

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.

Hermann PISTER (40's) Commandant of the Buchenwald Concentration Camp. Powerful. Well fed.

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

Fritz ENGELHARDT (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 Engelhardt (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.

ENGELHARDT

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

Curt looks up.

CURT

(deaden)

Right.

Funny, yeah?

ENGELHARDT

He takes a drink.

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

Engelhardt pours another.

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

Engelhardt goes to the gramophone and lifts the pin.

ENGELHARDT (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.

ENGELHARDT (cont'd)
Germany takes Silver in Field Hockey.

He takes a drink.

CURT
Silver is excellent.

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

CURT
Clever.

ENGELHARDT
Took the recorder straight out of my office.

CURT
Yes. Right.

ENGELHARDT

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.

ENGELHARDT

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 holds up the sleeve of the record. Something is written on it.

Beat.

CURT

They don't permit me glasses.

ENGELHARDT

It says, "You were there with me."

Pause.

Engelhardt rubs his eyes.

ENGELHARDT (cont'd)

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

He looks at his watch. He takes another drink.

ENGELHARDT (cont'd)

You have children, Herzstark?

CURT

No.

Engelhardt toasts and drinks.

ENGELHARDT

Thank God.

Curt goes back to work.

ENGELHARDT (cont'd)

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

CURT

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

Engelhardt pours another drink, holds it out to Curt.

ENGELHARDT

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

CURT

No, thank you, Herr Engelhardt.

ENGELHARDT

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?*

ENGELHARDT

Bread? Bread is something my wife actually keeps track of these days. Frau Engelhardt 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.

ENGELHARDT (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

(deaden)

I'm grateful.

ENGELHARDT

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

ENGELHARDT

No. Not down here.

He takes another sip.

ENGELHARDT (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 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.

ENGELHARDT (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 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.

ENGELHARDT

No.

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

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

ENGELHARDT (cont'd)

You do your math with a mechanical mind. Addition is addition. Subtraction is subtraction. How's it all going?

CURT

Very fine, Herr Engelhardt.

ENGELHARDT

Commandant Pister has been asking me about your calculator. He says he can't understand why (you can't get) it can't do subtraction when it 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?

ENGELHARDT

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.

ENGELHARDT

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

CURT

It's a help.

ENGELHARDT

I'm glad.

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

ENGELHARDT (cont'd)

Don't play with fire, Curt. The Commandant wants his machine. You're going to have to give him one.

CURT

Yes, Herr Engelhardt.

ENGELHARDT

Your father called me "Fritz" before the war.

CURT

I will too when the war is over.

Engelhardt looks at his watch.

ENGELHARDT

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

He removes a hidden compartment from the gramophone. He pulls out some headphones and some parts for radios. He puts them in a bag.

ENGELHARDT (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.

Curt begins to dig at the mine's floor. Engelhardt tried to help.

CURT (cont'd)

Don't get 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. Make sure no one is coming.

ENGELHARDT

Right.

Engelhardt goes and acts as look-out. He looks around the corner with a mirror that he finds in the room.

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.

ENGELHARDT (cont'd)

Those can't get wet.

CURT

Such is the world.

Curt begins to shovel the clay back in.

ENGELHARDT

If they get wet they won't work.

CURT

Tell Kogon to send someone to get them as soon as possible.

Curt moves his desk over the hiding place.

Engelhardt sees something.

ENGELHARDT

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

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

ENGELHARDT (cont'd)

Come on. Quickly.

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

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

Enter Herman Pister (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 ...

ENGELHARDT (cont'd)

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

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

Pister raises his arm in the Nazi Salute.

PISTER

(natural, easy)

Heil Hitler.

Engelhardt looks up.

Curt stands, head bowed.

ENGELHARDT

Heil.

PISTER

Is there a problem?

ENGELHARDT

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.

PISTER

Is that true, Herzstark?

ENGELHARDT

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

PISTER

Unacceptable.

ENGELHARDT

It's a small sacrifice.

PISTER

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

CURT

Yes, Commandant.

PISTER

(to Engelhardt)

No need to come down here yourself.

ENGELHARDT

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

Engelhardt and Pister shake hands.
They are friends, it seems.

PISTER

Hello.

ENGELHARDT

No more delays.

PISTER

You're right.

ENGELHARDT

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

PISTER

Naturally. Naturally. My apologies.

ENGELHARDT

(as in "It's okay.")

One's eyes can't be everywhere.

PISTER

I see he's fixed your gramophone.

Engelhardt turns the volume down.

ENGELHARDT

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

(regarding Finn)

Who's your friend?

PISTER

Ah! Herr Fritz Engelhardt, 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!

ENGELHARDT

(to Pister, bemused)

Heil Hitler.

PISTER

(to Finn)

We are making the armaments down here that Herr Engelhardt is distributing up top. The Americans think they've bombed us out, but they don't know that we're re-arming down here in the mines. They'll catch a surprise, won't they?

FINN

Yes, Standartenführer.

PISTER

(referring to Engelhardt)

This man is a hero.

ENGELHARDT

Don't talk nonsense.

PISTER

My Finn here's a hero as well. Fourteen years old and this boy's already seen action.

ENGELHARDT

Remarkable.

PISTER

Decorated.

ENGELHARDT

(to Finn)

Pleased to meet you.

PISTER

Yes, we're all heros down below.

He points to Curt.

PISTER (cont'd)

Finn, do you know what this is?

FINN

Is it a Jew, Sir?

PISTER

Yes it is. This is our intelligence-slave.

FINN

Intelligence-Slave?

PISTER

He's very clever. He oversees our factory down here.

FINN

(confused)

Sir?

PISTER

You're surprised?

FINN

(hesitation)

No, Sir.

PISTER

You know, I think the greatest dis-service all those frothing-at-the-mouth hausfraus and rally faggots have done for this country is making you boys afraid of the Jews. You think a butcher is afraid of his knives? No. You see here a useful tool that must be used properly in the hands of a craftsman.

ENGELHARDT

Hermann Von Nietzsche. Enough already. The boy's a soldier-

PISTER

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

FINN

Thirty one thousand, two hundred.

PISTER

Herzstark?

