

## **Sidedoor Season 5, Episode 3: The Milkmaid Spy**

Lizzie Peabody: A note: this episode includes mentions of violence and sexual themes that may not be appropriate for all listeners.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: This is Sidedoor, a podcast from the Smithsonian, with support from PRX. I'm Lizzie Peabody.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: Okay, Justin, we are starting this episode with a game. Are you ready to play?

Justin O'Neill: I like games.

Lizzie Peabody: A few weeks ago, before the days of social distancing, I got Sidedoor Senior Producer, Justin O'Neill, out of the studio for a quick game of, "How are these things related?"

Lizzie Peabody: Okay. I'm going to show you two things. And you have to guess how they're related. It's a pretty self-explanatory game. Okay. You ready to see the first thing?

Justin O'Neill: Lay it on me.

Lizzie Peabody: Alright. Let's go!

Lizzie Peabody: We started at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, in front of one of the most iconic displays.

Justin O'Neill: Well, right here we've got Julia Child's kitchen. It's like a time machine to the 1950s.

Lizzie Peabody: (Laughs).

Justin O'Neill: I see yellow tablecloth, some of-the-era teal cabinetry. And, and beyond that, it's a standard well-to-do person's kitchen.

Lizzie Peabody: Yeah, except it belonged to Julia Child.

Lizzie Peabody: That was thing number one. For thing two, we went next door to the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History. Museum specialist Christina Gebhard led us through an unmarked door and down a hallway, and into an elevator, and down another hall to the Division of Birds.

Lizzie Peabody: Whoa! Check out these (Gasps) birds!

Christina Gebhard: This is where all the magic happens.

Justin O'Neill: We're in like a warehouse of cabinets, essentially.

Lizzie Peabody: Cabinets filled with taxidermied birds. Take us to the thing!

Christina Gebhard: Alright. Here we go!

Lizzie Peabody: Christina opened a cabinet and pulled out a green billed Woodpecker.

Christina Gebhard: I believe the one you're looking for is in my hand.

Lizzie Peabody: Oh!

Lizzie Peabody: And she read the tag, which described the genus, species, the contents of the bird's stomach, which was ants, if you are wondering. The tag also noted that this bird was collected by the eighth Secretary of the Smithsonian.

Christina Gebhard: By S. Dillon Ripley. 1944.

Lizzie Peabody: Okay. So, Justin, we're here in front of this little Woodpecker.

Justin O'Neill: Hmm, mmm.

Lizzie Peabody: Any ideas how this Woodpecker might be related to what we just saw? Julia Child's kitchen?

Justin O'Neill: I have literally no idea what these two things might have in common. Did she make like a woodpecker stew?

Lizzie Peabody: Ew. No.

Justin O'Neill: Um,

Christina Gebhard: She uses wooden spoons? These are woodpeckers.

Justin O'Neill: Is it anything to do with the feathers?

Lizzie Peabody: No.

Justin O'Neill: No.

Lizzie Peabody: They had a few more guesses, but they weren't even close.

Justin O'Neill: Then, I'm out of guesses. I don't know.

Christina Gebhard: Alright. What was the answer?

Justin O'Neill: Yeah, Lizzie!

Lizzie Peabody: Okay. The answer is Julia Child was a member of a spy network, that S. Dillon Ripley was working for as a spy, at the time when he shot this bird. So, spies.

Christina Gebhard: Awesome!

[MUSIC]

Christina Gebhard: Whoa! (Laughs). Now, that's very cool!

Justin O'Neill: (Laughs).

[MUSIC]

Christina Gebhard: Okay.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: Before there was the CIA, there was the O.S.S: The Office of Strategic Services. An intelligence organization that included future Smithsonian Secretary, S. Dillon Ripley, and not yet famous chef, Julia Child. During World War II, the OSS pulled together Americans from all walks of life to gather critical intelligence and even sent agents behind enemy lines to spy on the Nazis from within.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: This time on Sidedoor, we tell the story of one of those secret agents: a woman whose courage and cunning, made her one of the greatest American spies of all time. Virginia Hall hid in plain sight, took names, saved lives, and fought the Nazis, all on one leg.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: On a crisp morning in December 1933, Virginia Hall set off bird hunting with some friends. Athletic, adventurous, and competitive, she wanted to be the first to bag a bird, which might be why she didn't engage the safety catch on her 12-gauge shotgun.

[MUSIC]

Sonia Purnell: Unfortunately, she tripped on a wire fence, and as she fell, she grabbed her gun. And she literally shot herself in the foot.

