INTRODUCTION

We were the Ninety-Eight.

Ahmet found my diary while going through my luggage. It was my fault; I never should have let him come. He said he had questions he needed answered. I could see in his eyes that he had read things he should not have read.

We were Armenian traders in Berlin. Germany has spent decades waging Kulturkampf against the Catholic church. Jews, well . . . There's never been a good time to be Jewish in Germany. In all fairness, 1910 seemed like a bad time to be anything, but we had to be something. Orthodox Christians from a place few had ever heard of was the safest box we could fit ourselves in.

Mother was wise in choosing Berlin. The cultural scene was unlike anything we'd ever seen, and there wasn't a place on Earth with a larger appetite for science. Berlin was hungry for it all. It was the most modern city in the world. It even had a subway, which served us well since Mother didn't drive. She thought owning a car would make us stand out. We were coffee merchants, which seemed a bit cliché, but people find comfort in the familiar. We owned a small shop in Kreuzberg and the three-story building that housed it. We lived upstairs from the store and Mother set up our laboratory in the third-floor apartment that we pretended to rent.

Ahmet was a scholar from the Ottoman Empire. We met at the shop. I was thirty years old, but Ahmet did not mind my age.

He did not mind my daughter Sara. She was almost five when we moved to Berlin. He did not mind that I had a passion for science. He did not mind that I spent my free time in a secret room full of strange contraptions, and he never asked about our past after I told him not to. I did not mind Ahmet. We were married within a year.

Ahmet treated us well. He was a kind and honorable man, kind being the operative word. There were lots of honorable men in those days. When Franz Ferdinand was assassinated by Serbian nationalists, honorable men in Austria declared war on Serbia. Honorable men in Russia did what honorable men do: they honored their treaty with Serbia. The honorable thing to do for Germany was to stand with Austria. France sided with Russia, because it, too, had honor. Seventeen million lives later, the war was over, everyone's honor intact.

Mother died during the war. She hanged herself after breakfast on a crisp April morning in 1915. She thought it was our time, my daughter and me. There can never be three for too long.

Mother had performed her duty well, as her mother did before her. She and I were the Ninety-Seven. My daughter and I were now the Ninety-Eight. I had learned all that I was to learn and I had set a path for myself as instructed. I was as certain of what was expected of me as I was of the sun coming up every day. That certainty would not last. While removing Mother's personal items from the laboratory, I stumbled upon a box of papers I had never seen. In it were handwritten notes and a dozen scientific papers from the previous century. There was a brilliant paper from 1824 by French mathematician Joseph Fourier in which he calculated the temperature of an Earth without an atmosphere, another by John Tyndall, an Irish physicist, about the effect of certain gases on infrared radiation. The one that caught my attention was from an electrochemist, of all people, a man by the name of Svante Arrhenius. In 1896, he had

presented at the Stockholm Physical Society a paper titled "On the Influence of Carbonic Acid in the Air upon the Temperature of the Ground." In it, he performed calculations on the effect of increased or decreased CO_2 concentrations on the temperature of Earth. I was not so much interested in the paper itself as I was in the countless scribbles my mother had added, no doubt over years, judging by the different inks she used.

Mother had spent most of her life working in physics. Her passion was electromagnetic waves, but like all of us she also spent a fair amount of time dabbing in anything from astrophysics to propulsion and flight dynamics. One year before I was born—I suspect the moment she decided it was time to bear a child—Mother had copied all her notes on EM waves and sent them to a promising student at the University of Berlin. From then on, she would sporadically perform new experiments but spent a good portion of her time collecting and analyzing air samples. She had regular correspondence with professors at various universities doing the same at her request, and carefully logged thirty years of data from across Europe inside notebooks. Mother was a brilliant physicist. This was tedious, unrewarding work at best. Why would she waste her time caring about the weather?

I found the answer in her diary. Mother was worried we would run out of time. If carbon dioxide levels kept rising, plant life, and soon all life on this world, would eventually come to an end. She wanted to know how fast it was happening and whether or not we could do anything about it. If Earth was doomed, her life, and that of the ninety-seven that came before her, had been a colossal waste of time. She had read our journals, felt the pain and sacrifice of each of her ancestors. She had watched her mother die. Was all of it for nothing? Every cell in her body was aching for an answer. She needed to know if our lives meant anything.