Curt has done the calculation in his head as well.

CURT

Yes. That is right, Commandant.

PISTER

(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-

PISTER

Fine. That's enough. Was he right?

Curt has begun to do the calculation by hand.

A moment.

CURT

Yes, Commandant.

ENGELHARDT

Where did you find him?

PISTER

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 month's bombing and his father fell in Danzig, God bless them, good friends of mine, so, now he's here with us.

ENGELHARDT

(to Finn)

What is seventy-five thousand, 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. It takes him quite a bit of time.

Is he right?

PISTER

Curt looks up.

Beat.

CURT

Yes, Commandant. It's right.

Engelhardt claps his hands.

ENGELHARDT

Extraordinary.

PISTER

(to Finn)

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

ENGELHARDT

Yes. Sturmbannführer Edgar Engelhardt.

FINN

I did not know him, Sir.

ENGELHARDT

He fell in Bryansk.

PISTER

God bless him.

FINN

I was in Dnepropetrovsk.

ENGELHARDT

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

PISTER

And you are here now, my boy, and I have a job for you.

FINN

Anything, Sir.

PISTER

So, you see this device here?

FINN

Yes, Sir.

PISTER

Our intelligence-slave has made a calculator.

He takes the device from Curt.

PISTER (cont'd)

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

FINN

Yes, Sir.

PISTER

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 him that if he could make this calculator, we would give it as a gift to the Führer, and the Führer might even Aryanize him. His mother was Aryan, you know? You would think this would be incentive enough, but he still can't get the device to do subtraction. The simplest thing. Then I realized, of course, he can't do it by himself. He needs us to complete the project for him.

Pister sets the device in front of Curt.

PISTER (cont'd)

You think you can help us, Finn?

FINN

Yes, Sir.

PISTER

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

FINN

(a little afraid)

Sir?

PISTER

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

FINN

Yes, Sir.

PISTER

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

FINN

Yes, Sir.

PISTER

Very well. Herr Engelhardt, are you finished here?

Engelhardt begins to pack up his gramophone and cognac.

ENGELHARDT

Yes. There's nothing more to say.

PISTER

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?

ENGELHARDT

I think she would like that, yes.

PISTER

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

ENGELHARDT

Naturally.

They begin to exit together.

PISTER

(to Finn)

You are not his nursemaid. He is your tool.

Finn nods.

ENGELHARDT

Did you shoot a Walther on the Eastern Front?

FINN

Yes, Sir.

ENGELHARDT

I'm sure you kept it clean. Oiled.

FINN

Yes, Sir.

ENGELHARDT

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.

Pister 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.

PISTER

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.

PISTER (cont'd)

Let's keep it safe now, yeah?

Finn nods.

PISTER (cont'd)

Good. (turning to Engelhardt) Fritz?

ENGELHARDT

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

Pister gives the Nazi salute.

PISTER

(to Finn, paternal)

Heil Hitler.

Pister and Engelhardt exit.

Beat.

Finn returns the salute.

FINN

(calling off)

Heil Hitler!

Finn turns and looks at Curt.

FINN (cont'd)

Let me see your answer.

CURT

My answer?

Finn approaches Curt.

FINN

Let me see your answer.

Curt holds the calculator out to Finn.
Finn takes it and looks at it the
answer.

Pause.

CURT

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

FINN

Yes.

Curt puts his head down.

FINN (cont'd)

You will show me all the work you have done on this device.

Finn begins to fiddle with the device.

FINN (cont'd)

How does it work?

CURT

It ... uhm ...

The calculator falls apart in Finn's hands.

There are a thousand metal pieces in front of him that he has no clue as how to re-assemble.

He stands on the verge of tears.

FINN

You are an inventor?

CURT

I was an engineer, Sir.

Beat.

FINN

(pointing at the pieces.)

Put it back together.

Finn sits down on the bunk. Curt begins to put the pieces back together.

CURT

(volunteering)

I will show you how to be an inventor.

FINN

What?

Curt puts his head down.

FINN (cont'd)

What did you say?

CURT

I ... I could teach you, Sir.

FINN

How?

CURT

When I was a boy, my father taught me how to make a mousetrap.

End of Scene.

SCENE II: CURT'S OFFICE

Curt enters from the factory. He wears a cap and a leather apron. His hands are covered in grease. He's exhausted. He looks around the room. He's alone.

He wrings his hands. He shivers slightly.

Beat.

Curt's hands begin to shake uncontrollably. He begins to hyperventilate. His body is wracked with silent sobbing.

He goes to his desk and locates a particular calculator part. He puts it in one of the calculators. He puts the calculator 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 laughs silently and breathes a sigh of relief.

CURT

(a whisper)

Subtraction.

Bruno Clemens enters cautiously. He is a terribly thin prisoner. Very tall.

There is a green triangle on his shirt sleeve.

Beat.

CURT (cont'd)

(composed)

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 takes a piece of paper out of his pocket.

Bruno points to the signature.

BRUNO

From one of the guards in Buchenwald. I'm to take this to the commissary.

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.

Clemens. BRUNO

Herzstark. CURT

Yeah. BRUNO

CURT
You were supposed to pick these up the day after Engelhardt 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 ruined, you'll be sorry you did. Keep your eye out!

Bruno goes to the door. Curt digs.

Hurry, Comrade. BRUNO

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 the commandant 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. Pister 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 Engelhardt!

BRUNO
Engelhardt's not to be trusted.

CURT
What?!

BRUNO

That's what Kogon says.

CURT

(disdainfully)

Kogon! Engelhardt risked his life to get you these radio parts.

BRUNO

Yes, and he's gone off the deep end.

Curt stops digging.

CURT

Engelhardt?

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

Our quotas have doubled. They just shot two men for falling behind.

Curt holds up the transfer order.

CURT (cont'd)

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 Linzer tart. 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 against 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. It's winter up top, you know? You'd never know down here. No-no-no. This is where you sleep, yeah? You and the little ...

A chuckle. He does a half-hearted Hilter 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. "Can of sardines." 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 Engelhardt cleared the path.

CURT

You just told me that Engelhardt 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. Pister passed out and Engelhardt comes in and announces that he wants to strap dynamite to his chest and walk into the commandant's quarters.

