tired.

FINN
(self-piteous)
Yes. And tired. (Beat.) And tired.

Finn falls asleep. His body goes limp.
Gently, Curt lays Finn down.

SILENCE.

The men stand. A deep breath.

CURT
That was good.

BRUNO
Yeah.

Beat.

CURT
Go back to bed.

Curt goes to his table. He turns the
lantern down low, and begins to work on
something at his drafting table.

Bruno sits on the floor near to Curt.

CURT (cont'd)
Really. Go to bed. I have to teach you the machines
tomorrow.

BRUNO
Can't sleep. First night in a new place.
(laughing quietly)
I keep thinking there should be somebody's armpit next to my
ear.

CURT
Or a splinter in your ass.

Quiet laughter.

BRUNO
Yeah. Exactly. Warm down here. It's so cold up top.

Beat.

CURT
I remember you.

BRUNO
You do.

CURT
You were tall and you could breathe in the boxcar.

Beat.

BRUNO
Yeah. That's right.

CURT
I was very jealous. Who else do you see ... up top?

BRUNO
Oh ... uh ... the boy from that young couple. You know, that couple.

CURT
Yes.

BRUNO
He's still alive.

CURT
Polish.

BRUNO
Yeah. Yeah, that's the one.

CURT
He's still alive. The girl?

Bruno shrugs. Curt nods.

BRUNO
That's it. (Beat.) You have kids? You're pretty good with kids.

CURT
No. No children.

BRUNO

My wife always said that I was a disaster with the children. No patience. I used to believe that you could just tell a child to do something and they should do it. "Go to bed, before I slap your face." Right? Doesn't work that way.

CURT

No.

BRUNO

No. I forgot what it was like when I was a child. That's what she said.

CURT

Maybe.

BRUNO

I have two boys. Saul and Joseph.

He writes their names in the clay on the ground, absent-mindedly.

BRUNO (cont'd)

My wife's name is Masha.

He draws a circle around the names and then wipes it all away.

BRUNO (cont'd)

You know how I got this green triangle? I used to sell hash in the alley behind the kitchen. You believe it? That's how I got it. God, my wife went through a lot to be with me. (Beat.) Thank you for letting me stay, Herr Herzstark.

SILENCE.

BRUNO (cont'd)

(to no one in particular)

Thank you.

SILENCE.

BRUNO (cont'd)

(to Curt)

Look at all that food hanging there? This is a dream, isn't it? All of this, everything, I'm seeing. This must be a dream. I'm hundreds of meters below, in an abandoned salt mine. It's warm. I'm here with an inventor and a ... a ... boy and there is food dangling from the ceiling. And I am hungry. But, if I eat that food, I think I might die. I'm so frightened of it. That's dream logic, isn't it?

CURT

Dream logic.

Beat.

BRUNO
(a whisper)
Does it work?

CURT
What?

BRUNO
The calculator. Does it work?

Beat.

CURT
(a whisper)
Yeah.

BRUNO
You found the solution.

CURT
Yeah. It works.

BRUNO
Since when?

CURT
A long time now.

BRUNO
Really.

CURT
Yeah, Bruno. It works.

BRUNO
(to himself)
So, there it is. It works. (Beat.) The miracle. (Beat.)
By the hands of a Jew. (Beat.) Congratulations, Herzstark.

CURT
Thank you.

BRUNO
Congratulations. How does it work?

The sound of a muffled BOOM somewhere
way off in the distance. Clay falls
from the ceiling. The room shakes,
slightly.

CURT
Americans?

Probably. BRUNO

What have you heard? CURT

They're getting closer. BRUNO

That's what the radio says? CURT

Bruno points up.

That's what their faces says. (Beat.) And the radio. BRUNO

You really think the war will be over soon? CURT

It's already over. The only ones who don't know it are the ghosts. They'll try to kill us all before the Americans find us. Don't you think? BRUNO

Yeah. We'll see. CURT

A barrage of bombs. A good deal of dust falls from the ceiling.

God help us. BRUNO

God help us. CURT

SILENCE.

What are you two doing? FINN

Finn. You're up. CURT
(full voice)

Why are you awake?! Is something wrong?! FINN

I'm making some drawings. CURT

Couldn't sleep, Sir. BRUNO

I can't sleep. FINN

Oh? BRUNO

It's the bugs, right? FINN
It's all the bugs?

Bruno and Curt look at each other.

Bugs, Sir? BRUNO

And the mice. I heard you talking about them. FINN

About mice? BRUNO

Yes. You said, the mice were eating through everything. And you said, they carry disease. They're eating through all our food and they carry disease. FINN

Finn- CURT

You said it! FINN

I think you were having a nightmare. CURT

No! Something is wrong here. Something is wrong. FINN

What? CURT

I don't know. Clemens! Turn on the lights! You'll see. You'll see! FINN

Bruno goes to turn on the light.

They're not working, Sir. BRUNO

Finn leaps out of bed and looks around the room.

There's been a bombing up top. CURT

BRUNO

Yes, Sir, we heard it. The power's down.

Finn lights some other lanterns.

FINN

You'll see. You'll see.

CURT

I think it was a nightmare.

FINN

It's not a nightmare!

