

**STARVED**

A play in two acts.

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## CHARACTERS

ANCEL KEYS: Director of the University of Minnesota Laboratory of Physiological Hygiene. Age 40.

JOSEF BROZEK: A psychologist with the Laboratory of Physiological Hygiene. Native of Czechoslovakia. Age 30.

MAX: Conscientious objector from New York City and experiment subject Number 2. Age 24.

SAM: Conscientious objector, son of missionary parents in India. Experiment subject 34. Age 21.

HENRY: Conscientious objector from Indiana and experiment subject 27. Age 21.

EILEEN: Henry's girlfriend, age 23.

NURSE: A nurse.

FOOD SERVER: A young woman.

WAITER: A young man working in a diner.

WOMAN  
DINER: A middle-aged, middle-class woman.

WALLACE  
KIRKLAND: A photographer for Life magazine.

MAJOR CORLETTE: A doctor in the U.S. Army.

Setting:

The play takes place between the summer of 1944 and 1945. The stage is divided into three segments representing the Laboratory of Physiological Hygiene underneath the University of Minnesota football stadium. On the left is a small office. The center is the cafeteria. The right is a dormitory room.

Each segment has a single door in the back. The play can be staged simply with a few chairs, tables and cots.

On a wall in the dormitory is a sign that reads: "Civilian Public Service Unit No. 115."

In the cafeteria, a sign on the wall reads: "Whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake. - 1 Corinthians 10:27"

The play has five main characters: Keys, Brozek, and the three test subjects, Max, Sam and Henry. The nurse, food server, woman diner and Eileen can all be played by the same actor. The minor roles of Wallace Kirkland, Major Corlette and the waiter can also be doubled by one of the main actors.

The test subjects depicted in this experiment, in addition to being guinea pigs, also were assigned housekeeping and administrative jobs in the lab. So in this play, the actors playing the test subjects will also be the stage hands, moving furniture and props while the actors playing the scientists observe. In that sense, the test subject actors will stay in character: As their conditions deteriorate with starvation, their stagehand work will become more labored and difficult.

ACT I  
Scene 1

(At rise: The stage is lit for outside on a moonlit night. A dim spotlight is on SAM, a figure kneeling center downstage. Distantly, a song is heard as if on a radio in the background: Glenn Miller's "Moonlight Serenade." SAM is dressed as a test subject in a white t-shirt, blue pants, dark canvas tennis shoes and white socks. He has a hatchet in one hand, and in the other hand, he is holding a chunk of firewood on the ground. He repeatedly strikes at the firewood with the hatchet. But his movements are weak, ineffectual and uncoordinated, as if he were sick or exhausted. Upstage and to the sides, dimly seen in the shadows, are the other actors arrayed in a semi-circle around SAM. They are an antiphony of voices heard as SAM chops.)

**VOICE 1**

(with contempt)

Conscientious objectors? Why don't we call them what they really are. Cowards.

**VOICE 2**

Work camps are too good for them. My boy is risking his life in Europe. They're draft dodgers. They should be in jail.

**VOICE 3**

We could use them. Use them as guinea pigs. A pool of young, healthy men. Ask them to volunteer. There are experiments in typhus, pneumonia, malaria that need human test subjects. And we don't even have to pay them.

**VOICE 4**

An experiment on starvation. A scientific study of what happens to a human under famine conditions. That's never been done before. It actually could be useful when this war is over.

**VOICE 1**

As long as we don't make some kind of martyrs out of them. They're not heroes. They're just going to be a little hungry. I bet a prisoner of war in Japan would change places with them in a second.

**VOICE 2**

They'll stay in the laboratory under the stadium. But we'll keep them away from the football players. We don't want them fraternizing with pacifists.

**VOICE 3**

(taunting)

Hey, conchie! Are you hungry? How about a nice sandwich? Mmmm. Just one bite?

**VOICE 4**

My God, look at them. What are they doing to those men? They look like skeletons.

(As the voices continue, SAM raises the hatchet above his head. He hesitates, wavering, staring at the wood being held in his other hand.)

**VOICE 1**

Oh, don't feel sorry for them. They're just slackers. They'll do anything to get out of the fighting.

(SAM seems to make a decision. He closes his

eyes and brings the hatchet down. The music stops. He gasps and drops the hatchet and hunches over, clutching his other hand to his stomach. Lights dim. Scene ends.)

## Scene 2

(The lighting in the laboratory is dim. HENRY, dressed as a lab subject, carries a lectern to a spot lit position to the left and downstage. He sets out a glass of water and arranges pages of a speech on the lectern. He exits and KEYS strides confidently to the podium from the right. He's a compact, intense, unsmiling, dark-haired man wearing a business suit. He is not a professional speaker, but he is used to giving scientific lectures. This one will be delivered in the dispassionate and objective tone that scientists typically adopt. But emotions – pride, guilt, defensiveness – will occasionally leak out. He takes a sip of water and clears his throat and begins to read.)

### KEYS

There is at present in operation at the Minnesota Laboratory of Physiological Hygiene an experimental study on human starvation and nutritional rehabilitation. Thirty-six young men, previously normal and well-nourished, will undergo six months of partial starvation under rigid controls in an attempt to recreate famine conditions in a laboratory setting. The subjects in this study are all conscientious objectors who were selected from volunteers in the Civilian Public Service program. Their transfer to this project is endorsed by the Committee on Medical Research of the Office of Scientific Research and Development and is authorized by the Selective Service System. Before volunteering, all men are completely informed as to the purposes, methods of operation, rigors and dangers involved.

(The spotlight dims. KEYS walks to the office, puts on a white lab coat over his suit, sits behind the desk and consults a

notepad. In a chair next to him, behind but on one side of the desk, is a younger man, BROZEK. He is 30. He wears eyeglasses and has a round, friendly face with a mouth that is inclined to smile. His legs are crossed. He is looking at papers in a manila folder. He is dressed in an elegant suit, somewhat European in style. There is an empty wooden chair facing KEYS and BROZEK in front of the desk. BROZEK is flipping through a document in one of the folders.)

**KEYS**

OK. Who's next?

**BROZEK**

(reading from a document in a manila folder)  
Next, we have Max Kampleman, 24. New York City. He's attended New York University. Very good grades. Active in several left-leaning political organizations. He wishes to be a lawyer. His personality tests show no extreme neuroticisms. He gets along well with others in the work camp, according to his supervisors.

(There is a knock at the door.)

**KEYS**

Come in.

(MAX enters through the door. He's a young man, handsome, intelligent looking, well-built, of medium height. He's wearing the dusty, sweat-stained overalls and work shirt of a construction worker. He has on heavy work boots, quite worn. He's carrying a plain baseball cap in his hands. His attitude is attentive, perhaps a touch wary and keyed-up.)

**KEYS**

Sit down please.

(MAX sits.)

**KEYS**

(cont.)

I am Ancel Keys, director of the Laboratory of Physiological Hygiene. This is my colleague, Dr. Brozek, who will be overseeing the psychological aspects of the experiment. The purpose of this interview is to see if you will be suitable to participate and to answer any questions you have. So.

(pause)

First, why do you want to be a test subject?

**MAX**

One of your guinea pigs, you mean?

(KEYS frowns, but BROZEK laughs.)

**BROZEK**

Yes, as you say, one of our guinea pigs. You are not happy with your current work assignment in the CPS camp?

**MAX**

(shaking his head)

"Work of national importance," they call it. That's what the government promised we would be doing. Want to know what nationally important work I'm doing? I'm building a road in the middle of nowhere, going from nowhere, to nowhere. We've been at it two months. Takes a long time, you see, if you only have shovels. It would have been done in a week if they let us use the bulldozers, but then they might have to find us something to do that wouldn't involve hiding us out of public view. I know the country is ashamed of us. I don't mind being treated like a leper. I don't mind work. But give me work that means something.

**BROZEK**

And you think our experiment will be meaningful?

(MAX pulls a pamphlet from his pocket. The cover has a black and white picture of a small child peering into an empty bowl. The headline says "Will You Starve That They Be Better Fed.")



**MAX**

It says here that your experiment will help hungry people around the world. If you really mean it, if this isn't just a front for a project to make better meal rations for the Army, then yes, I'd like to be a part of it.

**KEYS**

More than 200 conscientious objectors have volunteered to take part in the experiment. We will select 36. But we need to find the right men. Once we get started, we can't force you to continue. But if a half or even a third of the test subjects drop out before the year is out, the experiment will fail. So it gets down to this. Will you stick it out to the end? We need to be convinced that you have what it takes.

**MAX**

(with a touch of anger)

You mean, do I have the guts? Listen, I'm a pacifist. But I'm not a coward or a slacker. I believe that warfare is immoral and I won't participate in it. But when this war is over, I don't want to have to say I spent it moving dirt from one side of a hill to the other. I'd like to have a chance to do something that matters, that's important.

**BROZEK**

Do you really understand what you are getting into? For a year, you will not be allowed to eat a mouthful of food that isn't measured and weighed by us in the laboratory. For six months of that year, the amount of food we'll give you is what we believe might be available to a civilian in a war zone or in a concentration camp. In other words, you will be slowly starving. If we did this experiment with dogs as test subjects, we would probably be accused of animal cruelty. We can't guarantee what will happen to you physically or mentally during that time. Yes, you will be under constant medical supervision. You will be living in clean, sanitary conditions. In that sense, you will be much more fortunate than someone in a concentration camp. But consider this. You will not be isolated here. You will be on a college campus in a big city in the middle of a farm state. You will be subject to constant temptation, starving in an environment where there is plenty of food, when everyone around you, except your fellow test subjects, have all that they wish to eat. That may be the most difficult part of all.

**KEYS**

Do you really think you can do it?

**MAX**

(pausing to consider his response)

I have friends who are in the Army, fighting. I'd like to be able to look them in the eye and say I was willing to put my life and body on the line too. Not to kill, not to help one nation defeat another, but to help all people.

(KEYS, looks over to BROZEK and reaches out his hand to take MAX's file folder. He reads one of the papers in the file.)

**KEYS**

It says here your parents are Jews from Romania. Most of our applicants come from the peace churches, Mennonites, Brethren, Quakers. You must know what's happening to the Jews in Europe.

**MAX**

(with a humorless smile)

You might recall that it was a Jew who brought the Sixth Commandment down from the mountaintop. But no, I'm not a pacifist because of my religion. I'm not blind to evil and the need to oppose it. But war is the ultimate evil, a crime against all humanity. I believe there's a different way, a way without killing. You've heard of Gandhi? He is throwing off British rule in India through non-violent resistance. One of his tools is fasting. If he can go without food for weeks, I figure I can go on diet for a few months.