Lizzie Peabody: Ugh.

Lizzie Peabody: This is author, Sonia Purnell. She wrote about Virginia Hall's life in her book, "A Woman of No Importance: The Untold Story of the American Spy who Helped Win World War II." In it, she describes this pivotal moment in Virginia's life.

[MUSIC]

Sonia Purnell: She was absolutely gushing blood.

Lizzie Peabody: (Gasps).

Sonia Purnell: Her friends scooped her up and rushed her into the local hospital, where the only possible way of saving her life was by cutting off her left leg. This was such a rude awakening for Virginia, and for a while, she thought her life was over.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: How old was she at the time?

[MUSIC]

Sonia Purnell: She was 27.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: Oh my gosh!

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: By the time she was 27, Virginia had spent her whole life dreaming of adventure and that set her apart from the time that she was young, when girls were expected to be proper.

Sonia Purnell: She was a tomboy. She once went into high school with a bracelet made out of live snakes, you know!

Lizzie Peabody: Oh my gosh!

Sonia Purnell: She was quite unusual.

Lizzie Peabody: (Laughs).

Sonia Purnell: A bit of a character, (laughs), but also a leader.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: Her mother had high hopes that she would marry a rich man and settle into a comfortable life as a Baltimore socialite, but Virginia had other plans.

[MUSIC]

Sonia Purnell: Her great aim was to be an ambassador. No women had been ambassadors by this point.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: So, that must have been a great disappointment to her mother.

[MUSIC]

Sonia Purnell: Well, it didn't quite fit in with Mrs. Hall's great plan, no!

Lizzie Peabody: (Laughs).

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: But Mrs. Hall wasn't the only one to be disappointed. Because even with years of university study, international travel, and fluency in five languages (count 'em)...

[MUSIC]

Sonia Purnell: French, Italian, Spanish, Russian and German.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: That's five. Wow!

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: The State Department denied her entry to the Foreign Service. First, because she didn't pass the test, then because papers went missing, and finally, because she was an amputee.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: But Sonia says...

Sonia Purnell: We kind of guess what might have been going on here because there were only six women out of 1,500 American diplomats at the time, and they clearly didn't want Virginia.

Lizzie Peabody: Wow!

Sonia Purnell: And they clearly didn't want Virginia. Yeah.

Lizzie Peabody: The State Department didn't make Virginia an ambassador, but they did offer her a role as a secretary. And she spent the next several years in Europe, but she was not happy.

Lizzie Peabody: She was unhappy just because she was in administrative roles, or?

Sonia Purnell: Yeah. So, she was getting very, very menial tasks, answering the phone, filing.

Lizzie Peabody: So, Virginia found something less boring to do. After World War II broke out in 1939, she volunteered as an ambulance driver for the French Army, ferrying the wounded from the battlefield to the hospital under machine-gun fire. And I'd be shocked by this, but this was a woman who wore a live snake bracelet. She could have been as snug as a bug in a rug at home. Her own country wasn't even in the war yet.

Sonia Purnell: You're absolutely right. America was not in the war yet. Her mother would much rather her had gone back to Baltimore obviously, and had a safe and comfortable life, but that just wasn't Virginia. Okay! So, her country wasn't taking part, but as far as she was concerned, that didn't mean to say that she couldn't do her bit.

Lizzie Peabody: So how did Virginia become a spy then?

Sonia Purnell: This moment, this history-changing moment happened where she bumped into, by chance, an undercover British agent.

Lizzie Peabody: And it happened in the place where all the best movie moments happen: the train station.

Sonia Purnell: And he realized, here was a force of nature. So, he gave her the phone number. He said it was of a friend; actually, it was the phone number of a new British Secret Service, the one called Special Operations Executive.

Lizzie Peabody: The SOE. Winston Churchill's so-called, "Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare." By now, the Germans had taken over France, and the British were desperate to get a spy in there, to see what was going on.

Sonia Purnell: But it was so perilous, so unknown that after six months of trying, they hadn't managed to get one person in yet. And so, when Virginia Hall comes calling and says, "I'll do it, and I'm American. So, I can go in and I'll pretend I'm a journalist and write pieces for the New York Post." That's what they did.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: In September 1941, Virginia Hall infiltrated the city of Lyon, in central France. Nobody gave the 35-year-old amputee much of a chance of surviving the first few days.