Answering that question also became my life's work. I make it

sound like it was a calling. It was not, at least not at first. The war had infused my mother with a deep sense of urgency. I was still a child when it ended, and what suffering I remembered served as a reminder to enjoy every moment. For me, our lives were about the journey, not the destination. I took up Mother's research as a pastime. I spent most of my days teaching Sara everything I knew, a task that proved much more challenging than what I had imagined. This was my way to escape, like scrapbooking or playing biritch. Perhaps more than anything, it was something I could share with Ahmet. I will never know if it was the work he enjoyed or my opening up to him—I like to think it was both—but he poured himself into it. He was with me the whole time. He helped collect samples. He even traveled to France to get a better spectrophotometer. For nearly twenty years, he was a competent assistant, a constant supporter, a faithful husband. He was also a great father to my daughter.

On the eighteenth day of July 1925, Hitler published the first volume of *Mein Kampf*, and Sara gave birth to our granddaughter. We named her Mi'a, the Arabic word for one hundred. When the New York stock market crashed in 1929, we knew it was time to go. Hitler's popularity was on the rise, and the United States would undoubtedly pull back all the loans it had made this country after the war. Hell was coming to Germany.

We had to leave earlier than expected. Mi'a was only seven at the time. In hindsight, it was a blessing. Hindenburg won the election in April of that year but it wouldn't last. Hitler would soon take power. We left in September. 1932 was the year of everything.

Amelia Earhart completed her solo flight across the Atlantic. We were ecstatic. It was one of many things that inched us closer to our goal that year, but mostly we were indulging in a bit of vicarious living. None of us had ever been on a plane.

Across the Atlantic, Karl Jansky detected radio waves coming

from space. To Sara and me, it was as if we'd found a window to a whole new place. We could see more of what was out there, expand our knowledge of the universe. We spent entire evenings speculating about what we could find. What would the death of a star sound like if we could hear those frequencies? What kind of radio signal would a whole civilization be putting out? We designed radio telescopes in our minds and imagined giant dishes aimed at the sky, searching for life.

What else? They discovered the neutron, finally. I'll admit, it was somewhat less exciting than watching a woman fly across Earth or eavesdropping on aliens. It was a whole lot less exciting for my granddaughter. Mi'a only talked about crossing the ocean. Nonetheless, particle physics was a lot easier with all the particles. I was happy.

We'll never know if we played a part in any of these things. Perhaps some of our research from the past . . . It did not matter. We had an ocean to cross. We boarded the SS *Milwaukee* of the Hamburg-Amerika Linie on September 18, didn't tell a soul. The trip to New York would take eleven days.

On the third day, Ahmet found my diary. He was seasick and going through my luggage, looking for medicine. It was all my fault; I should never have let him come. I could see in his eyes that he had read things he should not have read. I could see he would not let it go. I could see the entire chessboard, and every move led to the same outcome. Checkmate. Panic is knowing there is a way out but not knowing what it is. Calm is the absolute certainty there is not. I smiled. I told him: "We are the Kibsu." I pulled a pen out of his shirt pocket, put it in his nostril, and drove it into his skull with my palm. I do not think he suffered. I waited until nightfall and I gave his body to the sea.

I won't tell Sara. Some things are better left unsaid. I left the passports I had made in Berlin on the bed. When we dock at Ellis Island, Sara and Mi'a Balian will be no more. Sarah and Mia

Freed will take their first steps into the world. I wish I could see it, that New World, but my time has come and gone. We are the Ninety-Nine now. There can never be three for too long.

A bag of silverware tied around the ankle should be good enough. I think I will wear the blue dress . . . Ahmet will like that. It was always his favorite.

ACT I

1

Sentimental Journey

1945

What's a little girl like you doing so close to the front lines? That's what he said, in German, of course. It's a very good question, though "little girl" is a bit of a stretch. I'm nineteen years old, not five. We *did* always look younger than our age. Anyway, I think a better question is why I walked up to the SS instead of sneaking in. It seemed like a good idea not five minutes ago. Relax, Mia. This is going to work.

Needless to say, I didn't want to come. It's 1945 and it's fucking World War II. Pardon the language. I've been hanging out with American GIs for a month. Still, I was seven years old when I left Germany. I never dreamed I'd see it again. I don't remember much, but I thought . . . I *hoped* being here would feel—I don't know—special. Childhood memories, familiar smells, anything.