(KEYS exchanges a look with BROZEK. BROZEK gives him a small smile and lifts his eyebrows slightly.)

**KEYS**

Very well. That's all. Thank you for your time. You'll be informed soon if we select you for the experiment.

(The lights dim. End of scene.)

Scene 3

(The lights rise in the dormitory. SAM and HENRY are there, dressed in ordinary civilian clothes. They are both healthy-looking men in their 20s. HENRY is lounging on a cot, reading a magazine. SAM is unpacking a suitcase, taking clothing out and putting it on a cot. The door opens and MAX enters, not sure if he's in the right place. He's also dressed in ordinary civilian clothes. He's carrying a suitcase.)

**HENRY**

Come on in, pilgrim. Looking to lose weight? Want to regain your girlish figure? You've come to the right place. Welcome to the conchie cage.

**MAX**

You the other guinea pigs? I'm Max.

**HENRY**

I'm Henry. This is Sam, our resident preacher.

**SAM**

Hi.

**HENRY**

He wants to be a missionary when this is all over. But first he's going to starve for God and country. That way he'll be able to sympathize with benighted hungry heathens in foreign climes.

(MAX dumps his suitcase on one of the cots.)

**MAX**

Where are you guys from?

**HENRY**

Hometowns or CPS unit? I'm from Indiana, where I had the distinction of being the only CO from my hometown. I was known as the coward of the county. But before here, I performed "nationally important" reforestation in Oregon. Planting live trees, cutting down dead trees. The only excitement was fighting forest fires. I was going to volunteer as a malaria guinea pig just out of sheer boredom, but then this came along.

**SAM**

I thought about that malaria experiment too.

(to MAX)

I'm from all over. My parents were missionaries. Before this, I was in a mental institution in Maine.

**HENRY**

Appropriate, very appropriate.

**SAM**

As an attendant.

(to MAX)

How about you?

**MAX**

I'm from New York City. I was building roads and trails. Pick and shovel work.

**HENRY**

There's a future in that. At least you were learning a trade.

**MAX**

Actually, I was hoping to finish my law degree while I'm here.

**HENRY**

Ambitious. You know, we have the makings of a conchie war movie here.

(indicating SAM)  
We've got the earnest, naïve, virginal PK.

(indicating MAX)  
And the New York intellectual. By the way, when the shooting doesn't start, I expect you to talk about how much you miss your mother's knishes or Coney Island hot dogs or whatever you Gothamites eat. And I am--

**MAX**

The wiseass?

**HENRY**

At your service, sir. We few, we happy soon-to-be hungry few, we band of humbuggers. And to complete the cast we have Keys as our gruff, tough drill instructor, whipping us into shape for hand-to-hand passive resistance. What did you think of that bird?

**MAX**

Yeah. A pretty hard-boiled egg. I guess he'll get what he wants out of us. But we asked for it.

**SAM**

"Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything, not only to please them while they are watching, but with sincerity of heart and fear of the Lord."

(after the other men look at him curiously)  
Paul's letter to the Colossians.

**HENRY**

If you say so. Hey, who's hungry? Almost time for dinner. We'll show you where the cafeteria is. They're going to fatten us up for a few weeks before we start S-phase.

**MAX**

S-phase?

**HENRY**

S for starvation.

(as the men start to walk out the door)  
Now remember, if I don't make it, I want you to write my mother and tell her I was brave. And that I didn't suffer.

(Lights in the dormitory dim. Scene ends.)

#### Scene 4

(KEYS returns to the lectern and the spotlight and begins reading again.)

#### **KEYS**

In the S-phase, the number of meals per day are reduced from three to two. The semi-starvation diet consists of three basic menus repeated in rotation. The major food items served are whole-wheat bread, potatoes, cereals and considerable amounts of turnips, cabbage and rutabagas. Only token amounts of meats and dairy products are provided. The diet is designed to represent as nearly as possible the type of foods available during the war in European famine areas.

(The spotlight dims and KEYS exits. The lights rise in the dormitory area. MAX is lying on his side on one of the cots in the dormitory, writing in a journal. HENRY and SAM are at the card table, playing a spirited game of chess. They are all dressed alike in blue pants, white t-shirts, dark canvas tennis shoes and white socks. The radio is on, and a news announcer is finishing a report on the recently completed Yalta conference between Churchill, Stalin and Roosevelt of Feb. 11, 1945. The broadcast then resumes with big band music. The door to the dormitory room opens and KEYS, dressed in his lab coat, enters carrying a clipboard. BROZEK comes with him.)

**KEYS**

A few announcements as we start S-phase. You'll still be required to walk a total of 22 miles per week and continue your housekeeping and administrative work in the laboratory. The morning meal will be at 8:30. The evening meal will be at 5. Tonight's first S-phase dinner will be:

(reading from an index card)

185 grams of bean soup, 255 grams of macaroni and cheese, 40 grams of rutabagas, 100 grams of steamed potatoes and 100 grams of lettuce salad. This will be approximately half the calories you received during the control period. You can drink as much water and black coffee as you wish. If you don't lose the expected amount of weight we've calculated, we will adjust the amount of food you receive accordingly. Any questions?

**HENRY**

(to general laughter except for KEYS)  
So no more dessert?

**KEYS**

I wish to stress again the seriousness and importance of what we're doing. Hunger is mankind's oldest enemy. It has stalked humans since our existence as a species. But there's never been an experiment under laboratory conditions to document starvation's physical and mental impact. So we don't know the best way to bring back a man from the brink of starvation. That's why the government is making you available for this project. When we win this war, the Allies will be confronted with the task of feeding millions of starving people in occupied Europe, in concentration camps, POW camps, refugee camps. We *will* win the war, but we'll lose the peace if we can't get that right. Hungry men won't care if their nations are rebuilt with democratic governments if they're hungry. A man doesn't care if he's living under fascists, communists or capitalists if he doesn't have enough to eat. Here we have an opportunity. The first comprehensive study of the biology of starvation in human beings. If that leads to just a small increase in efficiency in relief feeding, the benefit could be incalculable. That's why you must strictly follow the procedures.

(turning to BROZEK)

Anything to add, Josef?

**BROZEK**

I'd like to remind you to continue writing in your journals. It's especially important at this stage. Be sure to include any thoughts, or even dreams, that you find unusual.

(he glances at the clock, which is only a few minutes before 5 p.m.)

I see it's almost dinner time. I don't want to make you late for your first S meal.

(with a smile)

Bon appetit.

(The test subjects cheer and everyone laughs except KEYS. KEYS and BROZEK leave followed by the test subjects, who seem generally high-spirited, as if looking forward to a challenge. Lights dim in the dormitory. End of scene.)



Scene 5

(Lights rise in the cafeteria. The FOOD SERVER is waiting at the steam table. She's young and attractive. MAX, HENRY and SAM enter. They're curious about the meal, but not anxious. As they line up at the serving counter, the SERVER carefully measures out small portions of food for each man. As the men take them to the table and sit down, HENRY cranes his head back to get another look at the SERVER and he gives her a smile. She smiles back. MAX and HENRY begin to eat, but before he starts, SAM bows his head for a silent prayer. Everyone eats normally.)

**MAX**

(as he eats)

I had the strangest dream last night. I dreamed I was in heaven. And my relatives were there. My grandparents, my uncle, a great-aunt. But everyone was naked.

**HENRY**

(laughing)

You've got to be joking. That's something for your journal.

(imitating BROZEK's Czech accent)

Dr. Brozek will be fascinated.

**MAX**

(smiling)

Yeah. I know. So here I am, everyone happy to see me in heaven, but I'm feeling really embarrassed. I can't look at anyone. I'm averting my gaze from all these fat, wrinkled bodies, and I thought, "How could this be heaven if I feel so uncomfortable?"

**HENRY**

Maybe you were in hell.

**MAX**

Yeah, that occurred to me too. But then I thought, "Is this really the worst that hell can dish out? To be awkward around your naked relatives?"

**HENRY**

Sam, you're the Bible man. What's the verdict? Do people wear clothes in heaven?

**SAM**

(looking thoughtful)

Well, Daniel saw an angel dressed in linen with a belt of gold. And Matthew wrote that the angel who rolled the stone from Christ's tomb was dressed in raiment white as snow.

**HENRY**

Hmm. Looks bad.

(to MAX)

And let me ask you this. Were there any girls there? Naked girls, I mean?

(He glances back at the SERVER who is cleaning up.)

**MAX**

(smiling)

No. No girls there.

**HENRY**

Well, that decides it. No naked girls. You couldn't have been in heaven.

(Everyone laughs, though SAM looks a bit scandalized.)

Speaking of heavenly bodies, I heard there's a frat party tonight on campus. We should go.

**SAM**

But we can't eat or drink anything there.

**HENRY**

Who said anything about eating or drinking? There will be coeds there.

(drawing it out)

Co! Eds!

**MAX**

I thought you had a girlfriend back home.

**HENRY**

Just because I'm on a diet doesn't mean I can't look at the menu. Hey, get it? Just because I'm on a diet--

**MAX**

Yeah, we get it.

**HENRY**

How about this one. Man does not live by bread alone. Huh? Not bad right?

**SAM**

Actually, that's what Christ said when he was tempted by Satan after fasting for 40 days. He wasn't talking about girls.

**HENRY**

All right. All right. I guess I skipped that day in Sunday school.

(then finishing his meal, with sarcastic good humor)

Boy, I'm stuffed. Couldn't eat another bite.

(to SAM)

You're not going to eat your rutabagas?

**SAM**

Ugh. I never liked them. Just my luck, I'll be seeing them every three days for the next six months.

**HENRY**

(Reaching for SAM's tray)  
I'll eat them then.

**MAX**

Wait!

(to HENRY)  
You're not supposed to eat anything extra.

(to SAM)  
And you're supposed to eat exactly what they give you.

(SAM sighs and slowly, distastefully, begins to chew rutabagas. Lights dim. Scene ends.)

## Scene 6

(MAX and HENRY push a treadmill into the center of the dormitory room while KEYS, BROZEK and the NURSE watch and supervise. KEYS takes off his lab coat and stands in the spotlight at the lectern)

**KEYS**

During the experiment, the test subjects are subject to an extensive series of tests and measurements covering important physiological, biochemical and psychological functions as well as anthropometric characteristics.