[MUSIC]

Sonia Purnell: Her job, with no contacts, no reception committee, virtually no training, was to kickstart the flames of the resistance. No one really done this. The resistance didn't exist at this point.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: Lyon, at that time, was under the rule of the Vichy government, Nazi collaborators. The Vichy police and the Gestapo, who were the German Secret Police, encouraged neighbors to turn on one another by offering cash rewards to people who accused others of treasonous activities, like listening to foreign news radio, or associating with Jewish people. There were thousands of denunciations every day, and into this atmosphere of paranoia came Virginia. Her job was to grow an invisible resistance network of ordinary citizens who could remain undetected in French society, while establishing safehouses and stockpiling weapons, so that when the Allied forces eventually invaded, the resistance could spring into action from behind enemy lines.

[MUSIC]

Sonia Purnell: And her first recruits were nuns. She recruited nuns in the convents and she made the convents into a safe house. And then she recruited the local brothel madam.

Lizzie Peabody: The city's leading brothel madam became a powerful ally to Virginia. She instructed, "her girls," as she called them, to spy on their German clients.

Sonia Purnell: And to drug them, so they could steal documents from their uniforms and photograph them and even infect them deliberately and put them out of action. Um...

Lizzie Peabody: Really?

Sonia Purnell: Oh, yeah! All sorts of intelligence was passed to her in this way, and she also recruited their gynecologist.

Lizzie Peabody: Ah! Their gynecologist gave them white cards indicating that they were free of gonorrhoea and syphilis, so that they could go on infecting German soldiers. But before the sex workers got too sick, the doctor would treat them.

Lizzie Peabody: Wow! Yeah, that is one group of people I've never considered when thinking about a war front.

Sonia Purnell: Exactly! I mean, I think what was interesting about Virginia was that she recruited where she thought it was a good idea, not because it was fashionable or whatever, but these were women who were prepared to do their bit.

Lizzie Peabody: As a, "journalist," Virginia communicated with London through articles that she wired back, which contained coded messages. Meanwhile, her resistance network kept growing. Soon, she had allies in all corners of French society.

Sonia Purnell: She recruited police chiefs. She recruited people in the town hall who could do fake IDs, prison officers, nurses, all kinds of things.

Lizzie Peabody: With this network in place, Virginia could get people out of jail, hide them, procure them false papers.

Sonia Purnell: She soon became a legendary figure. Her main code name was Marie. "Marie of Lyon" was thought to be able to do anything.

Lizzie Peabody: But her success gained her the one thing she did not want as a spy, recognition.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: And soon, the Gestapo had their own name for her.

[MUSIC]

Sonia Purnell: They called her Artemis. They had a code name for her. Artemis, the Greek goddess of hunting, because they thought hunting her down was their sport.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: The Nazis put up posters all across France, urging everyone to watch for, "the limping lady."

[MUSIC]

Sonia Purnell: Posters saying, "This is the most dangerous of all Allied spies. We must find and destroy her."

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: After 13 months behind enemy lines, Virginia's informants told her that the Gestapo was closing in. She had to get out immediately, but the only way out of the country was on foot, through the Pyrenees mountains. And it was November, 1942, one of the snowiest of the century.

[MUSIC]

Sonia Purnell: The only thing that she could do was take one of the highest passes, one that no one in their right mind would go over (laughs), let alone in very, very heavy snow with the Gestapo in pursuit. And, of course, on top of all of that...

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: (Gasps).

Sonia Purnell: ...she had a primitive wooden leg.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: Virginia's prosthesis was a hollow piece of wood, strapped on over the knee with leather straps, that went all the way up to her waist. She called it, "Cuthbert," and she used it to smuggle important documents, but Cuthbert was not made for mountaineering. And because the wooden ankle couldn't bend, Virginia had to climb the mountain...

Sonia Purnell: ...sideways...

Lizzie Peabody: (Gasps).

Sonia Purnell: ...in absolute agony, blood pouring...

Lizzie Peabody: (Gasps).

Sonia Purnell: ...from her stump.

Lizzie Peabody: But Virginia had to hide her pain, and Cuthbert, from the guide she'd paid to take her through the mountains illegally, because these guides were ruthless.

[MUSIC]

Sonia Purnell: If they thought you were going to get them caught by slowing them down, they'd push you in a ravine or shoot you in the back of the head.

Lizzie Peabody: (Gasps).

Sonia Purnell: You know, they weren't sentimental about this and so she had to keep up.



[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: But, how would she have hidden her, you know, she's bleeding from her stump and...

