

CLANDESTINE
Directed by Gideon C. Kennedy and Marcus Rosentrater
English Dialog Transcription

TEXT ON SCREEN
BEGIN TRANSMISSION

MALE NARRATOR

When I talk about my father, I sometimes feel I'm talking about myself. My wife and our friends will be trading funny stories and one of my anecdotes will turn on a quirk of my father's, one of his faults. Any small flaw, really.

I'll get done and even before my friends stop laughing, I'll find myself making excuses. I'll start qualifying my father's actions or compensating by praising his attributes. I backpedal.

I don't want my father to be a bad guy. Partly because he wasn't. But I have to tell on him. Because nobody's the bad guy in their own story.

TEXT ON SCREEN
CLANDESTINE

FEMALE NARRATOR

April 1940: The Allied code-breakers of the Government Code and Cipher School at Bletchley Park, England crack the first German Enigma cipher.

Group Capt. F. W. Winterbotham, assigned to safely distribute the decrypted information known as ULTRA, organizes Special Liaison Units to receive ULTRA intelligence in the field via unique radio circuits.

He further ensures the safe transmission of ULTRA by instituting the use of unbreakable single-use ciphers consisting of random number sequences, known as one-time pads.

This cracking of the enemy's code and the secure distribution of its intelligence lead the Allied forces to an incalculable advantage over their German adversaries.

After the German defeat on 8 May 1945, the capital city of Berlin is divided. British, American, and French sectors partition the West, while the East is taken by the Soviets. Though it will not be until 13 August 1961 that the Berlin Wall will rise, the Cold War has begun.

TELEVISION ANNOUNCER

Colonel Rudolf Ivanovich Abel, alleged the highest ranking Russian Spy ever indicted in the United States, is returned to Brooklyn for arraignment in Federal Court. Arrested here for illegal entry, he was sent to Texas for deportation. Then a search of his quarters revealed espionage equipment. Deportation was canceled and Abel faces charges that carry a possible death penalty. After 9 years of spying, Rudolf Ivanovich Abel is brought to the bar of American justice.

FEMALE NARRATOR

On 25 Oct 1957 Vilyam Fisher, alias Rudolf Ivanovich Abel, is found guilty in United States Federal court on three separate counts of conspiracy. Among his belongings that serve as evidence are a hollow nickel, a short-wave radio and one-time pads.

Though the Supreme Court upholds the conviction against his appeals, Abel is released less than five years later when, on 10 Feb 1962, the United States exchanges him for captured American U-2 spy pilot Francis Gary Powers.

MALE NARRATOR

My parents met after my father got out of the Air Force as an engineer, sometime in the early-to-mid fifties. They got married around '57 or '58. I wasn't born until '63, their only child.

Other fathers throw the ball in the yard and teach players and stats. My father and I logged stations. He even gave me my own little short-wave that he marked with red dots along the dial so I could tune in the strong signals.

Primarily we logged what short-wave listeners refer to as Numbers Stations, broadcasts generally understood as enciphered communications to spies in the field. An agent picks up a short-wave radio over-the-counter, tunes in at a certain hour, transcribes the letters or numbers being broadcast, and converts them using an unbreakable one-time pad. One-time pads and how they worked were among my father's lessons.

He taught me Morse Code. I still tap out signals to myself sometimes when I just want to hear what I'm really thinking. The girl at the bar asking if I play drums has no idea I'm speaking a language she can't understand. She thinks it's a nervous beat when I say...

FEMALE SPY

Got the message?

MALE NARRATOR

My father taught me the Alphabet - Alpha; Bravo; Charlie; Delta; Echo; Foxtrot; Golf; Hotel; India; Juliet; Kilo; Lima; Mike;

November; Oscar; Papa; Quebec; Romeo; Sierra; Tango; Uniform; Victor; Whiskey; X-Ray; Yankee; Zulu.

MAJOR HENRY BARTON

You and I, of course, can communicate with each other openly and above board. But our nation's enemies, working in our midst, must use codes.

MALE NARRATOR

This is how we communicated. In conversations about short-wave radio and espionage, his hobbies.