(KEYS puts his lab coat back on, picks up a clipboard and goes to the dormitory. As the lights rise there, MAX is wearing old-fashioned physical education shorts and is walking on the treadmill at a brisk pace. The effort is taxing him somewhat. KEYS stands on one side of the treadmill. On the other is BROZEK, also in a lab coat, with a stopwatch. HENRY is seated at the card table, being tested for manual dexterity with a "pencil maze" device, a board with a grooved path that HENRY has to guide a pencil-like stylus

through. If he makes a mistake and touches the sides of the groove, it makes a buzzing sound like in the "Operation" game. The NURSE is standing next to him with a clipboard, noting when he makes a mistake. He is vigorously chewing a large wad of gum, and is growing increasingly frustrated with the test. As HENRY finishes the dexterity test, and the NURSE makes notations on her clipboard, the door opens and SAM walks in slowly. He's wearing a cardigan sweater over his t-shirt. Like the other men, he's looking more gaunt and dispirited. SAM is carrying a small paper cup with a lid. He walks over to the NURSE and self-consciously puts it in front of her on the card table.)

**HENRY**

(picking up the paper cup and giving it a sniff)

What's this? Forbidden food?

**SAM**

(with an embarrassed glance at the NURSE)  
It's my semen sample.

(HENRY quickly drops it on the table.)

**HENRY**

Jesus!

**KEYS**

Nurse? Are you done there? We're almost ready here.

(The NURSE puts down her clipboard and takes a position near the treadmill. SAM and HENRY look on with interest but also a bit of concern.)

**KEYS**

(to MAX)  
Ready to speed up?

**MAX**

(gasping somewhat)  
Yes. But how long will I have to go?

For as long as you can. **KEYS**

For as long as I can? **MAX**

Until exhaustion. **KEYS**  
(to BROZEK)  
Ready, Josef? Start!

(KEYS turns a knob on the treadmill at the same time that BROZEK hits a button on a stopwatch. The treadmill speeds up and MAX has to start running fast. After a minute or two, it becomes apparent that he is struggling to keep up. He is gasping for air, and as the test continues he looks back and forth between KEYS and BROZEK as if he can't understand why they don't stop him.)

Keep going. **KEYS**

(MAX is looking desperate now. It's clear he won't be able to keep it up much longer.)

I can't-- **MAX**  
(gasping)

Keep going. **KEYS**

(KEYS, BROZEK and the nurse are intently looking at MAX and they physically tense up in preparation. With a cry of alarm, MAX stumbles, his arms fly out, but KEYS and the NURSE are ready. They lunge forward to catch him before he collapses. BROZEK hits the button on the stopwatch. MAX is bent over, with his hands on his knees. His head is hanging down. His chest is heaving as he tries to suck in air. The NURSE is taking his pulse. HENRY and SAM look horrified. KEYS picks up his clipboard and looks over to BROZEK. BROZEK consults his stopwatch.)

**BROZEK**

Two minutes, 17 seconds.

(KEYS makes a notation in his clipboard.)

**NURSE**

173. (looking up from her watch to look at KEYS)

(KEYS makes another notation. With the NURSE's help, MAX slowly makes his way to his cot where he sits down heavily. KEYS consults his clipboard.)

**KEYS**

Subject number 27 is next.

(HENRY gets a stricken look on his face, but he gets up and approaches the treadmill with dread. Lights dim. Scene ends.)

Scene 7

(MAX, SAM and HENRY push the treadmill out of the dormitory area and set out the props for the next scene. Their movements are slow and labored. KEYS watches, then returns to the lectern which is lit again with a spotlight.)

**KEYS:**

As starvation progressed, the subjects became more and more silent, apathetic and immobile. Muscle soreness, general irritability, inability to concentrate, depression, dizziness, lack of ambition, moodiness, sensitivity to noise were very prominent complaints which progressively increased. Expressions of annoyance, disgust and anger became increasingly frequent. Favorite topics of conversation were food, food preparation and food production, a fact which was bitterly resented by some of the men. Several of these men at times became almost violently irritated by wishful discussions of food.

(KEYS leaves the lectern. The lights rise on the dormitory. MAX is curled up on his bed, reading a law book. SAM is on his bed, reading a Bible. HENRY is seated at the card table which has a bunch of cook books stacked on it. He's chewing compulsively on a wad of gum. He's sitting on a folding metal chair, but he's put a pillow on the seat to pad his butt. Pinned on the wall next to his cot are magazine and newspaper pictures of food and grocery store ads and a brightly colored label from a crate of oranges. These are his versions of pin-ups. A news announcer on the radio is reading a report about the recently liberated Buchenwald concentration camp, describing a scene of hundreds of prisoners reduced to skin and bones under starvation conditions. The test subjects don't seem to notice or care. The news broadcast is followed by dance music. All three test subjects are wearing sweaters. MAX is wearing a knit hat. HENRY has a wool blanket wrapped around his shoulders. Each of the three look tired, depressed, thin and pale. Their hair seems thinner and less well groomed. They are more slovenly, less attentive to their appearance. They move and act like old men, as if they have no energy and their bodies hurt. They talk more slowly, as if they find it harder to think and form the words. HENRY takes another stick of gum from his pocket, unwraps it, licks the wrapper thoroughly, and then stuffs the gum in his mouth.)

**HENRY**

(reading from a cookbook)

Listen to this. "Soak a quarter cup each of dried apricots, prunes and cherries in one cup of rum for 20 minutes in a small bowl. Drain, reserving rum. Coarsely chop fruit and toss with one teaspoon of sage and 1/2 teaspoon of thyme. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Cut a two-inch deep slit along the length of a four-pound pork loin roast. Stuff the roast with soaked fruit mixture. Wrap roast with bacon slices--

**MAX**

(irritated)

Do you have to read that aloud? I'm trying to study for a law exam here.



**HENRY**

What's the matter? Making you hungry? Just trying to make sure you have a good appetite for dinner.

(reading)

"...wrap roast with bacon slices and tie with butcher's twine. Roast for two hours. After roasting, while the meat rests, whisk together pan juices with reserved rum, shallots, heavy cream and bring to a boil in a--"

**MAX**

I said shut up. Just shut up.

**HENRY**

(louder and slower)

"Whisk together pan juices with reserved rum, shallots, heavy cream and bring to a boil in a small saucepan."

**MAX**

I mean it. Shut up, or--

(MAX throws down his text book. He stands up and shuffles toward HENRY who stands up as well.)

**HENRY**

Or what? What are you going to do? Violate your pacifist beliefs? What happened to your power of non-violent resistance? Where's your love among fellow men?

(MAX balls his fists and appears to be ready to strike HENRY. SAM gets up as well to stop them.)

**SAM**

Hey! Stop!

(The anger exhausts each man. MAX and HENRY sway slightly, panting. SAM pushes HENRY back to his cot, and he doesn't resist.)

**MAX**

(muttering)

Just shut up.

(HENRY shuts the cookbook. He stuffs another stick of gum in his mouth and picks up a magazine. He flips through it, stopping when he comes across an article or advertisement featuring a photo of food. He cuts it out with a pair of scissors and pastes it into a scrap book he has with his collection of cookbooks. The door opens and KEYS and BROZEK enter.)

**KEYS**

I have some announcements to make. As you know, we've graphed a curve of expected weight loss for you all based on our calculations of your energy expenditures and the calories of the food we've been giving you. But not all of the test subjects have been meeting the expected curve. Our only explanation is that there has been some cheating, that some of you are eating food outside of the laboratory. As a result, we are instituting a new policy, a buddy system. No man will be allowed to leave the laboratory without being accompanied by another test subject, a "buddy." We feel this will help you police each other and reduce the temptation to cheat. Is that clear? Any questions?

(At first the men look at KEYS dully, without seeming to comprehend. Then MAX begins to react.)

**MAX**

I'm not a cheater. I don't need an escort.

**KEYS**

It doesn't matter. The rule will apply to all of the subjects. There will be no exceptions.

**MAX**

We should be able to vote on this. We deserve a say in how this experiment is run.

**KEYS**

There will be no vote. This isn't a democracy.

**MAX**

What if we strike? Stop doing our jobs in the laboratory?

**KEYS**

Then you'll be removed from the experiment. Is that what you want? There's the door. It's not locked. You can walk out right now. The men who are keeping their commitment to stay will help you pack. You'll be reassigned back to planting trees or being orderlies in mental institutions, or whatever you were doing before. You'll have to tell everyone that you couldn't stick it out here. But you'll get all the food you want.

(He pauses to see if anyone will try to leave, looking at each man in turn. The test subjects look resentful, but they don't move.)

**KEYS**

(cont.)

If we can move on then. There's one other behavior we've observed that might explain the failure among some of you to lose the expected amount of weight.

(KEYS steps towards HENRY, who gapes at him.)

**KEYS**

(cont.)

How much gum have you been chewing?

(HENRY's chewing gradually slows down.)

**HENRY**

What?

**KEYS**

How much gum? How many sticks per day?

**HENRY**

I don't...

(Puzzled, he reaches into his pockets, pulling out dozens and dozens of sticks of gum and wrappers.)

**KEYS**

Spit it out. Throw those out.

**HENRY**

(protesting)  
I'm not *eating* the gum!

**KEYS**

There's a small amount of sugar in each piece of gum. If you are chewing dozens of sticks a day, it's enough to extract a significant amount of calories, enough to skew the weight loss curve. From now on, you can't have chewing gum.

(HENRY spits out a huge wad of gum and drops it ceremoniously into a trash can. He adds the sticks and wrappers he had in his pocket. He sits down as KEYS and BROZEK start to leave with the trash can.)

**HENRY**

Hey! Keys! I got a flash for you. You want to discover the best way to rehabilitate starving men. Here's an idea for you. Why not *feed* them? Just give them more food.

(shouting)

Have you considered that? Huh? Have you?

(KEYS fixes HENRY with a stare but says nothing. BROZEK looks concerned. The other subjects look shocked. KEYS and BROZEK leave.)

**HENRY**

(staring at the door, muttering mostly to himself)

When this thing ends, and we can finally eat whatever we want, I know where we should start. We should eat some fat scientists.

(HENRY starts to cut out another picture of a magazine. Lights dim. Scene ends.)

Scene 8

(A spotlight comes on BROZEK seated at the desk in the office. BROZEK is consulting notes and dictating into the microphone of an old-fashioned dictating machine. As he begins to talk, the lights rise in the cafeteria and MAX, SAM and HENRY enter the cafeteria carrying trays. They take seats and begin to eat, acting out the behavior BROZEK describes.)

**BROZEK**

The subjects exhibited a possessive attitude toward their food. For the most part, they ate silently and deliberately and gave total attention to the food and its consumption.

(The test subjects hunch over their food, with an arm protectively wrapped around the tray.)

**BROZEK**

(cont.)

Many ingenious devices were used to make the food seem to go farther and provide the illusion of variety. As the starvation progressed, the number of men who toyed with their food increased. They made what under normal conditions would be weird and distasteful concoctions.

(HENRY takes all the different parts of his meal - bean soup, macaroni, rutabagas, salad, a piece of bread torn into tiny pieces - and piles them all together in the middle of the plate. He then adds what seems like an enormous amount of salt and pepper and stirs the mess into a homogenous glop which he begins to eat.)