Sonia Purnell: Well, she's wearing pants and she's binding every time they stop, even for a few minutes. She tries to hide and bind the leg, trying to hide the blood as much as she can. They're in a howling blizzard. So, I'm sure that visibility was pretty difficult anyway. Somehow, she managed to keep going.

Lizzie Peabody: From the shelter of a hut in the Pyrenees, Virginia radioed back to London that she was okay, but Cuthbert was quote, "being tiresome."

[MUSIC]

Sonia Purnell: The duty officer that night signaled back, "If Cuthbert tiresome, have him eliminated," assuming Cuthbert must have been someone that she was with. (Laughs).

Lizzie Peabody: (Laughs).

[MUSIC]

Sonia Purnell: So, little bit of a misunderstanding there, but I think everyone was put right in the end.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: In the end, Virginia made the 50-mile trek over the mountains into bordering Spain, out of reach of the Gestapo, but her life as a spy was just beginning. Soon, she'd join forces with the budding American spy network that had heard her name from across the Atlantic. That's coming up, after the break.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: We're back! And we're telling the story of Virginia Hall, an American spy who worked for the British during World War II, but before we go any further with her story, let's check back in on the home front.

[MUSIC – "Hail to the Chief"]

Lizzie Peabody: In 1941, when Virginia was undercover in France, the U.S. had not yet entered the war, but President Franklin D. Roosevelt had a pretty good sense that we soon would. And he was anxious about the kind of, "intelligence gathering" capabilities the U.S. had or didn't have.

[MUSIC – "Hail to the Chief"]

Randy Burkett: There was no one to put things together, to connect the dots.

[MUSIC – "Hail to the Chief"]

Lizzie Peabody: This is Randy Burkett, CIA historian. He says, "Roosevelt appointed a friend, a former New York attorney and World War I veteran called, 'Wild Bill' Donovan, to head a new intelligence network called the, 'Office of Strategic Services,' the O.S.S." Their job was to collect strategic intelligence. And this was important, because, at that time...

Randy Burkett: ...the U.S., in particular, was very weak at the beginning of World War II.

Lizzie Peabody: Weak in the sense of intelligence-gathering or just weak militarily?

Randy Burkett: Militarily as well. I think, at the time, Romania had a larger army than we did. When you're weak, you turn to guerrilla warfare and sabotage, because you want to tie up forces, but you... it's gonna be a long time before you can go in conventionally and just defeat them.

Lizzie Peabody: By gathering strategic intelligence, the O.S.S. could learn how the enemy's war machine functioned, and then throw strategic wrenches in that machine, gum things up, slow things down and make the most of their limited military might. And it was Bill Donovan's job to get that intel. So, he got creative. He started with the people he already knew.

Randy Burkett: Donovan turns to his clients, businessman who had been in these industries, who had traveled enough, knew the other side.

Lizzie Peabody: But he also turned to people he didn't know at all.

Randy Burkett: Refugees, coming in off boats from these war zones.

Lizzie Peabody: Oh!

Randy Burkett: ...buying everything they have! Buying their clothes, their shoes, their luggage, everything they had in their pockets.

Lizzie Peabody: Really?!

Randy Burkett: Right. Because, what we're going to do next is we're gonna want to put people into those occupied areas.

Lizzie Peabody: Donovan's team studied these items, down to the stitching in the hem of the skirts. If the O.S.S was going to send agents into enemy territory, they needed the right clothes to look the part. And they needed fake passports and money, so...

Randy Burkett: We hire counterfeiters. Most of the money we used in Germany and occupied France, Italy was counterfeit. And so, where do you find people who can forge and counterfeit? In Jail.

[MUSIC]

Randy Burkett: So, we're hiring...

Lizzie Peabody: What?! (Laughs).

Randy Burkett: (Laughs). Criminals!

[MUSIC]

Randy Burkett: So, we're hiring people...

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: Wait a minute. Let me get this straight. So, the foundation of the O.S.S was the titans of industry and a bunch of criminals?

[MUSIC]

Randy Burkett: Yes, and talented people wherever we could find them.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: Like Virginia Hall in France, Bill Donovan recruited wherever it made sense. The O.S.S included professional athletes, actors, divers, parachuters, safecrackers, linguists. It was like the crew from Oceans 11, talented people of every stripe.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: The O.S.S grew to include 13,000 people, including S. Dillon Ripley, who would later be the eighth, Secretary of the Smithsonian. Ripley, while undercover as an ornithologist in Sri Lanka, shot that green-billed Woodpecker we saw in the collections. And Julia Child spoke about her time in the O.S.S, in this 1995 PBS interview.