MAJOR HENRY BARTON

Oh-ha! Pardon me, I didn't know you were here. Be with you in a minute.

Well!

MALE NARRATOR

My father was not, as they say, a member of the second oldest profession. But he played at it well. He wasn't a meek man, simply bland. What self-help books call 'emotionally unavailable.' Like they say a good spy should be. He is the child on the playground content to play his own games, at once observing and unobserved.

As a matter of fact, that's exactly what he is. What they are. Because they are men who still play tag. You're It. Hide. And Go Seek. They're spooks. Bogeymen. No, wait, that's not right. But they do live in the looking glass. Never-Never Land. The Wild Wood. Oz.

MAJOR HENRY BARTON

No matter where you look, there's always some device you can use to provide yourself with a code. Calendars, clocks, telephone dials...

MALE NARRATOR

In their world, magical thinking has practical results. Moving a flowerpot on your doorstep sends a message. Step on a crack and break your mother's back. Those little games we play in our minds, those little stories that we try to grow out of, they live by those. Their worlds burst with significance.

Tying it all together through the airwaves are your ABCs, your Count to 10's. The Numbers Stations my father and I tuned in to every night. Trying to find the key. Trying to peek over the secret garden wall.

FEMALE NARRATOR

In the early months of 1978, after a year of trying, Soviet aviation specialist Adolf Tolkachev makes positive contact with the CIA in

Moscow and volunteers as an informant.

TEXT ON SCREEN

"The data that the agent provided saved [the United States] up to five years of R&D time" Barry G. Royden

FEMALE NARRATOR

By 1981, according to an article published in Studies in Intelligence by former CIA officer Barry G. Royden, Tolkachev is provided by the CIA with a commercially purchased short-wave radio and two one-time pads as part of what Royden refers to as a base-to-agent alternate communication system. Due to Tolkachev's lack of private listening time the method proves ineffective, but the use of one-way communication via short-wave radio is shown as proven and common tradecraft.

In June of 1985, Soviet moles within the CIA oust Tolkachev after seven years as an informant and, by October of the following year, he is executed by the Soviet government. His reason for not exfiltrating - his wife and son, both unwilling to move to the United States, both unaware of Tolkachev's secret.

TEXT ON SCREEN

I cannot think about exfiltration since I would never leave my family.

MALE NARRATOR

I don't know what age I was when I lost interest and stopped listening. Probably around 14 or 15. I began to think that for all his commitment to communication, my father never really had anything to say. Swapping weather reports and signal strength somehow didn't feel like lasting relationships.

FATHER

Hello CQ. Hello CQ. This is W9-WZE Chicago. This is W9-WZE Chicago. Calling CQ for any 20 meter phone and standing by. Go ahead, please.

MALE NARRATOR

When I was in college I used words like 'obsession' and 'sublimation'.

RESPONDER

Hello W9-WZE Chicago.

MALE NARRATOR

Now I just think he was shy, and lonely, and looking for a way to commune with other people.

RESPONDER

Go ahead, Bill.

FATHER

Hello W6-QD Los Angeles, California. This is W9-WZE Chicago coming back. Good evening Herb, your signals are coming in fine tonight. R5-S9. By the way Herb, what are you doing on 20 meter phone? I thought you always worked CW. Now let's hear something about that marvelous California weather, aye.

MALE NARRATOR

I remember around that time, in college, getting my first modem. I tried showing it off to my father. He liked the idea. No tech can resist the latest and greatest. But he didn't take to it like I thought he would. If anything, he dug harder into his short-wave. Sifting through the signals, mining up fool's gold.

I tried to tell him that short-wave was soon to be an abandoned roadside attraction. I'm sure now that it came out all wrong. He turned his back on my new hobby, just as I had turned my back on him. I think he saw its potential but didn't know what to do with it. Like seeing the grown daughter of your high school sweetheart.

I think it made him feel old.