**BROZEK**

(cont.)

The subjects increased the bulk of their food by "souping." For example, a man would drink the fluid, then fill the bowl with hot water, salt it heavily, drink the fluid off again and repeat this process before eating the solid part of his soup.

(SAM engages in the "souping" ritual, lifting his soup bowl to his mouth, carefully drinking the fluid, and repeating the process with hot water from multiple coffee mugs he has on this tray.)

**BROZEK**

(cont.)

The men all considered it extremely important that the food be served very hot. It was as though the starving individual "borrowed" heat from the food ingested as a means of conserving energy. Because some men increased their coffee consumption to 15 or more cups daily, it became necessary to limit all subjects to a maximum of nine cups a day. The Minnesota subjects were often caught between conflicting desires to gulp their food down ravenously and to consume it slowly so that each morsel would be fully appreciated. During starvation, some men would spend almost two hours of a meal with previously they would have consumed in a matter of minutes.

(MAX lowers his face to his food, inhaling its scent, as if he can prolong the satisfaction by smell alone. When he eats, he closes his eyes, concentrating on the taste, holding each bite of his food in his mouth for a long while, then chewing slowly, trying to make each mouthful last.

**BROZEK**

(cont.)

All food was consumed to the last crumb.

(Lights dim. End of scene.)

Scene 9

(Lights rise in the dormitory. MAX is seated at a table with what looks like a thick deck of cards. Printed on each card is a question, which he must answer "true" or "false" and place on a different pile on the table depending on the answer. BROZEK is standing by with a clipboard, watching him take the personality test.)

**MAX**

"As a youngster, I was suspended from school one or more times for cutting up." False. "I am a good mixer." True. "I loved my father." True. "I have often wished I were a girl." False. "I am a special agent of God." False. "I think I would like to belong to a motorcycle club." False.

(The door to the dormitory opens and KEYS enters escorting KIRKLAND, who is carrying Graflex Speed Graphic or a similar camera of the style used by news photographers of the era.)

**KEYS**

This is part of the laboratory where we do some of our testing. This is Dr. Brozek, the psychologist for the experiment.

(to BROZEK)

Josef, this is Wallace Kirkland from Life magazine.

(MAX and BROZEK both look up, pausing in the personality test. KIRKLAND shakes hands with BROZEK.)

**KIRKLAND**

(gesturing to MAX)

And this is?

**KEYS**

(consulting his ever present a clip board)  
Subject number 2.

**BROZEK**

Max.

**KIRKLAND**

(holding out his hand)  
Max. How do you do? I'm Wallace Kirkland, Life magazine. We heard about the starvation experiment, and we think it's fascinating. We'd like to do a piece about it. How is it going?

**MAX**

It's OK.

**KIRKLAND**

No regrets? This looks like pretty rough duty. Starving yourself for months. Is this really better than being drafted? There are lots of pretty easy jobs in the Army. You know, out of the line of fire.

**MAX**

It's not a matter of what is easier. Or what is safer. It's a matter of what I believe is best, what is the right thing, the most moral thing. There's a reason we're called *conscientious* objectors. Our consciences tell us that a war that is slaughtering yet another generation of young men, not to mention millions of innocent civilians, cannot be right, cannot be just, no matter how good the intentions. War is a weed. Its end will just sow the seeds for the next war. I won't be a part of it. The only way to stop the cycle is if enough individuals like me take a stand. The politicians will never do it. And what we're doing here, we hope will save lives, lives that are being put in jeopardy, starving men, women and children, because of this war. Doesn't that sound more just than a so-called just war? This experiment is our battle. It's one we're fighting out of love for our fellow man, not hate. Will you put that in your article?



**KIRKLAND**

You're pretty eloquent. But this is Life magazine. I need pictures that will tell the story. What is it that you're doing here?

**BROZEK**

It's a personality test recently developed here at the university. The test subject's answers to a series of questions are compared to the answers of a sample of clinically normal subjects and to those with neurotic conditions.

**KIRKLAND**

(picking up some of the cards)

"Often I feel as if there were a tight band around my head."  
"I have had no difficulty in starting or holding my bowel movement." "I am very strongly attracted by members of my own sex." "There is something wrong with my sex organs."  
Wow. Well, you're the experts. However, a picture of Max here reading cards won't amount to much. And we can't put anything about sex organs or bowel movements in the magazine. Is he going to do anything a little more visually interesting?

**KEYS**

(consulting his clipboard)

He's scheduled to have a urine test today. And an intelligence test. He also has to do his tapping test today.

**KIRKLAND**

Urine is out. See comments re sex organs. What's tapping?

**BROZEK**

It's a sort of test of hand speed. He has to tap on alternating sides of a piece of paper with a blunt pencil as many times as possible in a 10-second interval.

**KIRKLAND**

(beat)

Uh-huh. OK, how about this? Any tests where you actually measure how much thinner he is? Can we get his shirt off, for example? See some ribs sticking out? Or something that looks like you're doing a procedure on a lab rat. Anything that shows him being poked and prodded.

**KEYS**

We do a series of anthropometric measurements. Upper arm circumference, thigh circumference, calf circumference, bi-deltoid diameter, bi-acromial diameter, transverse diameter of the thorax...

**KIRKLAND**

Thorax? That's his chest?

**KEYS**

We use a pair of calipers to determine the width of the chest. Standard procedure is to do it at the same time in the morning, before breakfast but after emptying the bladder.

**KIRKLAND**

Well, let's see what it looks like now, just for a picture. He takes his shirt off? Can we see what his legs look like too? Do you mind, Max? It's good publicity for the experiment. It'll be something that will put you COs in a good light, show the nation that you believe in helping your country, or the world, in your own way.

**MAX**

All right. It's not the worst thing we have to do here.

(MAX stands up. He's a bit embarrassed how he looks as he takes off his pants. He's wearing a pair of gym shorts underneath. He takes off his shirt, revealing stick-like legs, a bony torso, ribs sticking out plainly.)

**KIRKLAND**

Wow. Yeah. That's good. It does look like you could use a few meals. You know, I've photographed Gandhi. Not only do you sound like him, you look like him.

(KIRKLAND has MAX stand next to one of the walls. KEYS picks up a pair of large calipers, and KIRKLAND positions KEYS next to MAX.)

**KEYS**

(to MAX, always the scientist, as he holds the calipers up to MAX's chest)

Exhale normally.

(KIRKLAND begins snapping off photographs. KEYS and MAX seem a little self-conscious and awkward. They blink uncomfortably as the flash bulbs go off.)

**KIRKLAND**

OK, that's good. Max, don't look at me. Look at Dr. Keys. Look at the calipers.

(coaching MAX on how to appear)

Good Lord, you're thinking. They look like ice tongs. What's he going to do with them? Good. Keep doing that. Good. OK.

(coaching KEYS)

Doctor, you're absorbed with getting the right measurement. Wow, you're thinking. Can that be right? How did this guy get so skinny? What are we doing to these saps? They're skeletons.

(stops taking pictures)

OK, that's good. Let's see some more of the subjects. What else do you do? Did I hear that you run them through some sort of maze? Or a treadmill? And what are they like when they're eating?

(Lights dim in the dormitory. End of scene.)

Scene 10

(Lights rise in the cafeteria. MAX, HENRY and SAM are standing in line, waiting for the FOOD SERVER to give them their meal portions. She carefully measures each spoonful as usual. The men are tensely and impatiently watching the process.)

**HENRY**

(with anger)

C'mon, c'mon. Damn it. How long can it take to spoon out a tiny little bit of food?

(The SERVER is rattled by the barely contained anger and tension of the test subjects. Despite her efforts to be careful, a small chunk of rutabaga drops from a plate, bounces over the counter and falls on the floor. Before anyone can react, HENRY snatches it up and pops it into his mouth.)

**SAM**

Wait, that was supposed to be on my plate!

**HENRY**

Sorry. Too late now.

**SAM**

(to the SERVER)

He's not supposed to get more. Take a piece off his plate and put it on mine. Do it! Do it!

**SERVER**

(flustered)

All right.

**HENRY**

Wait! Goddamn you both. That piece is bigger than the one I got.

**SAM**

(to HENRY, with rage)

Don't touch my tray. Don't touch my food. I swear I'll kill you if you do that again.

(The SERVER is tries to ignore the desperation in the voices of the men and nervously finishes measuring out food for each man. The subjects take their trays to the table where they have left pillows or folded blankets on their seats to sit on. The men sit as far apart from each other as possible.)

**HENRY**

(to SAM, taunting)

Hey, Bible boy, didn't you forget to say grace? Huh? Hey, those rutabagas. Tasting better now, aren't they?

(SAM ignores him. He doesn't raise his head from his food. He keeps eating. The lights dim in the cafeteria. Slow blackout. Scene ends. End of Act I.)

**ACT II**

**Scene 1**

(KEYS appears at the lectern again under a spotlight. The rest of the laboratory is dim.)

**KEYS**

Sexual feelings and expression declined in the Minnesota Experiment until by the end of the semi-starvation period, they were virtually extinguished in all but a few subjects. Biologically, the loss of the sex drive may be considered one of the adaptive mechanisms protecting the individual organism from nonessential energy expenditure.

(The spotlight dims as KEYS leaves the lectern. The lights in the dormitory rise. HENRY is sitting on his cot, examining a small collection of kitchen utensils: a crank-style egg beater, a spatula, measuring spoons, a cream pitcher, sugar cube tongs, a wooden spoon, a potato masher. He strokes them lovingly, like a miser touching his gold. He carefully sniffs each one, and then starts to lick the spoon to see if there's any remnant of food on it. Suddenly, the door bangs open and in steps EILEEN, a young woman, attractive, if a bit brassy, dressed as if she had been on a train trip, but also dressed to impress.)

**EILEEN**

Honey, I'm home!

(HENRY jerks around, startled and embarrassed.)

**EILEEN**

Hey, lover boy, remember me?

**HENRY**

Eileen?

**EILEEN**

Don't look so surprised. Heyyy. I didn't catch you in a private moment, did I? Well at least your pants are still zipped up. For now.

(looking at the kitchen utensils)

What the heck are you doing with these?

**HENRY**

It's my...they're my...collection.

**EILEEN**

(picking up the potato masher)

Funny thing to collect.

**HENRY**

Eileen, what are you doing here?

**EILEEN**

Oh, Henry, baby, the pictures were right. You look so thin. I couldn't believe it when I saw you in Life magazine. Your parents wouldn't say what you were up to, where they put you after you refused to, well, you know. It's like you had died. Your father wouldn't even say your name. But then I saw the article. I had to come. Took the train right up. You're so brave to give up your food to feed foreigners. You're like heroes. Well, not like a soldier. But you're famous! I've never known anyone in Life magazine before.

