

Another day in Brexit hell



Birds flock over the River Thames as the sun sets behind Westminster Palace, where Parliament meets. The building, like Britain, is falling apart.

It feels like a good time to mention that the Palace of Westminster is falling apart



TANYA GOLD

I wonder if this is what the Black Death was like. People wandering around with donkeys, crying, “Bring out your dead!” and painting crosses on walls, which was, I guess, like a medieval Twitter. #AllHopeIsLost.

Everyone I know is either a Brexit Denier — “It’s not happening,” they say. “We’ll have a People’s Vote! Another referendum! We’ll win this time!” — or a Brexit Apocalypticist — “It’s happening. We are doomed. Hold my hand and run toward the blast.” The only people who are hopeful are the people with the gallows, far-right supporters of a “hard Brexit” who marched through the streets of London on Dec. 9 protesting Prime Minister Theresa May’s “betrayal” and carrying her effigy.

They didn’t hang it. Presumably, that can wait.

On Dec 10, the real May postponed the long-planned vote in Parliament on her Brexit deal, the one she spent 20 months negotiating with the European Union and the last three weeks trying (and failing) to sell to the British public and Parliament. What’s next? Apparently, she will go to Brussels on her knees, begging for further concessions. She doesn’t know how to implement the will of the people, if the will of the people — or at least the people who hold her political future in their hands — is suicide.

It feels like a good time to mention that the Palace of Westminster is falling apart. The building itself is a rotting construct, honouring an imagined past and — just for fun — built on a marsh. What does that remind you of, eh? It was not much publicised, for obvious reasons, but on June 23, 2016, the day of the Brexit referendum itself, the basement was flooded with sewage. It was

rainfall and a high tide, they said, but I know better. Metaphor, like the gods, must be heard.

Politicians, the ones absolutely no one has any faith in, are snuffling in the wreckage now, hoping to succeed May. It’s a horrible thing to watch calamity treated as opportunity but they thrive on it: The Labour Party, despite what its leaders might tell you, wants a hard Brexit and a general election — in that order. The Conservatives don’t know what they want, but Brexiteers are excited about being in charge. Boris Johnson, a Lothario galloping to seed, apparently has a new haircut, a sign that he’s ready to make yet another play for the top job. It is always about the hair for Boris. Increasingly, I think it is really his brain. Michael Gove, the environment secretary and one of the few Brexiteers left in May’s cabinet, is skulking around the middle. Jacob Rees-Mogg, who attended Margaret Thatcher’s funeral in a top

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hat, is denying all leadership ambitions, presumably from the center of some giant web built by the ghost of Ayn Rand.

Entertainers are wading in, because this is entertainment, or rather, when you treat politics like entertainment, you get this. Americans know that. I increasingly feel we are in Hollywood as the screenwriter William Goldman famously described it: “Nobody knows anything.” Pamela Anderson — formerly

of the constituency of Baywatch and who now lives in France and has taken passionate interest in European politics — has strong opinions on a potential Labour-led Brexit: “Lexit is a left exit,” she wrote on Twitter. “Re — what Corbyn would do. By negotiating a Brexit for the people. That protects the ordinary person.” The nation gawped, but there was more. “Never have the words of Shakespeare — ‘now is the winter of our discontent’ — rang more true than now,” she wrote on her website in a post called “Brexit and I (also starring Shakespeare and Churchill),” which she illustrated with a photograph of herself hiding behind a plant. “I have been following the situation very closely,” she wrote, “and I fully support the position of Jeremy Corbyn, the Labour party leader (leader of the opposition). Ok, I admit it, I have a little political crush on Jeremy Corbyn.”

But back in what is, for now, still the fifth largest economy in the world, the actor Andy

Serkis — Gollum from “Lord of the Rings” in the constituency of Middle Earth — has made a video, with May as Gollum and the deal as the One Ring. It ends with a plea for a People’s Vote, which will presumably be played by Ian McKellen, with all the gravitas he gave his King Lear: “O! Let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven; keep me in temper; I would not be mad!” Too late, too late.

No one here knows what will happen next — an election, another referendum, a new deal, a departure from the European Union with no deal at all. The last 18 months have felt like political hell; now, I fear we will look back at them as the time when things were sane.

I see Brexit as a progressive disease, like alcoholism. What you think gives you hope — nostalgia or vodka, who cares? — is killing you. I wouldn’t have said this at any time since 1940 but it feels apt now. Pray for us.

(Tanya Gold is a writer for The Spectator.)

CIVILIAN’S TRIBUNE

Brexit means Brexit

Theresa May would always insist in her speech that there would be no General Election until 2020. Yet she called one less than 10 months later.

And she insisted she would not trigger Article 50 to begin Brexit “until the British negotiating strategy is agreed and clear.”

Yet she triggered Article 50 the month before she called that snap general election and today, 18 months later, the chequers plan, the stated British negotiating strategy, is certainly far from agreed.

The ruling government cannot set out what Brexit means



without revolt within their own ranks. And the Labour Party fail to set out what Brexit means for fear they will lose a few Brexiteer votes.

While today the chequers plan has lasted two months, it has not yet been properly

set before the EU who already indicate that it will not be accepted.

Theresa May told us in her 2016 speech that “the country voted to leave the European Union”.

“Brexit means Brexit.” What could be clearer! Indeed. Brexit is proving to be a complete Brexit.

Dr Martin