

Sheeple Chase
Episode 3 – “Episode 54: Da, Minister”

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**SFX: A TACKY, MYSTERY THEME, FULL OF SYNTH-Y
THERAMIN**

1. INT. TWO SEPARATE URBAN FLATS

CELIA and GEORGIE are recording remotely, badly.

GEORGIE

**Hello and welcome to another
episode of *Sheeple Chase*, the
podcast where we question
everything, including our life
choices. I'm Georgie Barker...**

CELIA

And I'm Celia Ripley.

GEORGIE

So, how are you doing today, Celia?

CELIA

**I'm okay. Not much on outside of
family stuff.**

GEORGIE

Yeah? You look like you need a rest.

CELIA

**Wow! I skip mascara one time and
suddenly I'm the walking dead!**

GEORGIE

**In a hot Twilight way, not a night-of-
the-living-dead zombie way! I just
meant maybe don't run any
marathons today.**

CELIA

But what if I have to Georgie?

GEORGIE

**Why would you *have* to run
marathon?**

CELIA

**I don't know, what if some disaster
knocked out all the world's
infrastructure and I had to send a
really urgent message to someone
26 miles away?**

GEORGIE

**God, could you imagine? You
wouldn't even get to stop for lunch!
You have to run right through lunch!**

She shudders.

CELIA

**I feel like you might have other
priorities than lunch at that point...**

GEORGIE

Hard disagree.

CELIA

**You know what? I retract my
statement. You absolutely would still
be obsessed with food.**

GEORGIE

**Damn right. So on that note, while I
fish out my most tastefully erotic
expanding joggers, let's hear from
today's sponsor!**

FX: banking app ping

CELIA

(flat.)

**Darn, I forgot to cancel a
subscription.**

FX: banking app ping

CELIA

Oh, and that one-

FX: banking app ping

CELIA

And that one-

FX ping

CELIA

And that one!

(sighs)

**Don't you just hate wasting money
on old subscriptions?**

GEORGIE

(peppy)

**No! Because I have SubSub, the
subscription service management
service subscription!**

CELIA

**The subscription subservice sub...
what?**

GEORGIE

**Subsub! The subscription service
management service subscription!
With SubSub, I can manage all my
subscriptions in one place, so I
never lose track of what I'm paying
for.**

CELIA

That could save me so much money.

GEORGIE

**At only 49.99 a month it pays for
itself! Literally, because your**

**SubSub sub is also managed
through your SubSub account.**

CELIA

**Wow, sounds like I really need a
subscription service management
subsc-**

GEORGIE

**Subscription service management
service subscription.**

CELIA

Subscription management service-

GEORGIE

Just say SubSub.

CELIA

SubSub.

GEORGIE

(increasingly deadpan)

SubSub.

CELIA

(very deadpan)

SubSub.

FX: jingle.

GEORGIE

**So, Celia, now I'm all dressed to flee
from any government agents, which
conspiracy theory have you brought
for us today?**

CELIA

**I think you're going to like this one...
(narrating)**

**The year is 1964. Rock and roll rules
the airwaves, lead paint is**

**everywhere and the cold war is
getting hot... what a time for the UK
to elect a KGB spy as prime minister!**

SFX: Excessively spooky sting

GEORGIE

Harold Wilson?

CELIA

**Yeah, today we're looking tat UK
Prime Minister Harold Wilson and
whether he was a Soviet puppet,
planted in Downing Street through a
combination of manipulation,
assassination, and good, old-
fashioned corruption. Spoilers:
probably not.**

GEORGIE

**So what, the Tories had just hired
John Le Carré as their new spin-
doctor or something?**

CELIA

**Interestingly, at first glance it does
seem as if the story comes from a
legitimate source. In '63, a KGB
agent named Anatoliy Golitsyn
defected to the CIA, and gave them a
list naming Soviet agents in the US
and UK.**

GEORGIE

And Harold Wilson was one of them?

CELIA

**Apparently. Now, obviously, when a
KGB agent wanders into the CIA
offices and starts naming British
politicians like he's hosting
Newsnight, MI5 don't immediately**

assume they're all spies. But they do start asking questions, like why he wore so many Lithuanian designed raincoats.

GEORGIE

Sorry, that like an innuendo thing?
“Does he... you know... wear Lithuanian raincoats?”

CELIA

The raincoats weren't even Lithuanian. They were made in Leeds.

GEORGIE

Notorious hotbed of international communist conspiracy.

CELIA

You say that but the guy who owned the factory was a Lithuanian immigrant and someone had already told someone who told MI5 that *that* guy had played chess with a guy who might have talked to a different guy who was in the KGB.

GEORGIE

Ha! What was the real reason?

CELIA

No, that's the actual real reason. At least, according to Peter Wright the MI5 agent assigned to the case.

GEORGIE

Wow! Okay, so if they were already investigating him for the raincoat-chess connection, they must have been totally psyched when someone

actually named Wilson as a double agent?