**HENRY**

You talked to my father? How are things at home?

(EILEEN sits on HENRY's cot.)

**EILEEN**

Actually it's pretty lonely back home. You know, with everyone away at war. It's just so dull. I missed you Henry. I'm sorry I broke it off. I feel bad about calling you a coward. I don't think that anymore, not after you've been in Life magazine. I know you have your principles. That can be sexy. Like Gary Cooper in "Sergeant York." Oh, except he ended up fighting in that one, didn't he?

(EILEEN takes off her hat and leans toward HENRY.)

What I mean is, I wonder if we could start over, maybe get you get out of this place for a while.

(HENRY doesn't respond. EILEEN leans a little closer.)

**EILEEN**

How about a little sugar, baby? Just because you're on a diet doesn't mean you can't have a little sugar. Hey! Get it?

**HENRY**

Yeah, I get it.

(They kiss. But Henry isn't very enthusiastic about it. Even this physical effort is tiring.)

**EILEEN**

Hey, what gives? I used to have to beat you off with a stick.

**HENRY**

I'm sorry. It's just the experiment. We're just all... pretty tired. We just kind of lose a little...well, we're not able to...

(beat)

You haven't gained some weight, have you?



**EILEEN**

(offended)

What! Of course not!

**HENRY**

I'm sorry. It's the experiment again. Normal people look different to us. But you look great, honest.

(beat)

Hey, I know, let's go out to dinner. I'll take you to the best restaurant in town.

**EILEEN**

What do you mean? I thought you were supposed to be on this starvation diet?

**HENRY**

Oh, I won't eat anything. I'll just have a cup of coffee and watch you eat. We do that sort of thing all the time.

**EILEEN**

Henry, uh, I don't think I could eat a dinner with you staring at me, especially if I'm apparently an enormous cow now. Good God, Henry, what's come over you? I come all this way to make up with you, and you seem more interested in a potato masher than a real woman.

**HENRY**

No, it's not that way, really. How about this? We'll go to a movie. Have you seen "Meet Me in St. Louis?" It's really good. There's this scene where the family is sitting down to dinner and the cook brings out this enormous, fatty corned beef roast. My God, what a great scene. Then later the family is in the living room and they're having these huge slices of a layer cake. It's in Technicolor, so I'm pretty sure I could tell it was chocolate cake. Then when they get to the World's Fair, they've got cotton candy, and they're looking for the French restaurant. Doesn't that sound good?

(Lights dim in the dormitory. End of scene.)

Scene 2

(Before the lights rise, MAX and SAM work in the cafeteria segment of the lab, turning the long tables into several smaller tables. They set up flower vases on each table and dishes and silverware. The men move slowly and laboriously under the influence of starvation. The cafeteria is now a restaurant. As the lights rise, a middle-aged, middle-class WOMAN DINER is seated at one of the tables, treating herself to a meal after a long day of shopping. Seated at another table are MAX and SAM, drinking cups of coffee and watching the WOMAN. The WAITER approaches the WOMAN DINER and serves her an entrée.)

**MAX**

(with almost sexual pleasure)

Oh, man, that's good. When's the last time we had a big slab of meat like that? Put it right in your mouth, baby.

**SAM**

I like it with ketchup. Lots of ketchup. I'd probably empty about half a bottle of ketchup over it.

**MAX**

Did you see that big pat of butter she put on her green beans? It's practically swimming in butter. Now it's dripping down her chin.

(The WOMAN DINER uses a napkin to wipe her mouth.)

**MAX**

Oh, I'd volunteer to lick it off.

**SAM**

Butter on bread, that would be good too. And a big pat of butter on mashed potatoes.

**MAX**

Or just plain butter. Or gravy.

**SAM**

Both. Butter and gravy.

(Before the WOMAN DINER finishes her entrée, the WAITER brings her the dessert she ordered, an ice cream sundae. She eats the cherry, eats the whipped cream and starts eating the ice cream.)

**SAM**

Oh my God. I'm in love. I would kill for something like that right now.

(The WOMAN DINER takes a few more bites, sighs, and pushes the sundae away. She's done and she signals the WAITER.)

**WOMAN DINER**

Check, please.

**WAITER**

Yes, ma'am.

(The WAITER gives the WOMAN DINER her bill.)  
Would you like a doggie bag for your dinner?

**WOMAN DINER**

No, you can take it away.

(The WAITER looks a bit reproachful, but he takes the plate of half-eaten food away. The WOMAN DINER leaves money for her bill.)

**SAM**

(agitated)  
I can't believe it. She's not going to finish it. She's not going to eat it.

**MAX**

Easy, Sam. It's OK.

**SAM**

No, it's not.

(SAM gets up and shuffles over to the WOMAN DINER who is putting her wallet back in her purse and getting ready to leave.)

**SAM**

Excuse me, lady.

(WOMAN DINER looks at him faintly puzzled.)

**SAM**

Do you know what they're going to do with that meatloaf you didn't finish? Do you? They're going to throw it out. It's going to rot in a garbage can!

(The WOMAN DINER starts to back away. MAX has gotten up and is grabbing at SAM's arm.)

**WOMAN DINER**

What are you talking about?

**MAX**

C'mon, Sam. We're going to get into trouble.

**SAM**

(waving his arms and raving at the WOMAN  
DINER)

Don't you know that people are starving while you're  
throwing away food? Don't you know that it's selfish and  
sinful to waste food? You go back and finish your meal! Get  
that meat loaf out of the garbage and eat it! Do you hear  
me! Eat it!

**WOMAN DINER**

(backing away in a panic)

Who are you? Are you insane?

**MAX**

C'mon, Sam, they're gonna call the cops on us.

(MAX manages to pull SAM away from the WOMAN  
DINER who flees from the restaurant.)

**SAM**

It's not OK. She was wrong. It's wrong. It's worse than  
wrong. It's immoral.

**MAX**

Yeah, I know. But we can't do anything about it now. We  
gotta get out of here.

(The lights dim. Scene ends.)

### Scene 3

(SAM, MAX, HENRY labor to turn the restaurant  
back into their cafeteria. KEYS walks to the  
lectern, but stops midway to watch the  
exhausted men. Then he returns to the  
spotlight to continue his speech.)

**KEYS**

The cumulative stresses of semi-starvation resulted in emotional instability. A number of test subjects were bothered by vivid dreams, particularly dreams of breaking the diet with attendant great remorse. The men experienced transitory and sometimes protracted periods of depression. Analysis of the results of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory showed many pronounced changes, almost always in the direction of the psychoneurotic. The depression, hypochondriasis and hysteria scores increased significantly, and in many cases to extents as are encountered in psychoneurotic patients.

(Pauses, with a flicker of what might be remorse.)

Two test subjects developed symptoms that led to admission to the psychiatric ward of the University Hospitals.

(KEYS leaves the lectern and exits. The lights rise on the office. BROZEK is seated at the desk, reading some papers, and drinking a cup of a coffee. There's also a plate of pastries on the desk, and he occasionally takes a bite of one of them. There's a knock on the door.)

**BROZEK**

Come in.

(SAM enters. BROZEK is still reading and doesn't look up immediately to notice him. But SAM's eyes are riveted on the pastries.)

**SAM**

(in a whisper)

What are those?

(BROZEK looks up, sees an emaciated and hollow-eyed SAM staring at the pastries and is embarrassed. He stuffs the plate into a drawer in the desk, brushes the crumbs off his suit and quickly swallows the mouthful he was chewing.)

**BROZEK**

Forgive me, Sam. You wanted to see me about something?

**SAM**

What are those?

**BROZEK**

(hoping to change the subject)

They're a kind of pastry. Kolaches.

**SAM**

(savoring the sound of the word)

Kolaches. Are they good?

**BROZEK**

Yes. They're a Czech pastry. They remind me of home. When this is all done, we'll have some together. You'll see. But you wanted to talk about something? Please sit down.

(SAM's face falls. He has an expression of fear and embarrassment. He lowers himself into the chair.)

**SAM**

I can't stop thinking these terrible thoughts. Violent thoughts. I wonder if I'm going crazy.

**BROZEK**

What are these thoughts?

**SAM**

The littlest thing can set me off. If someone is talking too loud. Or laughing. If I see one of the doctors going up a flight of stairs, taking two steps at a time, without even thinking, without even breathing hard. I remember when I used to be able to do that. When I felt young and strong. It's like someone stole it from me. I feel like smashing something, hitting someone. I've prayed for discipline and control, to deny myself. But I can't stop these thoughts.

(beat)

One time, we were out of the cage--

**BROZEK**

The cage?

**SAM**

It's what we call the laboratory. We're the guinea pigs.

(looking around the room)

This is the cage.

(beat)

We were outside, getting our weekly miles in, walking along the river. I looked at the yards, and I wondered how the grass would taste, if I could eat it. There was a pigeon, a big fat ugly pigeon, pecking at a crust of bread in the street. And I was jealous of that bird. I was jealous that he had that dirty crust of bread.

(pause)

I saw a kid on a bike. He was really moving, just pedaling away. And I said to myself, "I know where he's going. He's going home for supper. And I'm not." And in that moment, I hated that kid.

**BROZEK**

(pausing for a moment to consider)

You're not alone. These moments of anger are being experienced by other test subjects, as I'm sure you've seen. But so far, you've been able to control it. You've not acted on these urges.



**SAM**

But...

(pause)

I've cheated.

**BROZEK**

(beat)

What did you do?

**SAM**

You know when the football players were eating in the same dining hall with us? Before they decided they didn't want them to fraternize with COs? I had a job washing dishes in the kitchen. The dishes from the COs would always come back into the kitchen without a trace of food. But the football players left plenty of food on their plates when they were done. Some of it would get on my hands. Before I knew what I was doing, I would lick the food off. Or I would scrape off what was sticking in a pot and put it into my mouth. Even the greasy dishwater looked good to me. I asked for another job so I wouldn't be tempted. But then once, I was walking across campus, and some students stopped me. One of them held out a half-eaten sandwich and waved it in my face. "Hey, conchie! Are you hungry?" They all know who we are. Even if it wasn't for that article in Life, we look like such freaks. Everyone stares at us. So this guy, he tosses the sandwich in the garbage. And I was like an animal. Like a squirrel or a raccoon you see digging in the trash. I got that sandwich out of the garbage and ate it. I'm not even sure what was in it. I just wanted to gulp it down before anyone else got it.

(beat)

I must have blacked out mentally. I know people must have been staring, saying things, but I didn't hear a thing. I didn't care about anything except that sandwich.

**BROZEK**

(pausing to consider)

I see.

