

Sheeple Chase
Episode 4 – “Episode 55: Strife on Mars”

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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 listeners and welcome to
Sheeple Chase, the podcast that
puts the "eerie" in "conspEERacy
theory." I'm Georgie Barker...**

SFX: Buh Dum Tss

CELIA

And I'm appalled by that intro.

GEORGIE

Everyone's a critic.

CELIA

**Well, I'm Celia Ripley and I'm ready
to hear more about your latest dating
escapade you were just telling me
about.**

GEORGIE

So it's like that is it?

CELIA

It's like that.

GEORGIE

**Oof. Alright. Well, I think I mentioned
a couple episodes ago, that I was
going for dinner with this guy I met
on a dating app, right?**

CELIA

The serial killer, yes.

SFX: Excessively spooky sting

GEORGIE

Well it was actually nice! We talked about work, hobbies, deepest fears. You know, basic first date stuff.

CELIA

Sure. And, out of curiosity, what did you say is your biggest fear?

GEORGIE

I mean, it's tough to choose just one, you know, they're all great, but it's probably heights. Or snakes. Course' I don't like needles either. Also, not a big fan of clowns. Kind of claustrophobic. Weirdly, chill with spiders, but absolutely no moths. Oh, puppets really freak me out -

CELIA

-but you had a nice time at the dinner?

GEORGIE

Oh, er, yeah. We had a nice night and we decided to see each other again.

Beat. Captain Barker gets up and scurries off.

CELIA

And...

GEORGIE

(furious)

And he took me bungee jumping. Bungee jumping! I told him my biggest fear was heights and he arranged for me to jump off a 200ft high wobbly box!

CELIA
(laughing)
Why would anyone think that's a
good idea?

GEORGIE
He said he thought it would be "extra
exciting for me".

CELIA
(still laughing)
That is deranged.

GEORGIE
Yes! It is!

CELIA
Did you jump?

GEORGIE
Of course not! I had a panic attack
10ft off the ground then they tried to
lower me back down, but the crane
got stuck and I had to spend an hour
trapped in this windy metal box on
my literal nightmare date.

CELIA
And you with your claustrophobia
too!

GEORGIE
I know!

CELIA
(pulling it back)
No third date, then?

GEORGIE
Absolutely not.

Beat.

CELIA

Georgie?

GEORGIE

I may however be seeing the jump instructor for a coffee next week. On the ground.

CELIA

(laughing)

Just don't ask them about their work!

GEORGIE

Oh ha ha. Just do the read you big bully.

FX: jingle

CELIA

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FX: ad outro jingle.

CELIA

So, Georgie, it's your week. What madness have you got for us this time?

GEORGIE

It's a good one, I promise! Okay.
(narrating)

For thousands of years, humanity has assumed we are alone in the universe-

CELIA groans.

GEORGIE

(louder)

-but are we being watched? Have already made contact with an alien race? Is the truth not only out there, but also down here?

FX: Spooky alien sounds.

Beat.

CELIA

Georgie, no.

GEORGIE

Yes! You can choose something boring like New Coke next week, but, today,

(singing)

Let's talk about space, baby. Do the government know E.T? Let's talk about space. Let's talk about space!

CELIA

Eurgh fine. But you don't get to do them again for the rest of the year.

GEORGIE

Deal! So, I think we can all agree that alien life does exist *somewhere* in the universe-

CELIA

We can?

GEORGIE

Oh yeah, the universe is massive so there's bound to be something somewhere. Maybe not little green men but a fungus or something!

CELIA

If you say so...

GEORGIE

I do! So, that means we can skip straight to asking whether intelligent life has ever made it to Earth, and whether governments or other agencies have been hiding evidence of their visit.

CELIA

Fine...

GEORGIE

So let's start at the beginning. In Aztec, New Mexico-

CELIA

You can't be serious. We're not starting with the racist pyramid thing-

GEORGIE

-Aztec, New Mexico, 1948.

CELIA

Oh... All right then.

GEORGIE

So obviously aliens didn't build the pyramids or the Mayan temples or the Easter Island heads or whatever. In fact, sidebar, we already know how people built the pyramids! They literally drew pictures. They practically left us an IKEA manual!

