

Trends Like These 237: Trump Impeachment Details, 'Joker' Director Criticizes 'Woke' Culture, Biden's ACTUAL Corruption, Yahoo Engineer Admits Hacking for Nudes, BIG Brexit Update, Alphadream Files for Bankruptcy, Botham Jean's Killer Sentenced

Published on October 4th, 2019

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[theme music plays]

Brent: This week: Joker director bad, Alphadream sad, and Trump real mad.

Kate: I'm Kate Sloan.

Dave: I'm Dave Bulmer.

Brent: I'm Brent Black.

Kate: And I am one hard Brexit.

Brent: With Trends Like These.

[theme music plays]

Brent: Hello, Kate.

Kate: Hello, Brent.

Brent: Yes, folks, this is an episode where Courtney and Travis are both at New York Comic Con, which is extremely, extremely taxing. They have extremely full schedules, so I am heading up the show. And as you may have noticed, joining me is journalist, sex writer, and educator, as well as my friend and cohost on Question Box, my other podcast, Kate Sloane.

Kate: Hi!

Brent: I'm so glad you're on.

Kate: Yeah, me too.

Brent: This is gonna be... I mean, y'know, the stories this week aren't all fun, but uh... I'm glad—I'm glad you're here. We'll also hear from our UK correspondent, Dave Bulmer, a little bit later on in the show. And uh, so, how you doin'?

Kate: I'm good. I'm secretly a little sad that I didn't get to do a segment with Dave, because I just think he's so charming and lovely.

Brent: He is! He is. Um, now, I will say, it is not the shortest segment ever, because he and I, as anyone who listened to his episode of Question Box can tell, the man, y'know, when it comes to rambling, I've met my match with that fella.

Kate: I think he took about 12 minutes to answer the question, "Which cartoon character would you like to have sex with?"

Brent: [laughing] It's true. But I mean—

Kate: Nobody would waffle that much, ever.

Brent: [laughing] I found—I found it charming. I think there's something about British guests, when you ask them a deeply personal question, they... have to get all of their British organs into place just to kind of give you an answer somehow.

Kate: [laughing]

Brent: But yeah, Dave's lovely, and that's not to say that you should not listen to the entirety of our Brexit segment later, because... boy, I thought I understood the whole thing, but... y'know, when you lay it end to end, it's quite an adventure, and would probably be the biggest thing in world news if Trump hadn't, y'know, been like, "I may as well get impeached. Why not. Let's do it."

Kate: [laughs] Classic Trump.

Brent: Classic Don! Oh that Donny boy. I hate him. Um...

Kate: [laughing]

Brent: And it sounds like we're both you and I juggling professional obligations today.

Kate: Yes. I feel like I have about eight jobs right now, so... that's been fun.

Brent: That is so relatable. That feels like basically, in late stage capitalism, you're either doing something... I mean, this is—tell me if I'm wrong, but it seems like you're either doing one soul sucking thing, or eight things you supposedly love that still have an email inbox and lots of administrative bullshit.

Kate: [laughs]

Brent: Kind of one or the other. I'm sure there's a spectrum in between, but it sometimes seems like that.

Kate: Yeah. I uh, was explaining to a new therapist what I do professionally, and at the end of my quite lengthy spiel, he was like, "Wow. The economy is really weird now." And I had to agree.

Brent: Yeah. Yeah. Um, but that being said, I feel like there is a strange solidarity in um, the sort of sector of particularly millennials, but just the sector of people who are some kind of freelance, especially creatives making their own thing, like um... we all know it's hard. And the thing is that, actually, I think I might be a little myopic here. I think that you have plenty of people that go do a nine to five job, and then they drive an Uber. Or they do two jobs. Or three jobs. And anyway, like... it's, uh... y'know, late capitalism with the wealth inequality we have is um, a hell of a drug.

Kate: [laughs]

Brent: But uh, let's shift gears. Um... [laughs] As drastically as I dare, to uh, what beverage are you drinking?

Kate: [laughs] I am drinking a cold brew, and uh, it was full of ice this morning, and I've been drinking it for so long that the ice has fully melted, so it is just a watered down cold brew.

Brent: That brings me to our time stamp. We're recording Thursday, October 3rd around four PM. I should say that the Dave Bulmer segment that you audience members will hear in the future was actually recorded in the past. That was around noon on the same day, eastern time. But my point that I wanted to make was in the form of a question.

You're drinking cold brew at four PM? Are you ever gonna get to sleep?

Kate: [laughs] Y'know, speaking of like, being a freelancer, there's just so much stuff all day long that I have to do, like, work stuff, and then also stuff like laundry and dishes, that I pretty much drink caffeine at any hour, and I'm fine. 'Cause by the end of the day, I'm so tired that it's no problem.

Brent: Wow. I came to a point where I just had to stop drinking caffeine after... I can imagine having like, half a cup around four, if I thought I was gonna... and sometimes, if it's like, "I'm going out all night! I'm gonna go party! I'm gonna have half a cup of coffee at seven PM! Ooh, I'm bein' bad!" Y'know.

Kate: [laughs]

Brent: Or like, occasionally like a rum and Coke for dinner.

Kate: For dinner. [laughs] That's your entire dinner.

Brent: Look. Look. I uh... have nothing funny to say.

Kate: You're partying hard. [laughing]

Brent: [laughing] Yeah. Yep.

Kate: So you are drinking not caffeine, I assume.

Brent: Correct. Uh, I am drinking a store brand sparkling water that is naturally flavored lime from the 365 Everyday Value brand. Which... I don't know if that's the Amazon one or the Acme one? I don't know.

