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'The Americans' season finale fan react: Trust your gut

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The season finale of *The Americans* explores how trust can give a man strength ... and how the absence of honesty can make another man implode.

In this season's final battle of the Cold War superpowers, who will triumph: the USA or the USSR?

Elizabeth's spy senses are tingling, her head on a swivel as she and Paige walk the streets of West Germany, where, it turns out, they arrived without permission from the Centre (more on that later). Paige questions her mom's watchful eye. It's a habit to always look around, Elizabeth supposes. **+USSR for quality training.**

Grandma is not what I expected. Elizabeth and Paige wake up to a coded knock on the door, and Elizabeth's small, frail, mother is wheeled into the room. She immediately recognizes her daughter and reaches for her. "I missed you every day," she says in Russian. Elizabeth is perhaps more vulnerable than we've ever seen her. They say their final farewells off camera, and Elizabeth watches wistfully from the hotel window as her mother is helped into a car below. She finds Paige in the bathroom, praying for the dying woman. Unable to join her, Elizabeth sinks to the floor and observes. **+USSR for allowing Elizabeth to say good-bye.**

Paige initially watches the emotional reunion between her mother and grandmother, more intrigued than affected. But she softens when her grandmother calls to her, and the three generations hold hands.

Paige has trouble adjusting when they return to Washington D.C., and she says she doesn't think she can lie to everyone she knows for the rest of her life. Elizabeth says that's just part of life, and they'll get through this together. **+Foreshadowing the episode's final few minutes.**

The Rezidentura has received unconfirmed reports of operations being run without permission. Oleg concludes that this means his shadowy threats spooked Zinaida, who really is a spy and somehow snuck a message to the KGB.

Oleg reports back to Stan. They speculate on Nina's condition in Russia, and wonder what she'd think of them working together.

The friendship isn't as solid as Oleg might think, though, because Stan hands their taped conversation to Gaad, calling it Oleg's confession. Gaad is furious at Stan's dishonesty, especially after the inappropriate relationship that developed with Nina.

Gaad arrests Zinaida, and tells the FBI director everything Stan's been doing—without permission—and warns him he's initiated an investigation and recommended Stan be fired immediately.

Is Stan's career over? His gut is finely tuned (est?), even if his methods are sometimes questionable. He waits at his desk: stone-faced, bewildered, and lost. Who would Stan Beeman be without his badge?

He won't have to find out. The director tells Stan to screw the red tape and keep on with Oleg and the Rezidentura. **+USA for finally busting Zinaida; +Stan for keeping his job, earning more independence to go up against the Soviets.**

Nina is on her own. (There was a CIA operative the USA wanted to save more than her, so Stan and Oleg won't be her knights in shining armor after all.)

Anton's turning into a mad scientist, trying to work out the stealth technology. He's so excited about the new photos that he can't sleep, and he hopes if he can solve the puzzle, he might see his son again. Nina half-admits she was sent there to befriend Anton—but he already knew, and tells her she doesn't have to live their way. **—Minus USSR. Their hold on these assets is slipping, even if Nina is playing the scientist to win her freedom.**

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The episode's title refers to the date of a speech given by President Ronald Reagan in which he compares the Cold War to an "age-old struggle between good and evil." And that's a struggle inside many of these characters that threatens to destroy them, and those around them—no one more so than Philip. I believe this episode was the end of Philip as we knew him.

Philip argues he was looking out for his family by sending Elizabeth and Paige to Europe, but Gabriel is furious and sees it another way: Philip can only see what's right in front of him and can't entertain anyone else's point of view. "Grow up," Gabriel snarls.

Yousaf reports that the meeting between the Mujahedeen and CIA Senate committee was canceled. Philip believes their actions saved the lives of many young soldiers ... but he still feels like shit all the time, for the death of Annelise, and many of the things he's done in the name of the job.

Philip enrolls in a new est seminar, this time without Stan, and runs into Sandra. She's surprised to see him (and so am I). The speaker lectures about listening to your gut, not your head. Philip seems to really take this to heart. So what's his gut saying?

Sandra pitches a wild idea: What if, because of the class, they tell each other everything? I find myself wishing he could. If he did, it would probably mean jail for the rest of his life, at best. But wouldn't it feel nice to be honest with just one person? Even with Elizabeth, he's hiding his feelings about the KGB and est. (And since when are Philip and Sandra close enough that this wouldn't be weird?)

Philip cleans up the mess he started with Martha and the FBI by staging the suicide of one of the bureau's technology experts. He kills the man, plants a receiver in a dresser drawer, and leaves a note on the computer: "I had no choice ... I'm sorry."

Philip returns home, and finds Henry is at Stan's, but can't even bring himself to pick up his son. Instead, he tunes the bedroom radio to the BBC to listen for news from Afghanistan.

Elizabeth and Paige return home. Paige has jet lag and needs some sleep. Elizabeth and Philip embrace, happy to see each other again. She's glad she was able to see her mother, and thinks Paige really will be okay.

But she's surprised to hear Philip is not planning to warn Martha about the murder; she thinks Martha should hear it from Philip/Clark first, or the guilt of thinking he killed himself because of her might break her. (Note: I'm disappointed Martha's story was put on hold for tonight, and therefore left for next season.)

Elizabeth worries that Philip isn't thinking clearly. He admits this was a difficult mission. He's falling apart, and needs her help, but he can't quite spit out the words. Elizabeth cuts him off to listen to President Reagan's now-famous "evil empire" speech being broadcast on TV. **—Minus USSR. I predict Philip will defect, or somehow escape the hold of the Centre in season four (or totally lose his mind).**

The tension mounts as we cut between Philip's struggle to confess his feelings, and Paige, losing control in her own bedroom. She eyes the phone (please don't call Pastor Tim), then dials (please don't call Pastor Tim!).

Pastor Tim picks up. (Oh, not) She confesses she's hurting, and praying isn't helping.

"What's wrong?" he asks. She slowly confesses her parents are not Americans, and begs him not to tell anyone.

"So who are they?"

"They're Russians." **—Minus USSR. Unless Pastor Tim is a KGB agent, as some fans have proposed (and I'm not at all ruling that out), and he can keep Paige under control, the plan to turn the Jennings' daughter is in serious jeopardy, as is the safety of their two favorite agents.**

EPISODE WINNER: USA. Like *Return of the Jedi* (another age-old battle of good versus evil, released May 1983), the United States comes back after a long season of defeat to win this episode.

SEASON WINNER: Total points go to Russia, but the final few minutes of the episode may have tipped the war toward the USA in the long run.

Who do you think won the entire season
3 of 'The Americans'?

- ☐ USA
- ☐ USSR
- ☐ Tie

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