CURT

Don't be insane.

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.

CURT

I guess.

BRUNO

Hey, don't be mistaken. He's one of them. Helps us now because the S.S. shot his son, but, before that, he was just like the rest of them. He can't be trusted.

CURT

(ironic)

The anti-fascists are to be trusted. Understood, Comrade.

BRUNO

Yeah. (Beat.) The boy. He's helping you with your machine, yeah? Our eyes down here tell us that you've gotten rather ... chummy.

CURT

I'm to spit in his face? He sends a telex to the commandant every day.

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 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 Pister to put a bullet in your head once he takes /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 Engelhardt, 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. You must not recognize me. I recognize you. I was very strong then. I was ...

He stands straighter for a moment.

BRUNO (cont'd)
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.) Please, don't send me back. I won't make trouble. I won't.

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
Look what I got up top today, Curt? Smells like shit down here today, huh?

CURT
(quietly)
Yeah, Finn.

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

FINN
Gross. 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 Engelhardt, of the Walther Gun Factory. There is a letter with the parcels. (pointing) There, see it?

Finn takes the envelope and opens it. He reads.

BRUNO (cont'd)
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 Engelhardt 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 Engelhardt'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)

Did the commandant come today?

Curt shakes his head.

FINN (cont'd)

I hurried back. I was afraid that I missed him.

CURT

No, he didn't come.

FINN

How long has it been?

CURT

Three weeks, I think.

Pause.

FINN

Yeah. (Beat.) I made a new mousetrap today. A really good one.

FINN (cont'd)

Want to see it?

CURT

Yeah, of course.

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

FINN

(to Curt)

I'm not working with wire anymore. Twisting it into springs? No. My hands are too dumb, but then I thought, well, what if the 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 have too many moving parts. 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 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
Christ's sake! (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 good idea. 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. "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. 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 to begin with.

FINN

Right! See? People you can trick. It's easy. But, how do you trick a machine? That's the big problem.

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 go in and 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.

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. 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
FUCK! 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.

FINN (cont'd)
Come on!

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.

BRUNO

I-

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! Lights-outs in five minutes,
Curt.

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.

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

FINN (cont'd)

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 hyperventilates. He offers some to Curt.

Curt takes it. Breaks it in half and shares it with Bruno. They devour it.

LIGHTS FADEOUT.

End of Scene.

SCENE III: CURT'S OFFICE

The set is BLACK. FINN HOWLS IN THE DARKNESS.

FINN

No, no. That's not the way ... no ... that's not the way ... that's not the way to Cranach Strasse. No, no, no, NO! ... I CAN'T FIT! THEY'LL SMELL ME THAT WAY! NO!

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

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

CURT

(gently)
Shhh. Shhh.

Finn thrashes.

CURT (cont'd)

Alright. It's alright, Finn.

Finn starts to swat at his body as though there are things crawling on him. He's short of breath. He pants. His heart beats terribly quickly.

FINN

THEY SMELLED ME! THIS IS NOT THE WAY! FALL BACK POSITION A.
68 DEGREES! /THEY SMELLED ME!

CURT

/Alright. Alright.

Finn continues to thrash.

BRUNO

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

FINN

YOU CAN BURN THEM! YOU CAN BURN THEM!

CURT

He can't hear you!

BRUNO

What's wrong with him?!

FINN

THEY SMELLED ME TOO CLOSE TO THE GROUND!

CURT

Some kind of nightmare. Help me with his legs! He'll hurt himself if we don't hold them down!

Bruno hesitates.

CURT (cont'd)

He won't remember it! Help me!

Bruno goes and holds down Finn's hands.

FINN
IT'S BLACK! THE BLACK ONE!

Curt tries to put his hands over Finn's mouth.

FINN (cont'd)
BLACK!

BRUNO
He's not awake? He looks awake!

CURT
No. It happens every night!

FINN
I CAN'T CRAWL IN THERE, ANDREW! I-

Curt's hands clamp down over Finn's mouth. He holds Finn close to his chest. The boy screams.

CURT
Shh-shh. Shhhhh. There-there. It's alright.

Finn fights hard. His legs thrash.

BRUNO
Shit!

CURT
It's alright, Finn. It's alright. Shh-shh. Shhhhh.

Finn begins to settle down.

CURT (cont'd)
Shh-shh. Shhhh. Shh-shh. Shhh. I know, Finn. I know. I know. I know. I know. Yes. Yes. It's true. Yes. It's true. It's all true, Finn. Shh-shh. Shhhh.

Finn falls back asleep.

Beat.

CURT (cont'd)
(to Finn)
It's all true.

Curt let's go.

CURT (cont'd)
(to Bruno)
It's alright now.

Bruno lets go.

BRUNO

What the fuck?

Curt shrugs. He puts Finn down.

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

He does this every night?

CURT

Yeah.

BRUNO

This bad?

CURT

Worse. He used to pull his hair out.

BRUNO

Whoa.

CURT

Bite his own hands.

BRUNO

Huh.

Beat.

CURT

He's getting better.

BRUNO

Yeah.

Bruno sits on the floor near to Curt.

BRUNO (cont'd)

I have a cousin who sleepwalks. Eats soap.

CURT

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.

Beat.

CURT

(softening)

I used to hate it when my feet had to touch someone else's feet.

Quiet laughter.

BRUNO

Yeah. Exactly.

CURT

Don't know why.

BRUNO

Exactly. (Beat.) 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 says.

CURT

Maybe. (Beat.) The guards told me they would shoot me if I couldn't keep him quiet.

BRUNO

Huh. (Beat.) 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. 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 a 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)

It works, doesn't it?

CURT

What?

BRUNO

The calculator. You know how to make it do subtraction, don't you?

Beat.

CURT
(a whisper)

Yeah.

BRUNO

Since when?

CURT

Since ... 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?

BRUNO
Probably.

CURT
What have you heard?

BRUNO
They're getting closer.

CURT
That's what the radio says?

Bruno points up.

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

CURT
You really think the war will be over soon?

BRUNO
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?

CURT
Yeah. (Beat.) We'll see.

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

BRUNO
God help us.