CELIA

Noted. Now, you were talking about Aztec in 1948? Was it like a Roswell thing?

GEORGIE

No, that was in Roswell and happened in 1947 but also didn't *really* happen until the 70s.

CELIA

What?

GEORGIE

We'll get there. So, 1948, a flying saucer crashes in the city of Aztec, loaded with extra-terrestrial gadgets named "doodlebugs." The incident stays surprisingly quiet until local journalist Frank Scully publishes a story about the crash, and the two men who'd told him about it. Men who just so happened to be selling these "doodlebugs", which they claimed used alien technology to locate gas, oil and gold.

CELIA

Ah, the American Dream. Hitting it big in oil with a dowsing rod you stole from a dead alien.

GEORGIE

Yeah, even I recognise it was a pretty blatant hoax. Scully did no fact-checking and just printed everything his sources, Newton and Gebauer, told him and shockingly, those two were eventually convicted for fraud.

CELIA

Honestly, I actually am surprised anyone even bothered.

GEORGIE

So nobody thinks it's legit but it did have a big effect on UFO-hunting as a whole.

CELIA

How so?

GEORGIE

Well, before this, most people thought of UFOs as military rather than alien.

CELIA

I mean it was the 40s. You see something explode in your back garden then, yeah, you're first thought's gonna be war.

GEORGIE

But Scully's article said this UFO came from Venus and included all sorts of details that are now really familiar: the craft was saucer shaped; it worked on magnetic principles; it was made of a super-strong and super-light metal not found on earth; and it was piloted by small humanoids he described as "king-sized Lilliputians."

CELIA

...King-sized Lilliputians? So... just average sized people?

GEORGIE

Nope. "King-sized Lilliputians" that were, like, 3 feet tall. So, short-king sized. And, when Scully published a book about his experience in 1950, militaries around the world were thrilled to have found a new threat to worry about.

CELIA

Was the book that popular?

GEORGIE

Apparently! Most countries started collecting files, and some even set up covert agencies, like Canada's "Project Magnet", or the UK's more prosaically named "Flying Saucer Working Group."

CELIA

This is why everyone likes Canada better than us.

GEORGIE

Can I tell you about my favourite government agency?

CELIA

(sighing)

Yes because that is a totally normal thing to have. Proceed.

GEORGIE

Great! So in 2010, the British Ministry of Defence released loads of previously classified documents about UFO encounters and *The Sydney Morning Herald* thought, "hey, we should get our government to do the same" so they put in an official Freedom of Information request to the Australian UFO Research Association. They asked for every single file the Australian government collected on UFOs over 50 years and the government's response was, "we'd love to, but we've just found out all but two of them were destroyed six years ago - we don't know by whom or why - and we've just lost another one down the

back of a sofa. Anyway, here's *one* file."

CELIA

Was it a good one, at least?

GEORGIE

It's wonderful! It's a crayon drawing of a flying saucer, scribbled on a napkin by some official, who watched the thing for 20 minutes before going, "actually, lads, I think it's a snow cloud!"

CELIA

Sounds about right...

GEORGIE

Then in 1956, two books are published in the US: *The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects* by Edward J. Ruppelt, and *They Knew Too Much About Flying Saucers* by Gray Barker [no relation]. The first one was meant to debunk the idea of UFOs as alien spacecraft, but it was so unconvincing, people instead believed the book was part of a cover up! And the other one, *They Knew Too Much About Flying Saucers* is both a cracking read, and the printed reference to the Men in Black.

CELIA

What like the films?

GEORGIE

(deflated)

Yes. Like the films. But the films are based on the comics which are

based on real stories about the real
men in black-

CELIA

Ahem.

GEORGIE

OK, the *allegedly* real Men in Black
who dress in black suits and coerce
UFO witnesses into silence on behalf
of the government.

CELIA

And I assume we're talking about the
US government again?

GEORGIE

Of course! It seems like, what
Mesopotamia was to agriculture, the
US is to conspiracies.

CELIA

So is this just going to be another
chemtrails or flat earth, where it all
falls apart as soon as you realise
other countries exist?