CELIA

You would have thought so, but it sounds like they didn't really consider it that big a deal. In his memoirs, Peter Wright said they thought it was rubbish but because it came from the head of the CIA's counterintelligence division, they "had no choice" but to file it somewhere.

GEORGIE

Huh apparently I would be a terrible spy because I would *definitely* have taken that more seriously than the whole communist raincoat thing.

CELIA

Well, don't write off your future career just yet. There were a couple of mitigating circumstances. One was that the CIA Counterintelligence chief, Angleton, was a known bullshitter with one agent describing him as "not above exaggeration"-

GEORGIE

Brutal putdown, for a spy.

CELIA

-and Wright said he was known to "manufacture evidence where none existed."

GEORGIE

Devastating.

CELIA

And Angleton said he '*definitely*' had evidence but would only share it if MI5 pinky promised not to tell it's government it was being run by a Soviet agent.

GEORGIE

And I'm guessing MI5 didn't go for it?

CELIA

Ha! No.

GEORGIE

Even with raincoat-gate?

CELIA

I mean they thought he was dodgy, but not like sliding-into-Khrushchev's-DMs dodgy.

GEORGIE

So do we know now what evidence Angleton had?

CELIA

He had the Russian defector, Golitsyn. Which sounds bad at first but lets just say the official historian for MI5 described him as "an unreliable conspiracy theorist."

GEORGIE

I'm sorry, what kind of job is 'official MI5 historian'? All your sources are classified, so do all your footnotes just say "trust me"?

CELIA

Pretty much, Golitsyn was claiming some wild stuff, like that Hugh

**Gaitskell was assassinated by the
KGB to make way for Wilson.**

GEORGIE
Oh wow, was he?

CELIA
Not unless the KGB invented Lupus.

GEORGIE
**But wasn't this Golitsyn guy
the one who identified the
Cambridge Five spy ring?**

CELIA
**Look, I'm not saying none of his info
panned out, just that MI5 didn't trust
him as far as they could throw him.**

GEORGIE
**Hmmm. Sounds like they might have
benefited from today's sponsor...**

CELIA
Worst Segway yet...

FX: Ad jingle

GEORGIE
**With so many scammers online, it's
easier than ever to lose your hard-
earned money to rogue e-course
providers. Thankfully, you can learn
how to avoid low quality, overpriced
and irrelevant e-courses in a few
short web seminars with Itsac
Online.**

**Their patented ten step method for
avoiding online scams is so easy,
anyone can follow it and you can
learn at your own pace with a**

**monthly subscription or save big
with a year's access for only £299.99.**

**Learn your lesson and save your
money for the important things in
life, like Itsac Online!**

FX: ad outro

GEORGIE

So where were we?

CELIA

“Unreliable Conspiracy Theorist”

GEORGIE

**My kinda guy. So, given who else
was named by this informant, could
Harold Wilson have been a Soviet
asset? Did MI5 miss something?**

CELIA

**Doubtful. They were already looking
into him, remember?**

GEORGIE

Because of the raincoats?

CELIA

**Because of the raincoats.
And jokes aside, they already had
him under constant surveillance
because of that, bugs in his offices,
in his house, his car...**

GEORGIE

**So if he *had* been directly in touch
with Russia, they'd definitely have
known.**

CELIA

Oh yeah.

GEORGIE

But what about *indirect* contact?
Could he have used some sort of
code word when he bought raincoats
or something?

CELIA

I mean its possible but you kinda
hope MI5 would notice. Codes are
kind of their thing.

GEORGIE

I thought their thing was suspecting
entrepreneurial Lithuanians.

CELIA

They can have two things.

GEORGIE

So if they didn't think he was a
Soviet spy what were they bugging
him for?

CELIA

Apparently they were "concerned he
might not be aware of the risk of
being compromised"

GEORGIE

So they decided to secretly
compromise his privacy?

CELIA

Pretty much.

GEORGIE

(Singsong)

Irony...

CELIA

Yeah, so it turns out that as a
person, Harold Wilson might have

been the most boring Prime Minister ever. Plus, it backfired, because Wilson figured out he was being bugged.

GEORGIE

Oh so he did have spy instincts after all?

CELIA

I mean everybody close to him thought it was just paranoia.

GEORGIE

But it's not paranoia if they really are out to get you!

CELIA

Well quite.

GEORGIE

So, do you think this is what was really going on with the ghost thing?

CELIA

The what? What's the ghost thing?

GEORGIE

You don't know?

CELIA

Know what?

GEORGIE

Harold Wilson was absolutely convinced that Downing Street was haunted.

SFX: Excessively spooky sting

CELIA

Really?

GEORGIE

I mean, bear in mind, this is 50-year-old gossip from the Oxford University Labour Club. But... they say that he'd hear people whispering about him behind his back but, when he turned around, there'd be no one there and there was this constant mechanical whirring, just on the edge of his hearing... It sounds like all that might actually have been real! No wonder he resigned so suddenly...

CELIA

He actually resigned because he was ill, though, right?

GEORGIE

Sure but I doubt being haunted by MI5 helped.

CELIA

I suppose not.

GEORGIE

So, do you want to talk about the plotting as well?