CURT
God help us.

SILENCE.

FINN
What are you two doing?

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

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

CURT
I'm making some drawings.

BRUNO
Couldn't sleep, Sir.

FINN
I can't sleep. (beat, as in "I just remembered that you're here.") Bruno Clemens.

BRUNO
Sir.

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

Bruno and Curt look at each other.

BRUNO
Bugs, Sir?

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

BRUNO
About mice?

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

CURT
Finn-

FINN
You said it!

CURT
I think you were having a nightmare.

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

CURT
What?

FINN

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

Bruno goes to turn on the light.

BRUNO

They're not working, Sir.

Finn leaps out of bed and looks around
the room.

CURT

There's been a bombing up top.

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.

FINN

What?

BRUNO

Your trap.

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

They rush over to the bucket.

BRUNO (cont'd)

Look at that!

FINN

It worked!

BRUNO

Congratulations, Sir!

FINN

Curt, do you see it?!

CURT

Yes, Finn.

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

BRUNO

It's a mouse alright.

FINN

That must be what woke me up.

BRUNO
Exactly.

FINN
You see it, Curt?

CURT
Yes, yes, it's wonderful.

FINN
It's not very big, is it?

BRUNO
It's wet.

CURT
It's small.

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.

FINN
Ready?

CURT
Okay.

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.

FINN
Gross.

Curt wipes his hands on his pants.

FINN (cont'd)
Did it bite you?

CURT
No. It was too tired.

FINN
I made my first invention, Curt.

CURT
You should be very proud.

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

CURT
It was well-designed.

FINN

I don't like the way it died.

CURT

Oh?

FINN

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

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

FINN (cont'd)

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.

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 cleaner 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

You can do subtraction by addition. Imagine there's an ocean and a river that flows into it ... and the world turns upside-down ... and the ocean flows into the river? A flood. What happens when the world turns back over and the ocean rushes back to its order. Some things won't rush back.

Beat.

CURT

No. No they won't.

FINN

What's left is what's been subtracted. Subtraction by addition.

Finn sits up.

FINN (cont'd)

The nines complement.

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

FINN (cont'd)

I read about this yesterday. We can turn a subtraction problem into an addition problem. With the nine's complement.

He puts the book down before Curt.

FINN (cont'd)

That's the solution for the calculator. The calculator already does addition. So turn an subtraction problem into an addition problem.

CURT

I ...

FINN

(fumbling through the book)

That's the solution. Yes! 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 complement, pour back the ocean, 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.

ACT TWO

SCENE I: CURT'S OFFICE

At rise: The tarp has been laid out again. A chair sits in the middle of it. There are tufts of blonde hair around it.

Curt stands with a pair of scissors. Bruno stands with a broom and a dustpan.

BRUNO

Subtraction by addition? Is he right?

Beat.

Curt goes and takes the broom from Bruno's hand.

CURT

Come now, Bruno.

BRUNO

Has he found the solution?

CURT

Hair is messy, isn't it?

BRUNO

Curt, you listen to me! The boy's solution. Will it work?

Beat.

CURT

Yeah, it will work.

BRUNO

Shit.

CURT

The nines complement. Yes.

Bruno picks up the book and begins to thumb through it.

Curt begins to sweep up the hair.

BRUNO

What's the nines complement?

CURT

It's a trick.

BRUNO

A trick?!

CURT

It's a way to fool the machine. The nines complement is what you would add to a number to make nine. You can do a subtraction by adding a nines complement.

BRUNO

How?

Curt resumes sweeping.

CURT

So let's say you want to subtract ... one hundred sixty-eight from from ... four hundred twenty-four.

BRUNO

Alright.

Bruno scratches the numbers into the ground with his index finger.

CURT

The answer's two hundred fifty-six, right?

Beat.

BRUNO

Yeah.

Bruno writes "256" and circles it.

CURT

So, let's try the nine's complement. What do you add to eight to get nine?

BRUNO

One?

CURT

Yeah.

Bruno scratches "1" into the ground.

CURT (cont'd)

Six?

BRUNO

Three.

Bruno scratches "3."

One? CURT

Eight. BRUNO

Bruno scratches "8."

CURT
So, eight hundred thirty one is the nines complement of one hundred sixty-eight. Add that to four hundred and twenty-four.

Bruno does the math. "1255."

One-two-five-five. BRUNO

Erase the "one." CURT

Why? BRUNO

It's part of the trick. CURT

Bruno erases the one.

CURT (cont'd)
Add one to two fifty-five.

Bruno does the math. "256."

Two hundred fifty-six. That's the answer. BRUNO

Subtraction by addition. CURT

And that works every time? BRUNO

Every time. CURT

Why? BRUNO

They have their order. CURT

What?! BRUNO

CURT

The numbers. They will rush to their order like upturned oceans.

Bruno grabs Curt by the shirt.

BRUNO

No riddles, Curt! How can they use this to make the calculator?

Beat.

Bruno removes his hands and throws them in the air in disgust.

Curt goes to the wall and pokes at it. It crumbles and he takes the wax paper out of the hole. He unwraps it and shows a round thin piece of metal to Bruno.

CURT

You make a special plate, so when you want it to subtract, it adds the nine's complement. "One" becomes "eight," and so on.

Bruno takes the plate and looks at it.

Curt takes the plate and assembles it into one of his calculators. He hands the calculator to Bruno.

CURT (cont'd)

Try it.

Bruno takes it.

BRUNO

One hundred minus fifty?

CURT

Anything.

Curt flips a switch on the calculator.

CURT (cont'd)

Push down the numbers from the side.

Bruno slides switches on the side of the machine.

CURT (cont'd)

Crank the top. Once.

Bruno complies. He looks at the result.

Beat.

BRUNO

Fifty.

CURT

Fifty.

Curt flips another switch on the machine.

CURT (cont'd)

Turn the crank six times.

Bruno complies.

BRUNO

Three hundred.

CURT

Multiplication.

Curt flips another switch.

CURT (cont'd)

Four turns.

Bruno cranks four times.

BRUNO

Seventy-five. (Beat.) Division.

Bruno looks down at the machine. Cautiously he hands it back to Curt.