The room is lit by the soft glow of the lanterns. Finn examines the food that is hung from the ceiling.

FINN (cont'd)

Nothing.

CURT

No.

Finn sits down on the ground.

FINN

Nothing. What-? (Beat.) I wasn't dreaming.

CURT

No one remembers their dreams.

FINN

But you remember that you had a dream. Nothing. (to himself) I wasn't dreaming.

CURT

It's alright. We're down in the guts of a mine, bombs falling on top of our heads. These things crawl into your mind.

Beat.

FINN

(steeling himself)

Yes, that must be it. You two scurrying about here in the dark. That must be it. You two ... yes. That's right. Curt, this is completely unacceptable for the two of you to be up and about, doing whatever-

BRUNO

Hey, look. The trap is sprung.

What? FINN

Your trap. BRUNO

They all look at the bucket, and indeed, a cardboard tube is lying next to it.

They rush over to the bucket.

Look at that! BRUNO (cont'd)

It worked! FINN

Congratulations, Sir! BRUNO

Curt, do you see it?! FINN

Yes, Finn. CURT

Finn goes and gets the lantern. He brings it back to the bucket. He shines the lantern into the bucket.

It's a mouse alright. BRUNO

That must be what woke me up. FINN

Exactly. BRUNO

You see it, Curt? FINN

Yes, yes, it's wonderful. CURT

It's not very big, is it? FINN

It's wet. BRUNO

It's small. CURT

FINN

How long do you think it's been swimming in there.

BRUNO

It looks pretty tired.

FINN

That's an awful way to die, isn't it? Swim and swim until you drown.

Beat.

CURT

Yes. Yes it is.

FINN

Might as well stop swimming when you first fall in.

CURT

Animals don't think like that.

BRUNO

We should kill it.

FINN

How?

BRUNO

We'll just grab it and break its neck.

Bruno begins to roll up his sleeves.

FINN

No. I want Curt to do it.

CURT

Me?

FINN

Yes. It's my first invention. I want you to kill it, Curt.

Beat.

CURT

Okay. (Beat.) Of course.

Curt rolls up his sleeves.

BRUNO

Careful, they bite.

CURT

This one is so small.

Ready? FINN

Okay. CURT

Curt rolls up his sleeves. He plunges his hand into the bucket and breaks the mouse's neck. He leaves the body in the bucket.

Finn giggles. He looks over into the bucket.

Gross. FINN

Curt wipes his hands on his pants.

Did it bite you? FINN (cont'd)

No. It was too tired. CURT

I made my first invention, Curt. FINN

You should be very proud. CURT

It worked. I can't believe it worked! FINN

It was well-designed. CURT

I don't like the way it died. FINN

Oh? CURT

I don't like that it had to swim and swim and swim like that. FINN

He takes the bucket and empties it into a corner of the room.

What-? BRUNO

FINN

Why do we need the water at all? The mice will fall in, and we'll just break all their necks in the morning. Good idea?

BRUNO

Yeah. Yeah, that's a good idea.

FINN begins to set up a lot of different traps around the bucket.

FINN

(to Bruno)

Who says mice don't like cheese?

He takes the cheese and baits the traps.

BRUNO

I was wrong, Sir.

FINN

Mice like everything.

BRUNO

No need to trouble yourself, Sir. I saw the way you do it. You should go back to bed.

FINN

Alright.

He hands the cheese to Bruno and climbs into his bunk.

Bruno puts the cheese in his pocket and baits the traps with bread.

FINN (cont'd)

It's amazing how quickly things can change, isn't it?

Curt begins to put out the lanterns in the room.

BRUNO

Oh?

FINN

One minute I feel horrible. The next minute I'm flying. What do you think about that?

BRUNO

I think enjoy the flying part.

FINN

Yes. Yes, I will. (Beat.) You know, I think it's because that mouse is gone. That's why I feel better. When I knew there were mice in here, it just spoiled everything. Even the air was harder to breathe. Now that the mouse is gone ... well, we've added something better, something sweeter in the air, don't you think? Curt, don't you think?

CURT

I think you can't do addition by subtraction.

FINN

No. I suppose you can't.

Curt goes back to his desk. He works.

Bruno finishes baiting the traps and goes back to his bunk.

SILENCE.

FINN (cont'd)

Curt ...

CURT

Just a few more minutes, please.

FINN

(quietly)

You can do subtraction by addition, can't you?

CURT

What?

Finn sits up.

FINN

You can do subtraction by addition.

CURT

Finn-

Finn jumps out of bed and picks up his book. He thumbs through it.

FINN

I read about this yesterday. We can turn a subtraction problem into an addition problem. With the nine's complement. That's the solution, isn't it?

He puts the book down before Curt.

FINN (cont'd)

That's the solution for the calculator.

CURT

I ...

FINN

(fumbling through the book)

That's the solution. Yes! That's the solution! That's the solution! I found the solution! We can make the calculator work by turning a subtraction problem into an addition problem! We'll add the nines complements, then add one. Tell me, am I right?

Beat.

BRUNO

Curt?

CURT

Finn ...

FINN

Tell me, am I right?!

All the lights come on in the room,
blinding Finn and the men.

End of Scene.

End of ACT ONE.