[MUSIC]

Julia Child: I got into the O.S.S, but having no languages and no skills, I ended up in the files and I stayed in the files all during the war, but at least I knew what was going on.

PBS Reporter: So, you actually reported to Donovan? Did you report to Donovan?

Julia Child: I was in his private office for a while.

Lizzie Peabody: With the O.S.S, the United States was doing something they'd never done before.

Randy Burkett: Building a resistance group in a foreign country and this kind of work, putting people out, either alone or very small group, sometimes three or four people at a time was all new to us.

Lizzie Peabody: But it wasn't new to one American. Stories of Virginia's courage behind enemy lines in France had made it back to the U.S., and back to Bill Donovan. Here's author Sonia Purnell again.

Sonia Purnell: While Bill Donovan is a tremendous character in his own right, you know, loved the stories about Virginia. He was a great romantic and, "daring-do" kind of fellow, who loved

the idea of this female agent he kept hearing about. So, he was always a great supporter of her's.

Lizzie Peabody: Now, by 1944, Virginia Hall really wanted to get back into France. She did not like being on the sidelines, and she had scores to settle with the Nazis, but the Brits said, "No way, Jose."

Sonia Purnell: There's no way we're going to send you back. Every single German knows exactly who you are. You are "brulee," the word for compromised. There's no way.

Lizzie Peabody: Brulee.

Sonia Purnell: Brulee.

Lizzie Peabody: Like burned?

Sonia Purnell: Like burned. Yeah.

Randy Burkett: She leaves the SOE, comes over to the O.S.S, convinces the O.S.S she can go back safely by disguising herself as a more elderly woman.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: Virginia couldn't go back to France as herself. By now, every German soldier knew her face. She had to go in disguise.

[MUSIC]

Sonia Purnell: So, she went to a London dentist, who ground down her lovely white American teeth, so they look like a French peasant's teeth.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: She dyed her hair grey and turned her limp into an arthritic shuffle.

[MUSIC]

Sonia Purnell: She wore lots of skirts, thick skirts, to make herself look a bit stout, and that was also a good way to hide her colt pistol.

Lizzie Peabody: (Gasps). Whoa!

[MUSIC]

Randy Burkett: She was, you know, pretty much fearless.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: Disguised as an elderly milkmaid, Virginia operated on farms, south of Paris. She shuffled into town under the guise of selling cheese, all the while listening in on German

soldiers' conversations, noting their convoy routes and numbers. Then, she radioed all this information back to the Allies.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: In June 1944, the Allies launched their D-Day invasion of France's northern coast.

Reporter for the 1940s: Allied naval forces supported by strong air forces began landing Allied Armies this morning on the northern coast of France.

Lizzie Peabody: But to defeat the Nazis, they knew they needed the help of every able-bodied resistance fighter embedded within the country itself. The O.S.S sent Virginia on her most ambitious mission yet. And it meant climbing another mountain. Away in the hills of, "the Haute-Loire," department of France, hid small groups of refugees. People who'd fled the cities for the countryside to avoid forced labor or capture by the Nazis. They were known as the Maquis.

Sonia Purnell: But they were completely vulnerable. They had one gun, pretty much, between all of them.

Lizzie Peabody: Wow!

Sonia Purnell: Oh, yeah! They had nothing.

Lizzie Peabody: Virginia's challenge was to turn this unarmed motley crew of into a disciplined army.

[MUSIC]

Sonia Purnell: There she was arriving, a woman out of nowhere, foreign woman with a wooden leg. "Look. Follow me guys. Do what I'm telling you to do and I will bring you those guns."

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: She started by coordinating parachute drops of uniforms, boots...

Sonia Purnell: ...ammunition and explosives, and money, and food and vitamins. Some of these people were starving!

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: She schooled her new army in guerilla warfare. Then, she mobilized on orders to target the new German military headquarters in a nearby town.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: The Maquis worked covertly, isolating the Germans bit by bit. They cut the electrical and phone lines leading into the town, ambushed German resupply convoys, blew up critical roads, bridges, and railways.

[MUSIC]

Sonia Purnell: She made them believe they were surrounded by vast armies, but were surrounded by actually quite a small ragbag army of doctors and farm laborers and vets and school boys.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: Without phone lines, the isolated Germans had to use wireless radio signals to communicate with each other, but Virginia was listening. So, she knew when the Germans planned to escape and the Maquis were ready for them.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: They fought for five days, killing over 150 Germans, and taking over 1,000 prisoners. On the final day of battle, the German Major surrendered to the Maquis with 600 men.