(another pause)

You're not among those we've suspected of cheating. You've met the expected weight loss curve.

**SAM**

Whenever I ate anything extra, I tried to walk extra miles so you wouldn't find out. And a few minutes after I had that sandwich, I felt sick. I threw up.

**BROZEK**

Well, I'll have to inform Dr. Keys. But these sound like minor deviations that will not jeopardize the experiment. As long as you can keep to the restrictions now.

**SAM**

I think--

(beat)

I think I can. But I can't stop these thoughts. I feel like Esau, like I would do anything for more food. It's sinful.

**BROZEK**

How is this sinful?

**SAM**

"Their end is destruction. Their god is their belly. And they glory in their shame with minds set on earthly things."

(pause)

I've also been having these terrible dreams. They can't be normal.

**BROZEK**

What are they about?

**SAM**

Well, I dream I'm eating. But it's not just that.

(A long silence.)

**BROZEK**

What is it?

**SAM**

(looking down at his hands.)

I dream that I'm eating meat. Raw meat.

(Another pause, while BROZEK waits to see if SAM will continue.)

**BROZEK**

Once again, it's not an extraordinary response. You're not the only person in the experiment dreaming about food.

**SAM**

The meat.

(pause)

It's human. I dream that I'm eating human flesh. Old people. Babies. Do you understand? They're alive, and I'm ripping them apart like a dog. The blood runs down my face and hands. And in my dream...in my dream...I'm happy. It tastes good. I can't stop. Lately, I've been afraid to go to sleep.

(Another pause while BROZEK considers a response.)

**BROZEK**

(carefully)

These aren't sins. They are, as we are finding, the mind's response to constant hunger. I believe it may be a sort of a defense. You are forcing yourself to starve. Yet there is food all around you. You can easily cheat, obtain food outside of the laboratory, drop out of the experiment. The subconscious responds by making available food that is stolen, or unclean, or the most forbidden food of all. Perhaps, we can get you medication that will help you sleep more deeply. That might help.

**SAM**

(not really listening to BROZEK)

Christ said, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger."

(quietly, ashamed)

It's not true.

(pause)

I got a cough last week. I hoped it was TB. That with the starvation, I had gotten TB and I would be removed from the experiment. No one could blame me. But I would be sent home. I would stay in a bed. I would get food again.

(pause)

You ever see a candle in a jar? How the flame shrinks and flickers when the wax or the air is used up? That's how I feel. Do you understand? I'm used up. My flame is dying.

**BROZEK**

Listen, Sam. We won't let you continue if we think you are endangering yourself. Short of that, you must decide for yourself whether you want to continue.

(beat)

Do you want to quit?

**SAM**

(sighs)

No. I can't. Not while the other guys are still sticking it out. We're doing something important here, aren't we? Something that will help others who are hungry too?

**BROZEK**

Yes, I think so. If we can make it to the end.

(The lights dim in the office. Scene ends.)

Scene 4

(The lights rise downstage. SAM and HENRY are shuffling side by side slowly from one side of the stage to another. They go back and forth without purpose. They look exhausted, heads hanging down, weaving slightly like old men. It's not exactly a death march but it's close.)

**HENRY**

How far?

(A long pause, then with more force.)

How far?

**SAM**

Maybe another quarter mile, I think.

**HENRY**

Then we're done?

**SAM**

Yeah. For this week.

**HENRY**

(after another long pause)  
Actually, I changed my mind. The first thing I would eat is fried chicken. I would get a whole fried chicken. Two whole fried chickens! But I would get them to go. I would bring them back to the cage before I would eat them. You know why?

(SAM is silent, ignoring HENRY.)

**HENRY**

I said you know why?

**SAM**

(a long pause; finally)  
Why?

**HENRY**

In case I hurt myself. In case I explode. I want to stuff myself "under the best medical supervision."

(beat)  
I think I'll bring back some milk shakes too.

(As SAM and HENRY finally arrive at their destination, the dorm room, the lights rise there revealing MAX listlessly reading a book. SAM and HENRY flop onto their cots.)

**MAX**

Did you guys hear? I got one of the lab technicians to tell me. Frank is out. He was cheating. Stealing food. Eating garbage. When Keys confronted him, he threatened to kill himself. Then he threatened to kill Keys. Then he ran off. Went to a bakery and bought all the donuts in the store. He started handing them out to kids in the street, making them eat them in front of him. They checked him into the mental ward.

(SAM hears the news with guilt, realizing he's been doing some of the same things.)

**SAM**

(nervously)  
I wonder who's next.

(hesitantly)  
Do you ever think you're cracking up?

(waits for a response that doesn't come,  
then)  
Ever think about quitting?

(The men turn to look at SAM.)

**HENRY**

Do you?

**SAM**

(quickly)

No.

(pause, and then mainly to himself)  
We just have to hold on a little longer. "At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. Then you shall know I am the Lord your God."

**HENRY**

If you say so, Bible boy. But forget the Lord. Your God here is Keys. This is your big chance. Saint Sam, a martyr for science. If you can't take it, you shouldn't have signed up. Besides, you quit, you louse it up for the rest of us.

**SAM**

What do you mean?

**MAX**

The scientists are worried. One kicked out for cheating. Two gone nuts. One sick. If too many more of us quit, or go crazy, they'll have to shut down the experiment.

**HENRY**

Then we'll all be quitters. The conchie cowards who couldn't take it. Too chicken to fight. Too soft to go hungry. Not me. I'd rather starve to death. I wouldn't give Keys the satisfaction of kicking me out. I wouldn't give my old man the satisfaction.

**SAM**

Your father? What do you mean?

**HENRY**

When I decided I wasn't going to take part in this war, it wasn't the fear of God. And I don't give a rip about peaceful resistance and the power of love like Max here. I just didn't think it was right that any man has the power to point to me and tell me to go shoot at some other guy. No one has the right turn me into cannon fodder just because he has a uniform. No one will make me kill. But when I told my dad I was going to be a CO, he said I was yellow. He went around to the neighbors and apologized that I wasn't in the army. If I don't stick this experiment out, the bastard will say he was right all along.

(beat)

Besides.

(he laughs bitterly)

I'm not giving up brushing my teeth for nothing.

**MAX**

What are you doing that for?

**HENRY**

I can't stop myself from eating the toothpaste.

(Lights dim in the dim in the dormitory.  
Scene ends.)



Scene 5

(The lab subjects slowly get up and prepare the room for the next scene. They push the treadmill in place and get other props ready. The lights rise in the dormitory. MAX is seated on a cot. KEYS is there watching MAJOR CORLETTE, a doctor in U.S. Army, dressed in uniform, giving MAX an examination. CORLETTE examines MAX's eyes and ears and checks his pulse.)

**CORLETTE**

(to KEYS, while he looks at MAX's eyes)  
I've not seen this before. And you say the other men have it too? The corneas look dead white, like their eyes are made of white porcelain.

**KEYS**

Striking, isn't it? We've tried putting soap solution into their eyes, and that's still has provoked almost no reddening. It hasn't affected their vision though. It's the same as pre-starvation. Their hearing is a different matter though. During semi-starvation, we've seen an improvement in auditory acuity at every sound frequency from 128 to 8,192 double vibrations per second.

**CORLETTE**

(with a laugh)  
That wives' tale about hunger sharpening the senses. It's true!

**KEYS**

At least so far as hearing. The subjects complain about not being able to tolerate loud noises or music.

**CORLETTE**

(continuing the examination, checking MAX's reflexes, listening to his heart)

And they're still continuing the walking regimen this late in the starvation segment of the experiment?

**KEYS**

Yes, that's mandatory. Although the effort they put into their other housekeeping jobs around the laboratory has fallen well off. Voluntary attendance at educational programs also has almost completely dried up.

**CORLETTE**

I'm surprised you can get them to do this much without keeping them behind barbed wire. You're lucky to have this pool of men around to try this on.

**KEYS**

I know they're not representative of the general population. But who else would agree to submit to this for a year?

**CORLETTE**

I'm not sure we could get anyone in the Army to do it for so long, even under orders. You've had some cheating incidents, though?

**KEYS**

A few. But if any of the subjects do not meet the expected weight loss curve, we reduce the rations for that individual. In a semi-starvation state, it's quite distressing at meal time to see that you're getting less food than the other subjects. I think that's helped them to obey.

**CORLETTE**

I see. Well, everything seems quite familiar to what we saw over there. The edema. This peculiar sallow color. The vacant stare. You could tell at a glance if you saw someone who had spent any time in one of the camps. You've created the same physical conditions here. Only without the smell. That was indescribable. And the bodies. I can't tell you how many dead bodies I saw. Though they didn't look much different from the live bodies there, to tell the truth. Hitler's final solution. Makes you wonder how any of the Jews in Europe survived.

**MAX**

What camps did you see?

**CORLETTE**

(almost surprised to hear MAX speak to him)  
What? Oh. Dachau. Bergen-Belsen. Buchenwald.

**MAX**

The Jews. Did you talk to any from Romania?

**CORLETTE**

I don't know. I really didn't *talk* to them. Just evaluated them.

(after a long awkward pause)  
You're lucky to be here. Sanitary conditions, good doctors.

(indicating the cot)  
Clean sheets. Soft beds. No one shooting at you. You have it easy. Keep up the good work.

**MAX**

(dryly)  
You forgot the three square meals a day. Correction. Two square meals a day. Plus, we get paid the princely sum of \$5 a month. That's almost a third of what German prisoners of war get paid here in the U.S. So, yeah, we're on easy street. Fat city. We'll keep up the good work. Work will make us free, they say.

(CORLETTE looks uncomfortable and KEYS looks embarrassed. Lights dim. Scene ends.)

## Scene 6

(KEYS returns to the spotlight lectern. He starts this part of his lecture confidently as always, but begins to be more doubtful about how his speech will be received as he continues.)

### KEYS

The total loss of body weight in the Minnesota Experiment reproduced conditions of severe semi-starvation. The average weight of the test subjects went from 152.7 pounds to 115.6 pounds, a loss of gross body weight of 24.29 percent compared to control diet. This resulted in accelerating physical debility. The heart was consistently and markedly reduced in size by the starvation. This striking change was at least equaled by the profound decline in heart rate. These changes might suggest a progressive cardiac weakening or impending failure. Endurance capacity was shown to be reduced strikingly. Grip strength and back-lift strength were reduced about 30 percent. Facial color was sallow and pallid. The skin was dry, cold and thin to the touch. The test subjects were observed during a visit by Major Marvin Corlette of the Army Medical Corps. His following statement is of interest in view of his extensive experience in the liberation of Northwestern Europe.

(KEYS hesitates, realizing how this next section might sound.)