He goes to the scissors and breaks them into two pieces with the shovel.

BRUNO (cont'd)

You hide that.

CURT

What are you doing?

BRUNO

You bury it in the clay.

Bruno begins to exit. Curt grabs him.

CURT

Bruno, what are you doing?

BRUNO
What do you think?

CURT
I don't know.

BRUNO
I told you we were going to keep you safe.

CURT
Bruno, don't you harm that boy!

BRUNO
Your Nazi pet?! Fuck you!

Bruno spits on the ground.

CURT
Bruno-

BRUNO
They can't get it.

CURT
Bruno-

BRUNO
We have to protect you. Kogon says ...

He shakes his head, pushes the emotion down and begins to head off again. Curt stands in front of him. Opens his arms.

CURT
They'll kill you!

BRUNO
Yeah! Maybe!

CURT
Certainly!

BRUNO
Step aside.

CURT
No! I can't let you!

BRUNO
Step away!

Bruno rushes forward. Curt pushes him back.

No! CURT

You fucking traitor! BRUNO

Bruno rushes forward. Curt pushes him back.

BRUNO (cont'd)
If he gives them the solution, they'll kill you!

Not a good enough reason-! CURT

The whole factory-! BRUNO

The factory will go on! CURT

Sixty men! BRUNO

The factory will go on! They need it! They need it, Bruno!
Bruno! What do you think you're doing? CURT

Kogon gave me orders!! BRUNO

Bruno forcefully grabs Curt and flings him to the back of the room. Curt crashes into his desk, shattering it to pieces. Bruno begins to exit.

Bruno! CURT

Bruno stops.

BRUNO (cont'd)
(gently)
Bruno.

I ... BRUNO

Bruno Clemens. CURT

Bruno looks down and the scissor blade in his hand.

He starts to cry. Deep, mournful,
angry tears.

CURT (cont'd)

Bruno. They need the factory. They need to keep us alive.
They-

BRUNO

It's not their miracle!

CURT

What?

BRUNO

It's a Jewish miracle.

He sits down, face in his hands. Curt
stands closer and touches Bruno's
shoulder.

SILENCE.

BRUNO (cont'd)

I was being so good when they took me. I was so ... AH ...
before, and then ... I was found. (Beat.) Masha was happy.
The boys were so happy. I felt so ... and then they took us.
Even the boys. Not even a coat for the winter. (Beat.)
It's not their miracle. (Beat.) God found us. All the way
down here, Curt. God found us and gave us a miracle. Don't
let them take it.

CURT

It's still ours.

BRUNO

They'll take it and erase all your fingerprints from it.

CURT

Can't be done. The boy is right. There's is no subtraction.
The only way to erase it is to add emptiness, smother it with
the complement of what it is and even that is just a trick.
God doesn't look down from the sky. God sees from the bottom
of the ocean-up.

Beat.

BRUNO

Why didn't you tell him he was wrong?

CURT

How could I have done that?

BRUNO

He would have believed you.

Curt sits down next to Bruno.

He takes the scissor out of Bruno's hand.

CURT

You broke my scissors. Do you know how hard it is to get scissors?

BRUNO

Curt-

CURT

I used to imagine the day they would come for me. I would hold up the calculator and buy myself a few more moments of life. But, the boy found that solution himself. How could we take that from him? No matter what, he will still grow up one day. Is it not better to buy a whole life? Shouldn't he know what it's like to find; to be found? (Beat.) You go to the factory now. Look for Stein. He's a little man with white hair. You tell him I said that sardines are for sex maniacs.

They laugh.

CURT (cont'd)

He'll show you how to operate the press and how to make the muzzles of the K-43's too small for the bullets.

Curt winks.

Beat.

CURT (cont'd)

Go. I'll talk to the boy. He'll listen.

They stand. Bruno helps him up.

CURT (cont'd)

You are still very strong.

BRUNO

Body forgets. The bones remember.

CURT

Yeah.

BRUNO

(seeing something)

Hey, the traps are sprung.

Bruno and Curt go to the bucket. All the cardboard tubes are in it.

Empty.
BRUNO (cont'd)

CURT
No water to push the tubes out.

BRUNO
They just climbed out. (Beat.) Good.

CURT
Yeah.

Bruno exits.

Beat.

Curt begins to reassemble his desk. He stops. He picks up the calculator. He makes a calculation, then another and another turning the crank vigorously and joyously.

Finn enters. His hair is cropped short and he is dressed neatly in a freshly pressed uniform.

He sees the table.

Whoa.
FINN

He sees the calculator.

FINN (cont'd)
Can that one do subtraction?!

Beat.

CURT
Yeah, Finn. It subtracts.

FINN
I knew it!

Finn rushes over to it and takes it out of Curt's hands.

FINN (cont'd)
I knew from all the clay on your hands. I knew you had your hiding spaces. But, I didn't go looking. I was tempted, but I didn't go looking. I wanted to figure it out myself. How does it work?

CURT

You-

FINN

No, don't tell me. I want to figure it out myself.

Finn begins to fiddle with the device, pushing levers and making a few calculations.

FINN (cont'd)

Why would you keep it a secret?

He flips the subtractions switch.

FINN (cont'd)

They're going to Aryanize you. You won't have to be a Jew anymore.

He makes a very complicated subtraction, lots of numbers. He looks at the answer.

FINN (cont'd)

Yeah, correct. Yeah. It's pretty fun, huh?

CURT

Yeah, Finn.

FINN

More than fun, this is going to change everything. It's going to be the most useful gadget anyone has ever seen. A calculator for your pocket. It's going to change the country, the war, the world, you'll see.

Finn puts the calculator in his bag.

FINN (cont'd)

I bet this ends the war half a year earlier. Where's Bruno?

CURT

Went to the factory.

FINN

I was going to tell him to cook a celebration meal tonight, but, no. We really should ration. We'll see. I Telexed the commandant. I told him that I needed to see him urgently. (to himself) "Urgently."

He starts to tie his bootlaces.

CURT

Finn ...

FINN

I told him I had big news to tell him. But, now I'll show him.

CURT

Finn, listen.

FINN

What?!

No response.