GEORGIE

I mean, when you say it like that it
sounds stupid!

CELIA

Uhuh...

GEORGIE

So anyway, Both Barker and
Ruppelt's books are about the Maury
Island incident, when US pilot
Kenneth Arnold claimed to have
seen nine shining discs flying over
the Washington mountains. He was

so sure they were alien spacecraft that he started investigating with two journalists from the *Oregon Journal*, the US Air Force, and the FBI.

CELIA

All well known for their transparency when it comes to their sources.

GEORGIE

Now Barker was writing about it as evidence that aliens had visited Earth whilst Ruppelt wanted to discredit the whole thing as a hoax. The problem was, no one had heard of the incident so the more he told people it wasn't true -

CELIA

The more people ended up learning about it?

GEORGIE

Yup. It massively boosted its profile and at the same time a bunch of weird stuff started happening.

CELIA

Weird as in "easily explicable coincidences blown way out of proportion or..."

GEORGIE

So, the two journalists from the *Oregon Journal* never publish and at the same time the investigating air force officers both die on their way back from visiting the crash site, when their plane spontaneously caught fire-

CELIA
Coincidence.

GEORGIE
They were both skilled pilots...

CELIA
Look I'm no airforce pilot but I suspect that once your plane is already on fire there's not a lot you can do about it. And the journalists just didn't publish anything because "man wrong about sky" isn't exactly headline news.

GEORGIE
Ah but the really weird thing is how much the details matched the Aztec hoax in 1948.

CELIA
Is that weird? You said the Aztec hoax was influential.

GEORGIE
Aha! *Except*, the Maury Island Incident actually took place...in June 1947! Before the Aztec story occurred.

CELIA
But the books were published in 1956. Which is after 1948.

GEORGIE
But both writers match up almost perfectly on the details even though there's no evidence they knew anything about each other.

CELIA

“Absence of evidence isn’t evidence of absence” but whatever. What are the details?

GEORGIE

Disc-shaped crafts, a little smaller than human planes, shedding a white metal so light, Arnold initially thought they were dropping newspapers.

CELIA

You found the missing *Oregon Journal* articles then?

GEORGIE

Except that they found the metal!

CELIA

Let me guess, Tin foil for hats?

GEORGIE

Okay it was officially recorded as being ordinary aluminium but-

CELIA

There it is!

GEORGIE

But It was only ever investigated by the air force pilots, whose plane crashed on their way back to base!

CELIA

I still think it's a coincidence, but it is at least an interesting one.

GEORGIE

Good enough. Now, moving on to the 1960s, there's-

CELIA

Moving on to the 60s? Don't tell me we're going through 80 years of UFO hunting chronologically? How far through your notes are you?

GEORGIE

Well, I'm on page three of fifteen but-

CELIA

Fifteen!

GEORGIE

But I can go faster!

CELIA

Georgie, you can lose some of those pages or you can lose me for the day because I do not have the time for *fifteen* pages.

Beat.

CELIA

Georgie!

GEORGIE

All right, all right! We'll have an ad break and I'll try to cut some stuff.

4. JINGLE

FX: Door bell rings. The door opens, and **CELIA** cries out (unconvincingly) as she is buried in a flood of cardboard boxes.

GEORGIE

Sorry, Celia! It's all this packaging from my monthly delivery of doomsday supplies. I just don't know how to get rid of it!

CELIA

That's alright. I used to have the same problem, before I switched to Ecopocalypse.

GEORGIE

Ecopocalypse? What's that?

CELIA

Ecopocalypse offers greener emergency rations with entirely vegan ingredients and 100% recyclable packaging. Once you've eaten their long-life meal packs, just send the tins straight back for recycling, using whatever postal service has managed to survive the collapse of civilisation.

GEORGIE

That sounds expensive?

CELIA

It does cost a little more than the next cheapest brand but with their smaller, anti-food waste ration pack sizes, you might find you save money!

GEORGIE

Well I'm sold! Thanks Celia. I'm going to switch to Ecopocalypse for all my post-delivered doomsday prepping needs.