Quote: "The salient clinical features we saw of the Minnesota Experiment very closely simulated the picture of semi-starvation seen in occupied Western Holland and in some of the German concentration camps in the early spring of 1945. Except for the absence of filth and secondary skin infections in the experimental subjects, it appears that the fundamental clinical pattern of partial starvation as we observed it in Europe has been duplicated." End quote.

**KEYS**

(cont.; a pause, and then he clears his throat and takes a drink of water as he tries to regain his dispassionate tone)

In general, the program proceeded in close accord with the plan and it was possible to adhere to the rather difficult conditions selected. The arduous and technically demanding program of tests and measurement was maintained in a satisfactory manner.

(beat)

Human misery and want are qualities of life which properly bring out an emotional response. But starvation is quantitative and must be met with quantitative answers.

(The spotlight on the lectern dims and the lights in the dormitory rise. SAM and MAX are being tested at two different card tables. Watched by BROZEK, SAM is reading statements from the personality test. MAX is taking the ball/pipe test, a measure of dexterity. The NURSE watches with a stopwatch and a clip board as MAX prepares to drop a ball bearing into the top of a foot-long pipe, catching the ball at the bottom. He repeats the process as many times as possible in the minute-long test. KEYS is standing silently in the background, watching.)

**SAM**

(picking up a card and reading it)

"I seldom worry about my health."

(glancing at BROZEK and putting down the card in a pile)

False.

(another card)

"I find it hard to keep my mind on a task or a job." True.

"At times I feel like smashing things."

(another glance at BROZEK)

True. "I have nightmares every few nights."

(a pause)

True. "Evil spirits possess me at times."

(another pause)

True. "I would like to be a singer." False. "At times I feel like swearing." True.

(The NURSE prepares her stopwatch and looks at SAM.)

**NURSE**

(nodding)

Ready? Begin.

(She clicks the stopwatch and MAX begins dropping and catching the ball bearing through the pipe while the NURSE counts the repetitions. Meanwhile, SAM continues the personality test questions.)

**NURSE**

One. Two. Three...

**SAM**

"I have had very peculiar and strange experiences." True.  
"My hands and feet are usually warm enough." False. "I wake up fresh and rested in the mornings." False. "The future seems hopeless to me." True. "I do not always tell the truth."

(a pause, and a shameful look)

True.

**NURSE**

Fifteen. Sixteen. Seventeen...

(Despite his efforts, SAM struggles with the test, and the ball bearing slips out his hands. It rolls around on the floor. SAM struggles out of his chair and commences a humiliating scabble after it on his hands and knees. He looks like a clumsy, frail old man. The NURSE looks on.)

**SAM**

"I am sure I get a raw deal from life."

(he pauses, considering.)

True. "I enjoy detective or mystery stories." False. "Once in a while I think of things too bad to talk about."

(beat)

True.

(MAX finally recovers the ball bearing, struggles to his feet, and tries to get it back into the pipe, but he's too late.)

**NURSE**

(clicking stopwatch)

Time.

(MAX is caught in mid-motion, the ball bearing in one hand, the pipe in another. His mouth is open and hanging slackly. Now he looks like a senile old man.)

**MAX**

I can...I can do better.

**NURSE**

I'm sorry.

(The NURSE makes a notation on her clipboard. MAX's face falls and he sits slowly in the chair in defeat.)

**SAM**

"I am an important person." False. "When I am with people I am bothered by hearing very queer things."

(considers)

True.

(The door opens and HENRY shuffles in, carrying a paper lidded cup. He goes to the nurse and hands it to her.)

**HENRY**

(with dull indifference)

It's empty. I couldn't come up with anything. Sorry. There's your scientific breakthrough. Starving man can't get it up. Alert the Nobel committee.

**SAM**

"I have had periods of days, weeks, or months when I couldn't take care of things because I couldn't 'get going.'" True. "I wish I could be as happy as others seem to be." True. "I sometimes keep on at a thing until others lose patience with me." True. "I have a good appetite."

(SAM is at first stunned that such a question could even be asked, as if someone slipped it in the stack of cards as a joke. He repeats the question, stressing it differently each time.)

"I have a good appetite?" "I have a *good* appetite." "I. Have. A. Good. Appetite."

(with uncharacteristic sarcasm)

Let me see. I wonder how I should answer? Hmm. I think I'm leaning toward true. Yes, definitely true. On second thought, make that *fucking* true. Goddamn fucking true. Shit yes! I do believe I have a good appetite! A truly goddamn motherfucking pretty good appetite!

(Everyone in the lab is looking at SAM. SAM begins to laugh, although it sounds like he's crying too.)

**HENRY**

Atta boy. You tell 'em, Sam. I have a good appetite too. How about you Max? How's your appetite? You have a good appetite?

**MAX**

(smiling slightly at a rare bit of humor)

Yes. I, too, have a good appetite.

(KEYS watches with a frown. BROZEK looks on



with concern, but eventually puts his hand on SAM's shoulder.)

**BROZEK**

Sam.

(SAM finally stops laughing and calms himself.)

**SAM**

I'm sorry.

(pause)

"I have a good appetite."

(a sigh)

True. "I am a good mixer." False. "I am in just as good physical health as most of my friends."

(he looks around at the other test subjects)

True. "Everything is turning out just like the prophets of the Bible said it would."

(a long pause)

False.

(SAM sighs again, and his shoulders slump. He's reached the last card in the deck. BROZEK, looking concerned, puts the true and false piles into two envelopes for scoring later.)

**KEYS**

(consults his clipboard)

Next is the maximal endurance test. Subject 34 is up first.

(SAM slowly gets up and takes off his pants. He's wearing old-fashioned gym shorts underneath. He approaches the treadmill with a sort of grim resignation, as if he's being punished for his outburst. KEYS, BROZEK and the NURSE all take positions next to the machine. HENRY and MAX look on with expressions of dread. SAM gets on the treadmill. KEYS looks at him seemingly

without emotion.)

**KEYS**

Ready?

(SAM nods and KEYS turns on the treadmill. BROZEK starts a stopwatch. SAM starts walking at a brisk pace. Soon he is breathing hard and starting to struggle. Several minutes go by. The lights in the dormitory dim, but a spotlight is on SAM. It slowly rises in intensity. As he reaches the limit of his endurance, he will be caught in a white, hot glare. BROZEK consults his stop watch. He looks at KEYS and SAM.)

**BROZEK**

Time for the second stage.

**KEYS**

(to SAM)

Ready to speed up?

(SAM is breathing too hard to reply. He merely grunts and nods. KEYS turns a knob on the treadmill, which speeds up and SAM is forced to break into a clumsy run. His gasps sound like sobs. He leans forward. He can barely keep lifting his feet. KEYS, BROZEK and the NURSE brace themselves. Suddenly, SAM's feet fly out from underneath him, and the others pitch forward to grab him, but they are a little too slow. SAM falls on the treadmill, which rolls him off onto the floor. BROZEK and the NURSE kneel down to help SAM up. He stays on his knees, struggling to get his breath.)

**KEYS**

(to BROZEK)

Time.

(beat)

Josef! Time!

(The lights suddenly go up in the dormitory. BROZEK is startled back to his duty. He fumbles for the stopwatch dangling on a string from his neck and clicks it off.)

**BROZEK**

(rattled)

21 seconds.

(KEYS makes a note on his clipboard. The NURSE takes SAM's pulse. After a few moments:)

**NURSE**

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(KEYS makes another note. The lights in the dormitory slowly dim. SAM is kneeling on the floor, his head down, and he begins to cry. He covers his face with his arm and begins to sob. He can't control himself, and he is ashamed of showing that.)

**SAM**

(through his sobs)

I'm sorry... I'm sorry... I can't...I can't, I can't do it. I can't do it...

(The NURSE, kneeling next to him, puts her hand on his back. She and BROZEK look upset. KEYS looks on as well with a growing expression of discomfort and perhaps guilt at SAM's breakdown. SAM's sobs fade as the lights dim. Scene ends.)

Scene 7

(The stage is dim except for the desk lamp in the office where KEYS and BROZEK are sitting. KEYS has taken off his lab coat. He's slumped in the desk chair in his shirtsleeves. His tie is loosened. There is a bottle of whiskey on the desk. He and BROZEK are having a drink.)

**KEYS**

(his confidence shaken)

Josef. What happened today. With subject 34.

**BROZEK**

Sam

**KEYS**

Sam.

(beat)

His breakdown. He's falling apart. Is it normal?

(While KEYS and BROZEK talk, SAM comes onto the stage through the door in the dormitory and walks downstage. He's carrying a piece of firewood. Light pours from the doorway that he just came through. Also through the doorway comes the faint sound of a conversation. The stage outside of the office is dimly lit. SAM is outside at night under the moonlight. There is the sound of crickets. SAM puts the firewood down on the stage. He returns back and forth through the door a couple of more times, carrying more firewood. On his last trip, he returns with a hatchet.)

**BROZEK**

Based on what we're seeing in their journals and their tests, I'd say it is to be expected. They're pretty much at their limits. They were unwilling to fight in a war, but now they are in a war with themselves. Everything in their bodies is telling them they need food, that they must eat whatever they can lay their hands on. Yet they must force themselves to starve.

**KEYS**

(hesitating)

What we're asking. What I'm doing to them. I didn't think it would be this hard. Is it wrong?

**BROZEK**

You're the second person this week who has asked me to absolve them of their sins.

(to himself)

Perhaps I should have become a priest.

(SAM kneels and uses the hatchet to split pieces of firewood. His movements are clumsy and weak.)

**KEYS**

I have to view them as test subjects for this experiment.

(beat)

But they're still men.

**BROZEK**

Yes. But remember they are *young* men. Young men, even those unwilling to go to war, like to do dangerous, difficult things. Especially if they have something to prove.

**KEYS**

I know. But I'm--

(he pauses to choose the right word)

I've become...uncomfortable...the reports out of Europe...what the German doctors were doing.

(SAM whacks at one piece of firewood a couple of times without success. He grabs the wood

with his left hand, and raises the hatchet above his head with his right hand. He pauses a long time, looking at the wood in his other hand. His right hand wavers. It is unsteady.)

**BROZEK**

You know there's no comparison. These men are volunteers. They were informed of the risks. Which we've minimized.

(ironically)

"They are starving under the best of medical care." They know exactly when and where their next meal will come, inadequate as it is. They know exactly the day when their ordeal will end. They are free to quit before then. I thought they would call your bluff. When you told them they could walk out the door whenever they wanted. But they didn't. And why? Because even though we are slowly killing them and driving them crazy, they want this. They are as invested in this experiment as you are. Maybe even more so. For the soldier, the war will be the crucible, the greatest test of their lives. For these men, it is this. This is the great adventure they will tell their children about years from now. Here. Let me read you something.