FINN (cont'd)

We'll be out of the mine. That's good. We'll be up there. Maybe I can live in the officer's quarters. You think they really have a zoo there?

CURT

Yes.

FINN

Yes, what?

CURT

Yes they do. They have a zoo there. The last commandant had us build one for his children.

FINN

Oh. Ha.

CURT

Congratulations, Finn.

FINN

Yeah?

CURT

That was a hard solution.

FINN

Ha-ha.

CURT

And you found it here. All the way down here. Took me a long time to come to that solution.

FINN

Where were you?

CURT

On a train through the Black Forest. I was on a sales call selling adding machines for my father.

(MORE)

CURT (cont'd)

I was thinking about the problem and then the train entered a clearing in the forest. And I thought, "We're in a clearing." And then the answer came to me.

FINN

Just like that.

CURT

Ha, just like that.

FINN

Cool. So do I look ready?

CURT

Yeah, you look ready.

Finn begins to exit.

CURT (cont'd)

Finn.

Finn stops.

FINN

Yes.

CURT

If I tell you something, you will believe me, yeah?

FINN

What?

CURT

Finn, I want to ask you not to give the calculator to the commandant.

FINN

Why not?!

CURT

You will believe what I say, yeah?

FINN

Why?

CURT

I won't lie to you.

FINN

What?!

CURT

If you give the calculator to the commandant he's going to kill me. Me and everyone down here.

FINN

Don't be stupid, Curt.

CURT

It's true.

FINN

Why would he do that?

CURT

It's what they do. Have you been inside the camp up top?
It's where they kill people. Thousands of people.

FINN

What are you talking about?

CURT

I was there! Before I was down here, I was there and that
place is there to kill people!

FINN

You don't understand-

CURT

When I first came here, I came in a boxcar full of people.
Many suffocated to death it was so crowded. When we got out,
the old and the small children were hanged and burned in the
ovens and the rest of us were made to work until we starved
and died and then we were sent to the ovens.

FINN

Didn't happen to you.

Beat.

CURT

No. I was different.

FINN

Didn't happen to Clemens.

CURT

You see how thin he is-

FINN

Didn't happen to all the workers down /here.

CURT

/Finn, I tell you it's the truth. What do you think the
black smoke is coming from the camp?

FINN

Why would they do that?

CURT

For the war, the economy-

FINN

Germans up top are starving!

CURT

They work us to death. And if the Americans come they'll-

FINN

The Americans are not coming.

Beat.

CURT

Listen, we'll tell the commandant, that it was a mistake. We thought we had the solution, but really-

FINN

The Americans are not coming!

Beat.

CURT

We made a mistake.

FINN

I found the solution. I found it.

CURT

Yes. Yes, you did, Finn. You were brilliant. When we get out, I promise, I'll tell everyone that you came to the solution. All on your own! That's what I'll tell everyone!

FINN

Now I see.

CURT

I promise. I will.

FINN

You just want it for yourself!

CURT

What? No.

FINN

Are you going to sell it?!

CURT

Finn.

FINN

Who's going to want to buy it from a Jew?!

No response.

FINN (cont'd)

No one! And they are not killing Jews at the camp!

CURT

Yes!

FINN

That's a lie.

CURT

(roaring)

YES THEY ARE! THOUSANDS! THOUSANDS, FINN! I'M TELLING YOU!
THOUSANDS!

SILENCE.

FINN

(quietly, with malice)

It's a work camp.

No response.

Curt looks down.

FINN (cont'd)

Lazy! You should do twice as much for what you've done to my country. (Beat.) Good for nothing. You think I'm a Jew lover? Just because I'm down here with you? It disgusts me!

Beat.

FINN (cont'd)

You know what I did to Jews on the Eastern Front? We put them in a barn and we set them on fire!

SILENCE.

FINN (cont'd)

Yes, that's what I did! Don't think you are anything special.

Beat.

Finn exits.

Curt goes to the bucket. He takes out all the cardboard tubes. He looks through one.

End of Scene.

SCENE V: CURT'S OFFICE

Pister stands in the room alone, a flask in his hand. He has a satchel. He looks at the various foodstuffs that are hanging from the ceiling.

He cuts down an apple. He sits down on a chair in the middle of the room and bites it. It's mealy. He drops it to the ground. He licks his fingers. He goes and cuts down a sausage.

Curt enters. He wears his cap. His hands are covered in black grease.

An explosion in the distance. Pister barely registers it.

Pister sits down. He nearly misses his seat. He takes a long drink from his flask.

Curt takes the cap off his head and puts his head down.

CURT

Commandant.

Pister takes a bleary-eyed look at him.

CURT (cont'd)

The guard told me to find you here.

PISTER

(pointing to the food with the
sausage)

Got quite the set up here, don't you?

CURT

Yes, Commandant.

PISTER

Quite the set-up.

He takes a bite.

PISTER (cont'd)

Engelhardt. How does the man find summer sausage these days?

He takes another bite.

PISTER (cont'd)

Cervelat. (snorting) Francophile.

He finishes everything in the flask.

PISTER (cont'd)
(pointing to the sausage)

Curt goes to do so.
Cut them down.

Curt goes to do so.

PISTER (cont'd)
And don't get your dirt on them.

Curt nods. He wipes his hands on a piece of paper and then goes to cut the sausage down.

PISTER (cont'd)
Put them in that satchel when you are finished.

Curt nods.

PISTER (cont'd)
Where's the boy?

CURT
Sir?

PISTER
The boy. Where is he?

Beat.

CURT
He didn't say, Commandant.

PISTER
No?

Curt shakes his head. He takes the sausage to the satchel.

PISTER (cont'd)
Hm. Nice down here, isn't it?

CURT
Yes, Commandant.

PISTER
Warm. Winter up top. (Beat.) Oh, you got quite the set-up, Herzstark.

CURT
Yes, Commandant.

PISTER

Where did you say the boy went?

CURT

I don't know, Sir. I've been fixing machines in the factory.

PISTER

Right. I grew up with the boy's father, you know?

CURT

No, Commandant.

PISTER

We liked cars. Fixed them. I'm good with my hands too, you know. (Beat.) Nice man. My father knew his father.