[MUSIC]

Sonia Purnell: 600 of them, without a single professional soldier, the whole department of the Haute-Loire in France was liberated from the Germans. That's what an achievement it was.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: The Maquis had gone from ragbag resistance to liberation force. Virginia Hall was called, "The Madonna of the Mountains."

[MUSIC]

Sonia Purnell: Virginia Hall is a legend in that part of France. So, they revere her. Some of the resistance who worked with her, they wrote each other and said things to each other like, it had been worth being born just to have met Virginia Hall, and to have fought along with her.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: It wasn't until after the war that the Allies could really take stock of the magnitude of Virginia's contribution. In Lyon, she'd planted key sleeper cells of the resistance that would help aid in end the war. And the intelligence she gathered as a milkmaid...

[MUSIC]

Sonia Purnell: ...that intelligence had been pivotal in the allies liberating Paris.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: When World War II ended, Virginia Hall was the only civilian woman to be awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. President Truman invited her to the White House for a public ceremony, but she refused.

[MUSIC]

Sonia Purnell: She wanted to go on being a secret agent, which is why when she received the Distinguished Service Cross, she wanted it done in secret because she wanted to go and join what would become the CIA...

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: Wow!

[MUSIC]

Sonia Purnell: ...which eventually she did.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: Virginia finished her career at the CIA. She died in 1982, at the age of 76. And today, the CIA honors her concretely.

Randy Burkett: We have a facility name for her. I can't talk much more about that.

Lizzie Peabody: Because it's secret?

Randy Burkett: Yeah. (Laughs).

Lizzie Peabody: (Laughs).

Randy Burkett: That it's just one way we can honor her.

Lizzie Peabody: Yeah. So, you can't tell us where it is?

Randy Burkett: No.

Lizzie Peabody: Or what it does? Or the shape of it?

Randy Burkett: (Laughs).

Lizzie Peabody: (Laughs). The architectural style?

Randy Burkett: (Silence - Then laughter).

Lizzie Peabody: I'm kidding.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: In 2019, the Smithsonian Museum of American History acquired a gold coin, which honors the men and women of the O.S.S. On the front, anonymous silhouettes evoke the many Americans who risked their safety for their country. The back of the coin is full of mission codewords, and one of them is, "Cuthbert." One more name to remind us of Virginia Hall, a woman with many names, and even more feats of courage.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: You've been listening to Sidedoor, a podcast from the Smithsonian with support from PRX.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: For a photograph of Virginia Hall receiving her Distinguished Service Cross in Bill Donovan's office, where Julia Child evidently spent a lot of time filing, subscribe to our newsletter at [si.edu/sidedoor](http://si.edu/sidedoor). And definitely follow us on Twitter and Instagram @Sidedoorpod!

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: For more stories of important women in history, be sure to look into the Smithsonian American Women's History Initiative. To learn more, go to [womenshistory.si.edu](http://womenshistory.si.edu) or join the conversation using #becauseofherstory on social media.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: If you're stuck at home with cabin fever, or stuck in a closet like me recoring this podcast, and you find yourself pushing the "random article" button on Wikipedia and you think this would make an amazing Sidedoor episode, email us at [sidedoor@si.edu](mailto:sidedoor@si.edu)! And, if you love the show, please leave us a review on Apple Podcasts! It's the little things like that, that keep us going these days.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: Special thanks to Lauren Lyons, Ruth Robbins and Amanda Sciandra at The Smithsonian Associates

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: Our podcast team is Justin O'Neill, Nathalie Boyd, Ann Conanan, Caitlin Shaffer, Jess Sadeq, Lara Koch, and Sharon Bryant. Episode artwork is by Greg Fisk. Extra support comes from John, Jason and Genevieve at PRX. Our show is mixed by Tarek Fouda. Our theme song and other episode music are by Breakmaster Cylinder.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: If you want to support our show, email [sponsorship@prx.org](mailto:sponsorship@prx.org).

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: I'm your host, Lizzie Peabody. Thanks for listening.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: So, is there anyone Virginia was afraid of?

Sonia Purnell: Her mother. (Laughs).

Lizzie Peabody: (Laughs).



Sonia Purnell: Yeah!

Lizzie Peabody: No! (Laughs).

Sonia Purnell: Her mum!