They flew me into France with US soldiers from the XXI Corps. A bunch of rude loudmouths, swearing and spitting everywhere. I liked them the minute I saw them. They snuck me into Germany through an unmanned gap in the Siegfried Line. I walked a dozen miles through farmland before I found a German farmer willing to drive me to the nearest town deserving of a train station. From there I spent—I don't know exactly—what felt like a decade on a near-empty train making my way northeast.

I slept through Bremen and Hamburg. The Allies pummeled Hamburg to dust. I didn't want to see it. Not the crumbled

buildings, not the shattered lives. Certainly not the dead. I've seen the war in black-and-white. Fifty thousand civilians burned alive is not something I need in living color. I stayed awake for barley. And beets. Beets and barley and the endless sound of train tracks. Clickety-clack. Clickety-clack.

I watched people come in and out. Little vignettes of human resilience. Children in soldier's uniforms hovering between tears and laughter. Haggard nurses leaving one hell for another. A man and his boy fleeing the night raids. Like most, they don't speak, except for the occasional "Put your head down, son" when gray-green greatcoats and jackboots plod the aisle. Ordinary people in extraordinary times. We all stare at the yellow fields, pretending none of this is real. Clickety-clack. Clickety-clack.

We crossed a small bridge near Rostock. There was a body floating in the river below. A woman. She was drifting face-down, her red polka-dot dress bulging with air. She could have been anyone. Sixteen or sixty. All I know is she was dead and no one seemed to notice her but me. I kept waiting for someone to see her. They didn't. I stared for as long as I could. I twisted my neck backwards, hugging the window until she vanished behind us. I had to see her. I don't know why. I couldn't let her . . . not matter like that.

The man and his boy got off at the last station. An hour later I was here, Peenemünde Army Research Center, where Wernher von Braun is building the V-2 rocket. It's a city, *was* a city. Airport, power plant, miles and miles of train tracks. Twelve thousand people lived here, I think, before the Brits bombed the shit out of it. The factories are gone now; so are the slave workers. All that's left are the scientists. A few thousand brains in a town too big for them.

This place gave up a long time ago. The main building sits alone, as if they forgot to build the world around it. It's ugly, functional, as nondescript as it gets. The walls don't bother

to hide their scars anymore. Burnt bricks. Boarded windows. Empty streets and run-down structures. Whoever kept things up around here is either dead or gone. Even the grass knows it lost the war. Everything smells . . . I don't know what it smells like. Musty. Sad, mostly. I shouldn't be here. I miss my home, my bed. I miss . . . I miss Mother.

She said I had to come. "It has to be done, Mia." I understand. It was her work that enabled them all, including Wernher von Braun, the man I'm here for. A hundred lifetimes had led us to Berlin. Our work, our legacy was here, spread around in the minds of thousands. Willingly or not, they were all working for the devil now, using the knowledge we gave them. Soon, Germany would lose and all that knowledge could be gone. We can't have that. Preserve the knowledge. That's the rule. Mother said that's all she cares about, but I know she can't stand Hitler using us that way. I just wish she'd come herself.

Hitler should have had von Braun executed six months ago. They've already lost. They just don't know it yet. Everyone else is playing another game, fighting for the spoils. To the victors, they say. Well, the victors will pillage this country. They'll pick it clean like vultures. The only question now is who gets the meatier parts. The Americans really want von Braun, but the one thing they want even more is to make sure no one else gets him. That's why they sent me. I'm nineteen and I'm supposed to shoot a German rocket scientist if they can't get their hands on him before the Russians do. I say shoot. I'm sure they'd be fine with strangle, drown, tickle to death, but men sent me, so I know they had a gun in mind. These are the same folks who think a woman's place is in the kitchen. Either there, or in a German compound. Go figure.

Mother set it all up. She works as a mathematician for the OSS. The Office of Strategic Services. There's nothing particularly strategic about them. Mother had the right résumé, she made sure of that, but these people will recruit just about anyone. They hired

a player from the Red Sox—the Boston fucking Red Sox—to pose as a Swiss physics student and—I love this part—kill Germany's top nuclear scientist if it looked like they were close to building an atomic weapon. They hired Julia Child. The chef! They'll also send someone's daughter behind enemy lines without thinking twice, apparently. They call it Operation Paperclip. I don't know why they call it that. I didn't ask. Mother said I had to come, so I did.

Here I am, five months later, making puppy eyes at the SS. That's, literally, what the OSS asked me to do. They used *those* words. Look pretty and make puppy eyes if you get in trouble.