On visits home from school I'd still talk to him about the short-wave, about the history of espionage, about Numbers Stations. That was the only code we had for telling each other that we loved one another. But I'd grown bored with listening long ago and needed something more to keep my interest. I often found myself wondering about the women reading the codes. Who were they? What was their story? Did they know? Was it a privilege or a chore? Or were they just hired voices? No need to know. Here's a job. In East Berlin. You will be doing us a great service.

FEMALE NARRATOR

26 June 1982: After being picked up on charges of child molestation, former Linguistic Specialist and cryptologist Geoffrey Prime of the British Government Communications Headquarters confesses he is an East German spy.

Evidence includes an East German radio receiver, a Grundig reel-to-reel recorder, a false bottom briefcase containing lists of frequencies and schedules, a number of one-time pads. After a brief two-hour trial on 10 Nov 1982, Prime pleads Guilty and is sentenced to thirty-eight years.

In an interview after Prime's capture, neighbors in the apartment below complained of the noise on Saturday nights when they were

disturbed by the voice of a German woman loudly reading numbers.

2 April 1988: British Special Branch detectives discover art dealer Erwin van Haarlem in his third floor London apartment transcribing a Morse code message at his short-wave receiver.

Officially, the pseudonymous Czech agent is "accused of recording enciphered information and being in possession of equipment to decipher that information for the benefit of a foreign power".

He is sentenced to ten years but will only served until 1992, when he will be deported back to Czechoslovakia.

Six one-time pads are found in his apartment concealed in hollow bars of soap. Jelinek, in his 13 years as an illegal agent, is estimated to have received over 200 messages from Prague.

Noted in the details of his capture are complaints from the head of the local neighborhood watch program, who had reported her television reception always going poor at the same time on certain nights, the static a match to the dots and dashes of Morse code.

MALE NARRATOR

My mother may have never heard the Ian Flemming quote, 'Once is happenstance, twice is coincidence, three times is enemy action,' but she understood it.

I never found out if it was the tell-tale lipstick on the collar, the scent of a foreign perfume, or too many unexplained absences, or hushed phone calls in the night...

HUSBAND

Hello Honey, sorry I'm late.

MALE NARRATOR

...unexplained charges on the credit card bill, or any of the other classic mistakes. But somehow my father compromised his position.

WIFE

Where have you been?

HUSBAND

I was working late with Phil.

WIFE

Why didn't you call me?

HUSBAND

I did. I called you quarter of five but there was no answer. Then I

got working and forgot.

WIFE

You knew I had to go the the cleaners this afternoon, so you try to tell me you called me then.

HUSBAND

I tell ya, I did call, and then I got involved. What's gotten into you anyway?

WIFE

Just, what did you get involved in? That's what I'd like to know.

MALE NARRATOR

I can imagine what excuses he gave. I heard at first he tried using a strategy of plausible deniability. "I don't recall." But since that wasn't the truth, it wasn't effective. When I asked her how she knew, she wouldn't tell me. Turns out mom was good at keeping secrets too.

So technically, he could be called an adulterer. But even though he wasn't a kid, he hadn't acted like an adult either, so I'm loath to call him anything with that in the word. It gives it too much sophistication. 'Ran off' makes it sound like he and the girl escaped. They didn't run anywhere. Besides, like I said, he wasn't some kid. He was an early retiree, not a runaway. A cheater? I don't like that, simply for my mother. It says she'd been cheated on, as if she and her thirty-some-odd years of monogamy were a card game or a test. And by looking into the pants of the girl sitting next to him, he failed her.

I find myself now, even today, wondering, compulsively, about the other woman. She was the last. Was she the first? Probably not. These mistresses, who are they? They have families, sisters. So why? Do they know? They must. But they're insecure and will take the attention, like a job in hard times.

Maybe she was someone who'd leave him his thoughts. I often thought that Dad really only wanted his privacy. Or she was someone who had a kind of one-time pad with him. That for those moments she decrypted him. Or made a fantasy he could enter. Never-Never Land. Shaken-not-stirred. Or maybe, maybe they just had a good time together.

FEMALE NARRATOR

In Jan 1997, Akin O. Fernandez releases "The Conet Project" - a four-disc set of Numbers Stations recordings.