(BROZEK picks up a folder on the desk and flips to a document.)

Here is what subject 29 - George - wrote in his journal: "It's undressing us. Those who we thought would be strong are weak. Those who we surely thought would take a beating are holding up best. I am proud of what I'm doing and of the other men here. My protruding ribs are my battle scars. It is something great. Something incomprehensible."

(BROZEK puts the document back in the folder. SAM closes his eyes. He brings the hatchet down. He immediately drops the hatchet and grabs his left hand, pulling it toward his stomach, hugging it with his other hand as he hunches over, gasping.)

**BROZEK**

The success of the experiment now depends more on them than us. Now that we've started it, we cannot stop. We've made them endure so much, we can't call it off without letting them have their reward, without letting them finish it.

**KEYS**

(absorbing this)

The war in Europe ended too fast. Our data won't be compiled in time to help. That's what we promised them.

(Slowly SAM raises his head and body. He lifts his left hand up to just above his face and looks at it. There's blood.)

**BROZEK**

We don't know how long it will take to beat the Japanese. And after that, do you think there won't be other wars? Other starving people? You underestimate--

(A hurried knock on the door. It opens and MAX comes in, looking panicked.)

**MAX**

It's Sam. He's hurt.

(KEYS and BROZEK exchange a worried look. The lights in the office dim. Scene ends.)

Scene 8

(MAX and HENRY pick up SAM and half carry him off stage. They move the hatchet and firewood off stage and the furniture out of the dorm room. They leave one of the cots, arrange a chair next to it and hang a medical chart at the foot of bed. They move with urgency despite their fatigue. Then they go out the door and return with SAM, helping him into the cot, which is now a bed in a hospital. SAM is now wearing a hospital gown. His left hand is swathed in a thick bandage, and he's holding the hand protectively against his

chest. At the end of the bandage covering the fingers are three red dots, blood that has soaked through the bandage. SAM is even paler than he was before, near shock from the loss of blood. He's eased into the bed, covered with a blanket, his injured hand carefully propped on his chest outside the blanket. He lies face up, motionless, staring at the ceiling as MAX and HENRY leave. The lights in the hospital room rise and KEYS comes in quietly and pauses, staring at SAM. KEYS is in his shirtsleeves. It's the first time he's been with a test subject without his lab coat.)

**KEYS**

Sam.

**SAM**

Dr. Keys.

(KEYS picks up the medical chart and examines it for a moment.)

**KEYS**

Do you need anything, Sam? Are you in pain?

**SAM**

No. I'm OK, I think. Thanks.

**KEYS**

(pause)

Can you tell me what happened?



**SAM**

(almost tonelessly)

I'm still not sure myself, I guess. Max and I went out together tonight. We got invited to a house off campus, one of Max's law school instructors. They wanted to have dinner with us. We brought our food from the lab. But when Max's friends started their meal, I didn't feel like watching and pretending to be interested in the conversation instead of their food. So I said I would go outside to chop some wood for the fireplace. I thought it would at least make it less cold for Max and me. I was in the backyard, holding a piece of wood with one hand. I had the hatchet in the other, chopping at it.

(pause)

And it just happened.

(pause, and then with a whisper)

I barely felt a thing.

**KEYS**

(pause)

It was an accident? Your hand slipped?

**SAM**

It must have. Yes. What else could it have been?

**KEYS**

(pausing, considering)

Yes. I'm sorry it happened, Sam.

**SAM**

I'm sorry. But I'm OK. Will you send my meals here? Do you know when I'll go back to the lab?

**KEYS**

Sam, what are you talking about? You can't continue in the experiment. You just lost three of your fingers. You need to recover. You need rest. And food.

**SAM**

I'm out? But we're nearly through. All the tests you've done on me so far? That will still be used, right?

**KEYS**

I'm sorry, Sam. No. We'll only be able to include data on the test subjects who complete the experiment.

**SAM**

It won't count for anything? All these months? For nothing?

**KEYS**

I'm sorry.

**SAM**

(a long pause)

Please. Let me stay. It can't be for nothing. It can't be.

(begging)

My hand slipped. It was an accident. I couldn't control myself. I swear it. It was nothing. I...I can barely feel it. It won't happen again. Max can watch me. He'll do that for me. He'll make sure I won't hurt myself.

**KEYS**

Sam, please...

**SAM**

(with growing desperation, trying to sit up)

I'm sorry. Please.

(He reaches out to clutch at KEYS' hand, pulling it toward him. His injured hand leaves a bloody smear on KEYS' shirtsleeve.)

**SAM**

(cont.)

I won't screw up again. I swear it. I'll make it to the end. Just give me another chance. I swear I'll be careful.

**KEYS**

(pulling his hand free and trying to get SAM to lie down)

Sam! Please don't.

(quietly)

I'll...I'll have to think about it. But for now, you'll have to rest.

**SAM**

(lying back on his pillow, relieved as if he was just reprieved)

Thank you. You'll see. I'll finish the experiment. I won't eat anything unless it's sent over from the lab.

(closing his eyes)

I won't hurt myself. I'll make it to the end. I'll be good. My data will be good.

(Lights dim. Scene ends.)

## Scene 9

(The lights rise in the dining room. The FOOD SERVER is behind the counter getting a meal ready. In the background, there is the sound of what sounds like a celebration outside including sirens, car horns and church bells. There's the indistinct sound of cheering, shouting and singing. When the door opens, HENRY, MAX and SAM enter looking hungry but otherwise expressionless. SAM has his bandaged hand in a sling, and he needs help from HENRY and MAX with his tray. But the three men attentively watch the server as always as she measures out their food.)

**SERVER**

(cheerfully)

So it's finally over. I bet you boys are happy. You'll be out of here soon, won't you?

(The men don't seem to hear what the FOOD SERVER is saying. They do notice that she has stopped spooning out the food while she is talking. At first she's offended that they won't respond. But then she shrugs and silently resumes spooning the food into plates. The men take their trays to the table, with MAX and HENRY helping SAM. They start to eat. The SERVER turns on the radio, lights a cigarette and begins to clean up. On the radio, a news announcer is excitedly speaking: "...traffic is blocked in all directions as throngs continue to pour into Times Square. The crowds there have broken out into a spontaneous frenzy of dancing, singing and embracing. In the financial district, office workers are showering the streets with paper being thrown out of windows. In the garment district, workers are throwing heaps of cloth scraps out on the streets. All the taverns seem to be doing terrific business. The harbor is filled with the deafening sound of steamship whistles, part of the delirium that has seized the city since President Truman's announcement of the unconditional surrender of Japan, bringing World War II finally to an end. The president has stated that the war won't officially be over until a September 2 formal signing of a surrender document. But the nation and the world aren't waiting to joyously celebrate V-J day - Victory in Japan." The announcement is followed by patriotic music and a bouncy big band tune, "American Patrol." MAX, SAM and HENRY continue to eat, focused on their food, not taking notice the broadcast or the noise of a group of people running noisily and laughing outside in the hallway. Eventually the three finish their food, but one by one, each man carefully licks off any remaining trace on their utensils. They wipe their mouths with their hands, and then lick their hands. MAX and HENRY pick up their plates to lick them clean. SAM, unable to

pick up his plate with one hand, lowers his head to the table and bends over his plate to lick it. The sound of licking can be heard as the radio broadcast fades and the lights go down. Scene ends.)

#### Scene 10

(KEYS returns to the lectern. Their meal finished, MAX, SAM and HENRY set up the last part of KEYS' lecture. They set an old-fashioned slide projector on a table. They erect a portable screen on a stand in the middle of the stage. The screen is not heavy, but it is awkward. The weakened men struggle with it. KEYS watches, but then steps from the lectern to help. When the screen is set up, MAX sits on a chair to operate the slide projector. KEYS returns to the lectern.)

#### KEYS

Subjects of the Minnesota experiment were released from the controlled feeding regimen in October 1945, but follow-up tests of some of the subjects of the after-effects of semi-starvation continued into 1946.

Complete results of the experiment were compiled in a two-volume, 1,385-page monograph "The Biology of Human Starvation," published in 1950 by the University of Minnesota Press. But preliminary findings were made available earlier in an effort to aid relief efforts for war-starved populations. "Men and Hunger: A Psychological Manual for Relief Workers," was published in 1946.

(KEYS nods to MAX and MAX turns on the slide projector. The other characters, BROZEK, the NURSE, SAM and HENRY return to the stage and stand facing the audience on both sides of the screen. As KEYS and the other characters speak, MAX changes the slides, displaying photographs on the screen, a different one for each point. The first photographs are black and white images of starving people in post-war Europe, from civilian populations, concentration camps and POW camps. As the recital continues, the black and white photos are replaced with color photographs of more

recent famine incidents in the late 20th and even early 21st century: Bangladesh, China, Ethiopia, India, Somalia, Cambodia, Sudan, North Korea and finally, Syria. The slide projector makes a metallic "clunk-clunk" as the photographs are changed. The whirring sound from the projector's cooling fan is loud enough to be heard.)

**KEYS**

(cont.)

Among the findings developed in working with the starvation experiment subjects: "Do not ask a starving man how he feels. He does not want to admit how bad he feels, even to himself."

**BROZEK**

"The prudent relief worker will never make light of starvation, of the problems of starving people, or of their peculiarities."

**HENRY**

"The starving man is quite conscious of his physical weakness and unnecessary exhibitions of strength and vitality on the part of others are a source of irritation."

**SAM**

"With the tendency for the starving to feel resentful of the well-fed, the staff and other working groups should not eat with the starving group, at least not regularly. If they do eat with the starving, they should be certain to eat every bit of food served them and that they eat exactly the same food served to all the others."

**NURSE**

"Do not expect the starving man to make quick responses. Let the starving man sit whenever possible. Do not force him to activity or try to hurry him. Above all, do not require a starving man to stand in long lines for an extended period of time."

**BROZEK**

"It is an unpardonable error for the worker to mention the dislike of any food. All food must be treated with respect and reverence."

**HENRY**

"The eating schedule should be rigidly adhered to and changed only when necessary."

**SAM**

"By some method it should be guaranteed that each person will receive exactly the same amount of food."

**NURSE**

"There must be no waste. Special attention must be called to the extremely demoralizing effect on a starving man of seeing one bit of food thrown out. Scraps must be religiously saved and used."

**KEYS**

"The relief worker is always conscious that the starving thinks only of one thing. The world for a starving man revolves around food. Those who have not experienced starvation never fully appreciate this fact, and must constantly remind themselves that it is of first importance. Everything else is secondary."

(The lights dim except for the final image on the screen. The last sound is the slide projector being clicked off and the cooling fan winding down to a stop as the last photograph on the screen fades. Scene ends. Play ends.)