I think I am. I messed up. I told them I was Wernher von Braun's niece, Lili. That's what I said. I said niece. I was supposed to say cousin, but I'm so scared I should be glad I managed to say anything. Niece is bad, though. A cousin is vague enough. Everyone has cousins they've never met. Niece . . . He'll say: "What niece? I don't have a niece named Lili." Even if he's curious enough to play along, the SS will know something's up just by the look on his face. Stop thinking, Mia. What's done is done. Puppy eyes.

It almost sounded easy the way Mother put it. "Von Braun will understand. He's a smart man, and he's a scientist. He only cares about the work, Mia, not who he does it for." I hope so. Our plan, the one where I come out of this alive, sort of hinges on that man's survival instinct. I just wish . . .

I know why I came, I can see it from here. The steel tower. The high-sloped sand wall. That's Test Stand VII. Von Braun's V-2 launched from there and became the first man-made object to make it to space. Right over there, October 3, 1942. I am standing here, legs shaking, in the cradle of spaceflight. This is a place of science, home to one of mankind's greatest achievements. Wernher von Braun perfected that rocket on the top floor of the building behind me. *That's* what Mother wants me to see. She

wants me to see the top floor, not the empty concentration camp in the basement.

There's a concrete footway going from this building to the next. Whoever designed it made it turn at a right angle. Aesthetics, I guess. People, of course, took the direct route. The dirt path they made is three feet wide, and a good eight inches deep. It would take . . . megatons of cumulated pressure to do that. Droves of starved people in striped uniforms walking to a slow death over and over again. This whole town was built by slave workers; so were the rockets. This is a place of science, and a place of oppression, and a place of suffering.

Countless died—That's not true. I'm sure the Germans counted them. They all died and not a single person here ever did anything to stop it. Not the young SS staring at me in his one-size-too-big uniform. Not the engineers, not the accountants. Certainly not Wernher von Braun. His rockets rained on London by the thousands—death falling from the heavens—but they killed more people making that weapon than they did using it. I doubt he could have stopped any of it, but we'll never know because he didn't try. His commitment never wavered, even after the Gestapo arrested him for treason. Von Braun is a man of science. He's also an SS officer. How many good men own an SS uniform?

I suppose it doesn't really matter. The US would want him if he hunted kittens for sport, and I won't come out of here alive without his help. If von Braun is a true believer, he'll turn me in to the SS. If he's a bad actor, he'll turn me in to the SS. If he wants to surrender to the Soviets, he'll turn me in to the SS. All he has to do is stay here if that's what he wants. Russian troops are less than a hundred miles away.

I've been waiting for a good thirty minutes now. Something's wrong, I know it. I'm not sure I can make it out if things go south. Maybe. Grab the kid's rifle with my right hand, raise it

under his chin. Force his trigger finger with my left. I can take him, but there's lots of open space once I get out of here. I need to be rea—Oh shit, that's him. That's von Braun.

Dear God. The groomed hair, the tan. He looks more like a Hollywood actor than a physicist. Mother might be right. I see vanity here, not conviction. This is a man who does research in a fancy suit. He doesn't have to be a good man. He just has to be smart enough to realize the Germans have lost. Selfishness will do just fine. I just hope his ego wants to hear what I have to say. He's coming this way. Be ready.

—Lili!

A smile. I'll be damned. This might just work.

2

The Honeydripper

—Sit down, Lili. I'll be back in a minute.

He doesn't speak a lick of English, but all I hear is Cary Grant. He's all smiles and graces. I don't think he ever turns the charm off. This is a man who likes to be liked. I wouldn't be surprised if he slept with half the secretarial staff here. His office is meant to impress. Mahogany desk, fancy carpet, wall-to-wall bookshelves. The room belongs at Oxford, not in a concrete building littered with metal scraps. I suppose most of this would feel normal if it weren't for the war outside, but right now it reeks of denial. This is wall-to-wall pretend, like a movie set. He's made himself the star of his little world. All I need now is to convince him I deserve a role in it. Only I don't know how. I sure don't feel like Katharine Hepburn.

I feel like a child. I certainly look like one. I cut my hair. I don't know why I did it. I was leaving for Germany the next day. There were a million things to do but I went out and got my hair cut. There is this fancy salon not far from our house. I walk by it almost every day. I see rich people coming out of there and they look so . . . happy, confident. I wanted that. I never wanted it before but I did then. Going on a secret mission for the government. It was scary, but exciting. I wanted to feel . . . special. Ha!