CELIA

The... plotting?

GEORGIE

You know, the scheme to oust him as PM? I know there was a proper coup planned at some point, which I guess makes a bit more sense if people thought he was a paranoid, ghost-obsessed Soviet spy.

CELIA

Well, that's the weird thing about this conspiracy theory. The rumours themselves resulted in three actual, real-life conspiracies against him.

GEORGIE

Three? How does something like that happen three times!?

CELIA

I mean, they might not have all been real, but the first one probably was. That was in 1968 and was orchestrated by the head of the International Publishing Corporation, Cecil King, who was also the chairman of the *Daily Mirror*.

GEORGIE

Classic *Daily Mirror*.

CELIA

It didn't go brilliantly. Apparently one of King's journalists, Cudlipp, happened to have met the head of the Armed Forces, Lord Mountbatten so they arranged a visit between Cudlipp, King, Lord Mountbatten and one of Mounbatten's mates who was some random called Sir Solly.

GEORGIE

That name doesn't exactly scream political mastermind does it?

CELIA

So, King turns up and says, "lads, the country's on the brink of ruin, the government's about to collapse, there's gonna be blood in the streets

and the army will need to take over. You up to it?" Mountbatten thinks about it but then this Sir Solly guy says Mountbatten is no traitor so that's the end of it and King is kicked out.

GEORGIE

So that was the whole plot? A meeting that could have been an email?

CELIA

I mean, King did publish a front-page call for Wilson to be removed from office "by any means necessary" but he was fired from *The Mirror* for it. Then Wilson was re-elected in 1974 and allegedly history repeated itself.

GEORGIE

How far did they get this time?

CELIA

Well we don't really know if they were plotting at all, mostly it was just Mountbatton holding training exercises in really public places without any warning, like a show of strength maybe.

GEORGIE

I mean that is pretty rude and I could see how Wilson would get a bee in his already bugged bonnet over it.

CELIA

Especially since a BBC documentary revealed multiple ex-military personnel were building up private

armies to march against him if he was outed as a Soviet plant.

GEORGIE

Ah. Again, I think I might be team Wilson on this one.

CELIA

It gets worse. At the time a pair of journalists were secretly recording him with a bugged briefcase-

GEORGIE

Christ who wasn't secretly recording him?

CELIA

-and MI5 were feeding information on him to the Tories, so they could undermine him before the election. And his private secretary was doing the same thing for Thatcher directly.

GEORGIE

Good grief...

CELIA

Oh and you know the raincoat guy? Apparently he bought the secretary a house so...

GEORGIE

Right, new conspiracy theory. Harold Wilson wasn't a Soviet spy, but he was being cursed by a vengeful Tory wizard, disguising himself as a Lithuanian chess-playing raincoat seller, who magically convinced everyone that the biggest threat to national security was a boring, lefty

whose main passions were council housing and widow's pensions.

CELIA

Makes about as much sense doesn't it? So, what's the verdict? Was Harold Wilson a Soviet spy?

GEORGIE

Not a chance. The KGB would have to queue for days behind all the other plots just get near him!

CELIA

Even though he did try to open up trade with the Soviet Union at one point?

GEORGIE

I reckon that might be why M the KGB assassinated Hugh Gaitskell. They reckoned Wilson will be a bit better for them, so they just nudged a few germs towards Gaitskell when he's over in Russia and-

CELIA

You do know you can't catch Lupus, right?

Beat.

GEORGIE

I think it's quite clear that I did not know that, no.

CELIA

Cool. And what about all the other plots against him?

GEORGIE

Let's just say if even a tenth of them were real the poor guy must have been wading through hidden cameras just to get to the loo at night. What about you?

CELIA

I mean there definitely were some plots against him even if he did take a couple of things personally. And he can be forgiven for being twitchy given all the journalists, politicians and civil servants that have admitted to sabotaging his career.

GEORGIE

But was he a spy? Our very own *Mancunian* candidate?

SFX: Buh Dum Tss

CELIA

No, I think 1960s conservatives just didn't know the difference between wanting a slightly higher tax rate and full-on militaristic communism.

GEORGIE

Plus ça change.

CELIA

That's it for this week, folks. Uh, thank you for listening, please don't forget to rate, review us, compliment us however you like, Georgie and I will be back with a new mystery every week!

GEORGIE

We might actually have a special guest for an episode soon.

CELIA
Might we? Who?

GEORGIE
I don't want to say too much right now, because it's not confirmed yet, but I'm pretty excited.

CELIA
Well, there's a new mystery for you already. We didn't even have to wait for next week after all.

SFX: tacky theme tune.

ANNOUNCER
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Sheeple Chase was created by Sasha Sienna, directed by April Sumner, and based on the works of Jonathan Sims and Alexander J Newall.

This episode was written by Sasha Sienna and edited with additional materials by Jonathan Sims and Alexander J Newall, with audio edits by Nico Vettese, mastering by Meg McKellar, and music by Nico Vettese.

It featured Sasha Sienna as Georgie Barker and Lowri Ann Davies as Celia Ripley.

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