In anticipation of its release, Will Thomas writes an article in the Jan. 14th issue of the Daily Telegraph about the phenomenon. In the article, he quotes Andy Tower, then spokesman for the British

Department of Trade & Industry,

TEXT ON SCREEN

'These broadcasts are what you suppose they are. People shouldn't be mystified by them. They are not for, shall we say, public consumption.'

FEMALE NARRATOR

Until this admission, official sources in national governments have only responded with varied excuses for the existence and continued operation of the unregistered Numbers Stations.

TEXT ON SCREEN

Government excuses weather data river soundings drug smuggling snowfall statistics lottery numbers

FEMALE NARRATOR

In a BBC Here & Now radio interview on 21 April 1997, Oleg Gordievsky, a former KGB station chief, confirms the purpose of numbers stations, adding that

OLEG GORDIEVSKY

'The messages are a mixture of professional instruction, what to do next, and some personal messages from children, parents and friends.'

MALE NARRATOR

My father and I, we never talked about it. It was there, we just never discussed it. How could we? He would have been mortified. That's why I waited. That's why I still don't show any pictures. Why I never shoved a camera in his face, questioned him, or it, or our relationship. I could try to psychoanalyze what my father was doing, say that he was sabotaging his relationships, but I'm no expert.

Sometimes I think too many people looking to find out who their parents were are too often only looking for who they are in their parents' eyes. Looking not to see the person but to stare at their own reflection. Journeys of self-discovery are often just selfish.

I guess, in that respect, I'm no different.

FEMALE NARRATOR

In the wake of the Sept. 11th 2001 attacks, Ana Belen Montes, the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency's senior Cuban analyst is arrested in her office on charges of spying for the Cuban government.

Montes is discovered to have been an operating agent for up to fifteen years, while her official analysis of defense intelligence directly shaped U.S. foreign policy concerning Cuba.

For her involvement, she received very little financial compensation, her actions instead motivated by personal ideology.

After pleading guilty and striking a deal to reveal information concerning Cuban intelligence, Montes is sentenced to 25 years for the capital offense of conspiracy to commit espionage. Evidence found in her investigation showed that Montes received messages from her Cuban handlers via short-wave radio, using her laptop, later used as evidence, to decode the encrypted transmissions.

TEXT ON SCREEN

"I have great admiration for Ana Montes. She's a hero... but she took too many chances... in my opinion... she wasn't paranoid enough."
Kendall Myers

FEMALE NARRATOR

4 June 2009 - The FBI arrests seventy-year-old couple Kendall and Gwendolyn Myers in a Washington, DC hotel room. According to the affidavits, an undercover source for the FBI, posing as a Cuban handler, ascertained that the couple had been in the service of Cuban intelligence for thirty years. Agents 202 and 123, as they were known to the Cubans, received one-way voice link transmissions via a shortwave radio of the same make used by Montes.

Before retiring, Kendall Myers last worked at the Bureau of Intelligence and Research in the US Department of State where he had TOP SECRET/SPECIAL COMPARTMENTED INFORMATION clearance.

The two met in their early forties, both recently divorced, and, after being assessed by the Cuban Intelligence Service, began a new life as spies, together.

Their next thirty years would be defined by their secret connection to the island.

Despite having last visited Cuba a decade prior to their arrest, the retired couple had plans to finally sail their private yacht to the Communist country they called "home."

And Numbers Stations around the world continue to broadcast.

MALE NARRATOR

It goes on.

FEMALE NARRATOR

A frequency can be picked up, a transmission overheard, that is intended for a single listener.

MALE NARRATOR

We have to tell the little stories that we make of our lives. What good is a secret if it can't be whispered into someone else's ear?

FEMALE NARRATOR

Once brought to light, these agents share a predominant motivation not of money, compromised positions or egos, but ideology - a belief that the other side, no matter how foreign, is somehow more fantastic. Their fidelity simply depends on if you are the wife... or the mistress.

MALE NARRATOR

Because nobody's the bad guy in their own story.

At best, we are patriotic martyrs sacrificing ourselves for the integrity of the Family. At worst, necessary evils.

TEXT ON SCREEN

END TRANSMISSION