Shoulder length, and bangs. As soon as I looked in the mirror, I knew I'd been lying to myself all along. It was stupid, really. I told myself I wanted to feel special, but I wanted to feel different. It's the first time I've done anything by myself. Me. Just me. I

didn't want to look like my mother. Now I look like my mother when she was a teenager. I'm sure I inspire about as much confidence as I have in myself. I don't think I'd follow me if I were in von Braun's fancy shoes.

Not like my mother . . . Funny. Who else is there? I don't even know who I am without her. I don't know why I can force a door open without breaking a sweat, why I find people more cryptic than differential equations. Mother is the only person I relate to. I am *exactly* like her. I look like her, think like her. There is nothing *but* my mother. I spend my life following the rules she taught me, pursuing the one goal she told me to pursue.

Take them to the stars, before Evil comes and kills them all. My mother's words. *Her* mother's words, and her mother's, and her mother's. Our lives boil down to a single sentence, a handful of symbols on an ancient piece of jewelry. I thought it was a gift when Mother said I could wear it. Now that necklace hangs heavy like a manacle.

The world is doomed, and we must get people off of it. That's what's important. Not this war, not the first one or the next one. Not the woman in the river. Our fight is against gravity, and von Braun can help us win it. Mother said all that, of course. She's the one who believes. I only know we're the same, so I follow. Maybe that's how it's supposed to work.

3

Begin the Beguine

—Do you know who I am? Look around you. I created all this. I made the V-2! If the Americans were serious about this, they would not have sent a little girl.

He's smiling. What a creep! Yes, mister. You're a big wheel. We're all impressed. The good news is he didn't make a pass at me. That and they all agreed they should surrender to the US three weeks ago. The bad news is he won't listen to anything I say. I don't know if it's my gender, my skin, or the fact that I look like a fourteen-year-old nerd. Probably all three, not that it makes a difference. What does he think? That I *want* to be here? I want to go home and drink a milkshake, listen to Big Boy Crudup while a B-17 carpet-bombs this place. But I can't. I have to be here, with him. Him and a townful of Nazis. Time for some Olympic-level pride-swallowing.

—I'm nineteen, sir. And I understand. I do. You're a very important man, and a brilliant one. I know that, and the United States knows that. They will stop at nothing to make sure you get out safe. You see, they didn't send a little girl. They sent Patton's Third Army. All of it. I'm only here to make sure you're still alive when they reach us.

—Flattery will get you nowhere, young lady. . . . How long until they get here?

He knows I'm fawning over him, but he can't help himself. Now for the hard part.

—Soon, sir. Soon. Unfortunately, not before Soviet troops reach Peenemünde.

— . . .

—What I mean is we can't stay here, sir. If we stay, you'll be dead in a week. Either dead or learning Russian. I need you to come with me.

—Come with you where?

That is a very good question. One that the OSS answered only with "away from the Soviets and towards US troops." It kind of made sense when they showed me on the map with their small toys. They like pushing toy figures on maps, with a stick. It's a small map, they could reach with their hands, but they think the stick makes it look serious somehow. Red Soviet figures, blue American figures. Get away from the red toys and head towards the blue toys. Simple enough. What was missing on their little map was about a million little German figures filling all the space in between. One step at a time, I guess. We need to get away from tiny red people.

—Anywhere but here, sir, and preferably without being fired at. The Germans must know they'll lose Peenemünde. Do you have orders to go anywhere?

—I do indeed.

. . . Really? That's it? Maybe it's a European thing. A friend of Mother's went to Paris before the war. She said she asked a lady if there was a post office nearby and the lady answered: "Yes."

—Where, sir? Where did they ask you to go?

—How do you Americans put it? Oh yes. *Take your pick.*

Wow. I knew German command was a mess, but this . . . Right there on his desk, ten, maybe a dozen written orders, all from different people. Here's an army chief who wants him to pick up arms and join the fight on the eastern front. I don't think we'll follow that one. Another one asking him to stay put. The wording on these is fascinating. Failure to comply. Blah blah blah. Summarily executed. Blah blah blah. Firing squad. Here it

is again. Orders to stay, orders to go. This one is from Kammler himself.