He chuckles.

PISTER (cont'd)

Hey, do you know why the boy was really sent back?

CURT

No, Commandant.

PISTER

Screaming at night. Imagine, you are launching an attack a daybreak and your artillery man's screaming in the middle of the night. Ha, I caught one night of it and I thought, "Send him down below," right Herzstark? Am I right?

No response.

PISTER (cont'd)

(laughing)

He's shaking the walls down here, isn't he?

CURT

No, Sir. He sleeps well, Sir.

Beat.

PISTER

Well, then. That's good. (Beat.) You want to know what I find on my desk every morning?

No response.

PISTER (cont'd)

I'll show you. Bring me my satchel.

Curt complies. Pister takes a stack of Telex messages out of the satchel that are bound with a paper clip.

PISTER (cont'd)

My little friend. He writes me everyday. Good soldier.

Pister puts on his reading glasses.

PISTER (cont'd)

(reading)

"Standartenführer. I am proud to be doing such a service for our Führer. I am certain that we will be making progress soon, as the Jew is now teaching me about the inner-working of the device. Once I am clear, I am certain a solution will present itself shortly. I look forward to seeing you at the end of the week. Give my best to Frau Pister and your daughter. F. F." Hm.

Pister flips to another Telex.

PISTER (cont'd)

(reading)

"Standartenführer. I must tell you that the device is a marvel. Incomplete, but still, a marvel. All gears and slides and cranks, but right in the palm of your hand. You are right. Herzstark is indeed clever, but it's true, he will need my help to complete his invention. He is teaching me math to complete it. I will not fail you. Please send word of when you will be coming. F. F."

Pister flips to another Telex.

PISTER (cont'd)

(reading)

"Standartenführer. I went to the gymnasium and took a book that Curt recommended, and Sir, I come to find that Maths are beautiful. I come to understand that numbers are such beautiful fragile things, completely groundless, thrown to the winds. They must obey. They must comply to the vessel that we pour them into. Yes. Math and numbers are beautiful. Everything is a puzzle with a solution and you can solve it if you can keep track of all the numbers as they move and change, follow them like they are drops of water in a stream; follow them when a stone changes their course or they drop over a cliff; follow them when the sun boils them away. I see drops and rivers and lakes and ... sometimes, sometimes oceans, Uncle Hermann. I want to see clouds. I want to see steam from a kettle. Who can see so much? Is it God? Today I thought that I should be like a Chinese monk sitting in a cave, counting out the numbers of pi until all I am is numbers, an ocean myself for birds to see from the sky after I've melted and flowed into the sea. Numbers are so fragile. I want to care for them. (Beat.) The Jew knows many things. (Beat.) I am fifteen years old today. Truly, Finn Frey."

Pister flips to another Telex.

PISTER (cont'd)

(to Curt)

"*The Jew* knows many things." Very interesting. Today, what do I find on my desk?

He reads.

PISTER (cont'd)

"Standartenführer!" Exclamation point! "Standartenführer! Wonderful news. I must see you immediately. Urgently. Urgent. I will see you today?" Question mark? "Finn Frey."

He tears it out and hold it out to Curt.

PISTER (cont'd)

So, Herzstark. You tell me. What could be so urgent?

Beat.

CURT

I don't know, Commandant.

PISTER

You have the solution, don't you?

Beat.

CURT

No, Sir.

PISTER

When we last spoke you told me that you were upon a solution shortly.

CURT

Our quotas have been increased. The sewage broke. I haven't had time-

PISTER

Enough, Herzstark. I've played with you long enough. I need the device.

Beat.

CURT

I'm sorry.

PISTER

Enough! Things are not so good up top for anyone, yeah?! I have enemies everywhere. They're thinking about transferring me and I don't think you'll like the set-up so much under someone else! I need that calculator! I need it!

Finn enters. He is covered in black soot. His ears are bleeding, a bit shell-shocked.

FINN

Standartenführer.

Pister turns around.

PISTER

Finn! What happened to you?!

FINN

I went to find you, Sir.

He looks at Finn's ears.

PISTER

My goodness! Can you hear?!

He snaps next to Finn's ears. Finn winces in pain.

PISTER (cont'd)

What happened?!

FINN

I went to find you in the camp.

PISTER

The camp?! Speak quickly boy! What happened?!

FINN

Ovens. They tried to blow up ovens with gunpowder.

PISTER

What?! Who?!

FINN

I don't know, Sir.

PISTER

Did they succeed?!

FINN

I don't think so.

PISTER

You don't think so?

FINN

I don't know.

PISTER
What do you mean, "You don't know?"

Beat.

FINN
I ran, Commandant. (Beat.) I ran.

PISTER
Jesus Christ!

Pister puts on his heavy coat.

FINN
I walked into the room, and I saw ... Herr Engelhardt. I called out to him ... to thank him for the ... the ... there was a flash and then smoke everywhere.

PISTER
Engelhardt?! Fritz Engelhardt?

FINN
Sir ...

PISTER
(to himself)
They got to Engelhardt. Goddamn those saboteurs. This is my neck! The officers will blame /me!

FINN
/I saw, Commandant, /I saw ...

PISTER
(to Curt)
/Okay now! Enough! Give me the solution!

FINN
There were bodies. They were taking them to the room.

PISTER
(to Curt)
Whatever you have! What's on paper is enough!

FINN
They flew every which /way.

PISTER
/The solution, Herzstark!

FINN
Bodies.

PISTER
Shut up, Finn!

FINN

Everywhere.

PISTER

Herzstark! I'm not a fool./

CURT

/There is no solution./

PISTER

/The boy wrote me. He had strict orders. He would not write to me "urgently" if he didn't see you had the solution.

CURT

I have been working the factories. I have-

Pister slaps Curt in the face, hard.

PISTER

Enough!

Beat.

CURT

He's mistaken.

Pister slaps him again.

PISTER

Liar.

SILENCE.

He finds a belt in the room and begins to flog Curt with it.

PISTER (cont'd)

I need that solution!

Another slash.

PISTER (cont'd)

I need /it.

FINN

(quietly)

/There is no solution.

A violent barrage of slashing.

