

Substantial Disruption



Fee Fie Foe

By Mike Tully

*Fee Fie Foe Fump
I smell the blood of an English Trump*

It used to be said that [the sun never sets on the British Empire](#) because the wide-ranging empire once occupied territory in every time zone on the planet. In 2019, the British Empire occupies one zone only: [The Twilight Zone](#): "It is the middle ground between light and shadow, between science and superstition, and it lies between the pit of man's fears, and the summit of his knowledge." Rod Serling wrote about nuclear war, gremlins on airplanes, and murderous dolls, but never conjured up anything as scary as Brexit. Fear and superstition walk among us and vote in our elections.

How could the United Kingdom come to this? They gave the world the *Magna Carta*, Shakespeare, and Harry Potter. They conquered the seas. They limited their monarchs with a bill of rights in the 17th century. They abolished slavery decades before the United States did and created the modern law of zoning. They led the Industrial Revolution. In their darkest hour they survived and defeated Nazi aggression. They gave us the Beatles. Monty Python. They also gave the world "[Mr. Bean](#)," which was a harmless and amusing diversion – until they made Mr. Bean Prime Minister. (Cue the "Beverly Hillbillies" theme song.)

*Come and listen to my story 'bout a man named Boris
(Though a fellow MP member [said his name is really Doris](#))
And then one day a decision that will shame us
He stumbled on a path that was bound to make him famous:*

Brexit that is, nationalism, [racism](#)

*Well the first thing you know ol' Boris is PM
The kinfolk said, you were never one of them
They pushed him to the front, saying "you know what to do"
Whatever it will cost us, get us out of the EU!*

Brexit that is, isolation, disruption

*Well now it's time to say good bye to Boris and the rest
He thinks he is a savior but he really is a pest
You're all invited back to see what's up on Halloween
To find out what this Brexit mess is really going to mean*

[Violence](#), that is, [Irish chaos](#), [food shortages](#).

Boris Johnson was a minor political figure who stumbled into prominence as a guest on British talk shows. “His bumbling demeanour and occasionally irreverent remarks made him a perennial favourite on British talk shows,” wrote the *Encyclopedia Britannica* [in an online bio](#), noting “he continued to appear frequently on British television programs and became one of the country’s most-recognized politicians.” He would have been relegated to history’s footnotes had history shown the U.K. and world a modicum of mercy. Instead, history drove outside the lane with the elevation of Donald Trump in the United States and the rise of nationalism in both countries. Trump, who also rode to prominence as a television personality and was prone to outrageous statements, was a kindred spirit to Johnson. The fact that both men resemble giant troll dolls adds a theatrical overlay.

As does the wonderful coincidence that the United Kingdom is scheduled to leave the European Union on Halloween. As I write this, there is no plan for the exit, no potential trade agreements, nothing on immigration and foreign travel, nothing on the implications for the Irish border. It’s logical to spend as much time and energy as possible to generate an exit deal that hopefully avoids the worst consequences of the U.K. crashing out of the European Union in a “hard Brexit,” with no legal or regulatory scheme to address the consequences of the departure. But logic has no seat at the table. Johnson has decided to [suspend Parliament](#) for all but a few days before the Brexit deadline. Come October 31st British officials will find themselves at Europe’s doorstep, holding a large paper bag and pleading, “trick or treat!” “How cute!” the EU will say, while dropping nuggets of coal into the bag. “Have a nice winter.”

Boris Johnson won’t be on Europe’s porch. He will instead be in Washington, brandishing his paper bag for Donald Trump, who promised Johnson a “[very big trade deal](#), bigger than we’ve ever had” while repeating his endorsement of the Brexit policy. Johnson’s primary political opponent, Labour Party Leader Jeremy Corbyn, is [not impressed](#), calling it “a ‘Trump-deal Brexit’” that might be good for the United States but a disaster for Britain. Corbyn has a point: Trump’s promises are the world’s most worthless currency.

America’s favorite Halloween story might be Washington Irving’s “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” with its terrifying [Headless Horseman](#). Two centuries after Irving published his tale, Americans and Brits are terrified by the Heedless Horseshit of their political leaders, who govern as if their heads were not securely fastened. Their fates – and ours – are tethered to this year’s Halloween observance like Prometheus to a rock.

It’s a twist of historical and literary magnificence that Brexit falls on Halloween and that its two most prominent advocates seem born to play their roles. Tommy Chong invoked Halloween during an [interview with AV Club in 2008](#). While he was referring to the Bush administration, his words are just as relevant in the age of The Donald and BOJO:

“(I)f you saw them on Halloween, they wouldn’t need a costume,” he said. “You’d give them a treat and compliment them on what great-looking demons they were.” “They are demons,” he added. “There’s no doubt about it.”

Trick or treat.