Technically, Kammler is von Braun's boss. Official title: Beauftragter zur besonderen Verwendung Heer, Army Commissioner for Special Tasks, something like that. *Less* technically, Kammler is about as close as you can get to the devil himself. Before dealing in advanced weaponry, Hans Kammler was chief of Office C, the same Office C that built all the concentration camps. Now this asshole is ordering von Braun and his men to Bleicherode in central Germany, near the Mittelwerk weapons factory where they build the V-2.

—I think Kammler is our best bet, sir. We should head southwest to Bleicherode.

—No! You said we had to wait for the Americans. Now you want to take us away from them.

It does sound counterintuitive. We'd like to get out of Germany, not deeper into it. But we'll never get near the border without getting caught. What I told him was kind of true. The Americans really have no plan to get us out other than to plow their way through the German army until they reach us. The best we can do for now is to bide our time.

—I know, sir. But we can't stay here, that means going somewhere else. We also need to stay alive. We're going to need help doing that, and since we're in Germany, I think the Germans are in a better position to help us than anyone else. You can't hide from your own army for weeks, sir. Follow orders, any orders. All we need is time.

Silence. I think he knows I'm right. Either he doesn't like what that means for him, or he really doesn't want to listen to me.

—Then tell me, Lili—is that even your real name?—I'm the chief scientist in the V-2 program. I have nearly five thousand men under my command. Why would I listen to *you*?

—Mr. von Braun, I—

—You can go back to where you came from, Lili. I will handle this myself.

I should tell him I have orders to kill him if he doesn't play along. Maybe I should just kill him and get it over with.

—Forgive me, sir, but I don't think you have much of a choice.

—Who the hell do you think you are?

I have absolutely no idea, so let's not go there. I get it, though. Creep or not, he doesn't know me from Adam. I might not listen to me either, but we're running out of time.

—I don't mean any disrespect, sir. I only mean that your options are very limited at the moment. Unless you want to put your fate in the hands of a Russian general, you have to leave. You can run, but you and I both know it won't work. You need to understand, you . . .

—What? What do I need to understand?

Here it comes. Kid gloves, Mia. Kid gloves.

— . . . You're a brilliant man, sir. I said that already. The work you've done here is impressive, very impressive. But you're not . . . irreplaceable.

—I built the V-2!

Good Lord! I almost feel bad for what I'm about to do to him, but someone has to shrink him down to size. I need to speak a language he understands.

—You did. And it's great, but it's not perfect. I think a lot of it isn't your fault. Working conditions haven't been ideal, but that engine . . . I suspect you just couldn't build one that size that fast, without it going BOOM, so you tied together eighteen smaller ones, fed their exhaust into one large mixing chamber, and hoped for the best.

—How dare you? What do you know about building rockets?

—Enough to know there are limits to what the Americans will do for two hundred and three seconds of specific impulse. . . . I don't mean this as an insult, sir. I understand. You scaled up your design and the rocket started shaking like a leaf.

—Nonsense! Are you saying the Americans will kill me?

I need to make him trust me. Me, not the plan. He has to see me as an ally, a kindred spirit or something. I need . . .

—I'm saying . . . I'm saying you couldn't find the right geometry to get rid of those transverse gas vibrations. I'm saying maybe you should try adding baffles around the injector face.

— . . .

He's still smiling, smug as a cat, but I think he understands.

—And we should follow Kammler's orders and head southwest.

— . . . Baffles, you say? Anything else?

—No, sir, just the orders.

Progress. Not much, but progress. At least he's willing to hear what I have to say.

—It will not work. There will be checkpoints along the way. There will be checkpoints everywhere. The SS will stop us.

—We have Kammler's orders.

—We have many orders, from people just as important as Kammler. Someone will find out we disobeyed theirs.

—Who?

—It does not matter. Any of them. The SS will call the wrong person, and they will arrest us, or they will round us up and shoot us all. We will *never* make it all the way to Bleicherode with these orders.

I'm tempted to disagree on principle, but the man does have a point. He also works for the SS. He *might* know a bit more about them than I do. Problem is I don't have another plan, so I sort of need this one to work. How do we make sure the SS will let us through? We have good orders, ones we want to follow. We just need to make sure *these* orders supersede every other set of orders on that table. Problem solved. . . . I have absolutely no idea how we're supposed to do that. . . . Maybe *he* does.

—Sir? Is there anyone the SS wouldn't stop, anything they wouldn't check on?