FINN (cont'd)

THERE IS NO SOLUTION!!!

Pister stops.

What? PISTER

There is no solution, Commandant. FINN

Why did you write me? PISTER

Beat.

What was so urgent?! PISTER (cont'd)

I wanted you to see my mousetrap. FINN

What? PISTER

My mousetrap. I made a mousetrap. FINN

A mousetrap. PISTER

Pister grabs Finn by the shirt. He pushes him forcefully against the wall.

A mousetrap?! PISTER (cont'd)

He pounds Finn against the wall.

A MOUSETRAP?! PISTER (cont'd)

Again.

You think this is a joke? This is not a joke! Who else have you told? PISTER (cont'd)

No one. FINN

Pister grabs Finn by the neck.

Who knows that I'm down here?! Speak up! Who else have you told?! PISTER

No one. FINN

PISTER

Who else?! You think I don't know? Those greedy, fucking officers, jealous of me. Jealous of my ...

Pister begins to choke Finn. Finn thrashes beneath his hands.

PISTER (cont'd)

I need that solution.

Finn falls to the ground pulling Pister down with him.

PISTER (cont'd)

I need it.

Finn struggles against Pister, gagging and choking.

PISTER (cont'd)

I need it.

Finn grabs handfuls of clay and tries to push it into Pister's face. His legs thrash against the floor.

PISTER (cont'd)

I NEED IT!

Finn's body goes limp.

PISTER (cont'd)

I need it. I need it. I need it. i ...

CURT

Commandant.

Pister stops choking him.

PISTER

i need it ... *they're going to arrest me ...*

SILENCE.

Pister tidies Finn's clothing.

PISTER (cont'd)

I'm not your father. I'm not him. Your father would care about your mousetrap. (Beat.) You look like your mother. (Beat.) No one else can know we have it. No one else can know. (to Curt, after a SILENCE) I just saved both our necks. They're coming for me. The device will save us. Both of us. I want that solution, Goddamnit.

Beat.

CURT

I don't have it.

PISTER

Then get it.

CURT

I-

PISTER

I know it's in your head! (pointing to Finn) He doesn't know anything about engineering. Little freak! Began spouting numbers when he was brained by a grenade, that's all. I know the calculator is in your head. You give it to me!

CURT

Alright, Commandant.

Beat.

PISTER

Good.

CURT

Very soon, Commandant.

Beat.

PISTER

Yeah?

CURT

Soon.

PISTER

Soon. How soon?

CURT

Very soon. I just need some time.

Pister stands up. His face and his uniform are covered in clay.

PISTER

Two weeks. I can hold them off for two weeks.

CURT

Two weeks, Commandant. Yes.

Beat.

Alright, then.

PISTER

He tries to drink from his flask.
There is nothing left. He looks up at
the ceiling. There is nothing left.

PISTER (cont'd)
You know. I protected you. You and everyone down here.
That's what I did. I brought you down here. I brought you
down. You could have been killed a thousand times. You
know.

He looks at Finn. He shakes his head.

Quite the set up.

PISTER (cont'd)

He stumbles out.

Curt goes over to Finn. He puts his
hand on Finn's chest. He puts his ear
to Finn's chest ... Still alive! He
blows air into Finn's lungs. He
listens for a heartbeat. He blows air
again. Again. Again. Again.

Finn gasps awake. Writhes on the
ground. He coughs loudly.

Curt holds his finger to his mouth.
Tries to cover Finn's mouth.

Finn grabs Curt's hand.

A moment.

Finn grabs Curt and sobs into his
chest.

Curt smooths Finn's hair.

CURT
Alright, Finn. Alright. Shh. Shh. For God's sake you must
be quiet, boy. He might come back. You must be quiet.

Finn is quiet. His body trembles
violently.

CURT (cont'd)
Okay. Okay, boy. Okay.

SILENCE.

Finn stops.

Beat.

He goes to his satchel. He pulls out the calculator.

He begins to dig in the ground. It is very hard.

FINN

(hoarse)

We can't let them have it.

He digs with all his might but can barely make any headway. His fingers bleed.

FINN (cont'd)

We have to hide it; we can't let them get it.

He digs and digs and digs and digs until finally ...

CURT

Finn.

Curt puts his hand on Finn's shoulder.

Finn stops digging.

CURT (cont'd)

Stop.

HOLD.

CURT (cont'd)

Okay. (Beat.) Okay.

Curt puts his hands on the boy as though the boy were fragile.

Beat.

FINN

I didn't do what I said I did.

CURT

What?

FINN

About the barn.

Oh. CURT

My brother Andrew did it. FINN

Oh. CURT

Our companies met one night and the men were telling stories. They told me he set fire to that barn and ... the men were laughing ... and Andrew wasn't and I told him "he should laugh" ... and he did. FINN

SILENCE.

Curt picks up the calculator.

Finn Frey. What is seventy-seven times ninety three? CURT

Seven thousand one hundred sixty-one. FINN

Curt does the calculation.

Yeah correct. What is nine thousand one times three thousand six hundred fifty-four? CURT

Thirty-two million, eight hundred eighty-nine thousand, six hundred fifty-four. FINN

Curt does the calculation.

Yeah. Correct. CURT

Beat.

Finn. CURT (cont'd)

Yeah. FINN

Beat.

What is twenty-two divided by seven? CURT

Beat.

Curt does the calculation.

FINN

Three point one four one five nine two six five three five
eight nine/

CURT

/Yeah. Correct./

FINN

/seven nine three two three eight four six two/

CURT

/Good, Finn. Good./

FINN

/six four three three eight three two seven nine five zero/

Curt smooths Finn's hair.

FINN (cont'd)

CURT

/That's it, Finn. That's good./

FINN

/two eight eight four one nine seven one six nine three nine
nine three seven five one zero five/

CURT

/I'm here, Finn. Yes, I'm here./

FINN

/eight two zero nine seven four nine/

CURT

/I found you.

Finn stops speaking.

LIGHTS FADEOUT.

CURT (cont'd)

I found you. Yes, my child, yes, you are found.

FINN

(continues to speak)

four four five nine two three zero seven eight one six four
zero ...

End of Scene

End of Play.