FX: outro

GEORGIE

Okay so now, we're gonna skip ahead to 1978. The big one. In an interview with UFO-logist Stanton

Friedman, retired Lieutenant Colonel Jesse Marcel reveals that a government story about a crashed weather balloon in Roswell, New Mexico, had been nothing more than a flimsy cover story to distract the public from the crash landing of a potentially extra-terrestrial spacecraft.

FX: Spooky alien sounds.

CELIA

When you say "reveals", you mean alleges don't you?

GEORGIE

Alright, but given he was the officer in charge of investigating the crash, that technically makes him a witness and his testimony would hold up in court.

CELIA

Would it though? Really?

GEORGIE

His son corroborates it, claiming his dad showed him alien debris from Roswell when he was 10.

CELIA

Again, I'm not a sure I'd trust a 10 year old to tell the difference between an alien spaceship and a weather balloon...

GEORGIE

Ah, but what about the timing? Although nobody noticed it at the time, the original crash occurred in

1947, just a few days after the Maury Island incident...

CELIA

Right.

GEORGIE

See! It all fits together!

CELIA

If by “all” you mean, a couple of coincidental dates then sure, why not?

GEORGIE

Fair but I think you have to admit that whether you think it's aliens or not, there's clearly some sort of cover up going on. The military have put out multiple competing stories about what they found at Roswell, first it's a weather balloon, then it's a kite, then it's part of a top-secret project monitoring Soviet nuclear weapons. Not to mention how Marcel was promoted to lieutenant colonel suspiciously quickly after the Roswell incident.

CELIA

Ah yes because if there's one thing the US military is known for its rewarding whistleblowers.

GEORGIE

Also fair, but UFO hunters started putting in Freedom of Information requests to the FBI and it turns out they have over 800 reports on UFO sightings in the summer of 1947 alone, many of which are *still*

classified. Why would they do that if they didn't at least believe - there was something to them?

CELIA

Better safe than sorry?

GEORGIE

And what about all the other people who have gone public with their own stories about Roswell later including Glenn Dennis, a mortician working for the Air Force in Roswell, who claimed to have worked with a nurse who'd performed an autopsy on a small, humanoid alien in 1947.

CELIA

Ah yes, the "My sister's friend's hairdresser's dog's pathologist once dissected an extraterrestrial" defence.

GEORGIE

You say that but there has been some really interesting testimony coming out of the most recent US hearings which-

CELIA gives a small warning noise.

GEORGIE

(cont.)

-which we'll have to cover in another episode because we're out of time today.

CELIA

So what do you think? You sound pretty convinced.

GEORGIE

Sort of, but not really. I doubt the US Air Force has a secret alien graveyard but there was definitely a coverup, all those coincidences taking place at the same time in the same part of the world and the US government actively trying to keep it quiet? That's weird.

CELIA

Sure, but if Roswell really was a- what was it they said- A nuclear surveillance thing? They would absolutely keep it hush hush.

GEORGIE

You can't really believe they were spying on Russian nuclear weapons with a balloon in 1940s New Mexico?

CELIA

I think it's more likely than Aliens visiting earth just to freak out some rural North Americans.

GEORGIE

Okay but what if instead there was some more plausible coverup like human experimentation or something that had an effect on the population to make them more prone to believe in conspiracy theories...

CELIA

What? Like a conspiracy conspiracy?

GEORGIE

(enthused)

Why not!? The US government could be deliberately fuelling UFO rumours with the Aztec hoax and people like Kenneth Arnold are acting on orders to make people believe there were aliens and then if people dig too deep they send out Glenn Dennis to make it all ridiculous again-

CELIA

Have you ever been to New Mexico?

GEORGIE

No, but I'd love to go. They have a UFO museum.

CELIA

You should. I think you'd fit right in.

(beat)

Well if that's all on little aluminium men...

GEORGIE

Yeah I think that about wraps it up for now

CELIA

Great-

GEORGIE

At least until we dive deeper in parts two through seven!

CELIA

...great. Can't wait.

GEORGIE

Me neither! Bye everyone!

CELIA
Yeah bye...

SFX: tacky theme tune.

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

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