I'm trying to kind of cut down on my... on my seltzer budget, 'cause it's... as much as it keeps me hydrated better than like—I hydrate better with it than tap water or still water, it's like... how much of my grocery budget should bubbly water be? Like, how—at what point is this laughably privileged and wasteful and the reason I don't have any savings? Like, how far are we gonna take this stuff?

Kate: That came up on Question Box when I asked you recently like, what kind of extraneous expenditure would you not give up even if times were tighter? And you said seltzer, and I was a little bit surprised.

Brent: Well, I mean, and the thing is, Courtney and I, who sometimes line up perfectly and sometimes very don't, were very much in agreement that like, it can become a problem. And I've been told like, "Oh, get a Soda Stream!" Are you ready to hear the most, like, first world problem eye roll thing I've ever said?

Kate: Sure, hit me.

Brent: I just don't like... I just don't like the soda stream bubbles. I don't.

Kate: [laughs]

Brent: They're not the right kind of bubbles.

Kate: You're just a particular guy about your bubbles. You have specific bubble needs.

Brent: I'm a bubble prince, and I shant have any less than the correct kind of bubbles.

Kate: [laughing] This is uh, first world problems and bubble troubles, if you will.

Brent: Ooh, girl! Alright, comin' in with the wordplay. Classic Kate. Classic.

[theme music plays]

Brent: And now, we're going beyond the headlines. I would've done a— something more like a Travis-style funny intro to this, but these two stories we're doing for beyond the headlines are... like, not hilarious. Um, per se. we don't have any of those like, y'know, "New study says wieners are funny!" Y'know, we don't have that this week.

Kate: [laughs] I want to read that study.

Brent: Oh, trust me. It's, uh... kind of a small cohort.

Kate: [laughs] That's mean. Don't say that about people.

Brent: Look, you can interpret that statement as you will.

Kate: [laughing]

Brent: I'm not trying to shame anybody. Um, anyway, you can direct all of your thoughts about that to the Facebook group, the Trends Like These fan group. So, first story, Kate. Take it away.

Kate: Yeah, this story really made me mad this week. So, the director of the new movie, Joker, Todd Phillips, got into hot water when he told Vanity Fair that it's too hard to make people laugh these days, in what he called "this "woke" culture." Phillips is known for making bro-y comedies like Old School and the Hangover series, but his new Joker movie is about, according to the Vanity Fair piece, "an alienated white guy whose failure to be funny drives him into a vengeful rage."

Phillips got mobbed on Twitter with thousands of people tweeting commentary like, "Some people are alarmingly unable to separate vulgarity from bigotry." And, "He's basically saying, "I don't have the talent or skill to evolve in comedy, so I'm just switching genres.""

Like the Shane Gillis story a few weeks ago, this, again, points to the current cultural tension between people who think bigotry is funny, or even integral to comedy, and people who think comedy can and should be more progressive and inclusive than that.

A 1990 interview clip of comedian, George Carlin, was passed around on Twitter in the wake of this story where he says that "comedy traditionally has picked on people in power; people who abuse their power. And so, picking on underdogs like women and gay people is antithetical to that." It's kind of unbelievable that we're still having this debate almost 30 years after that Carlin clip aired.

Brent: Yeah. Yeah. I think that it's so easy, um, to rope in comedians who, number one, are dead. Number two, said terrible things. And we did discuss this on the show recently, so I don't want to harp too much on the Carlin piece, but... Carlin evolved as well.

Kate: Mm-hmm.

Brent: And you either evolve in comedy, or you get stale, and you become that comedian that older people still like, and older people think is something of a joke unto themselves. And I think that, first off, y'know, I'm gonna go against the narrative on Twitter and among certain circles, and just point out that like... from everything I hear, Joker's a great movie. And I'm not just talking about like, the white male reviewers I watch on YouTube.

Kate: [laughs]

Brent: This is the tragedy in all this, is that it may, aside from having a Venn diagram with things like incels and certain kinds of violent people in

our society, like... and that's not great, per se. I do hear it's a wonderful, like, really thoughtful, good film. However, what a bummer that the director is... shitting the bed right now.

Kate: Yeah.

Brent: And I don't mean bummer for him – I just mean, like, y'know, this is not... anyway, whatever. I'm not defending a movie I haven't seen. I just hear it's really good.

Kate: Yeah. I saw the trailer. I thought it looked cool. I made a mental note, maybe I should check that out. And I'm not even like, a comic book movie type of person. But it seemed interesting, and then, I feel like he made these comments, and it made a bunch of people not want to go see the movie.

And it—it just also reminds me of like, other art forms where people have a tendency to, instead of being like, "Well, I'm not relevant anymore, I haven't kept up with the times. I haven't remained good at my art in the world that we're currently in." People will sometimes be like, "People just don't understand what good art is anymore." And I think that that's a really, like, myopic way of looking at that.

Brent: Totally.

Kate: Very self-absorbed viewpoint. And like, especially with something like comedy that really, like, references the world as it is, moment by moment, like... you really gotta keep up with what's going on, and it's not that people don't have that sense of humor anymore. It's that like, y'know, he's just a—this type of stuff just isn't funny anymore. I'm sure that if I were to watch Old School today that it would be very, very cringey.

Brent: Yeah, and I mean, there's, y'know, this intersects with the notion of a problematic fave. Like, I recently, um, god knows why, but uh, about a month or two ago, I just was um... I didn't have a very full dance card over the weekend, and I watched all three Austin Powers movies. And it was that

weird seesaw of like, "Oh, that's still such a funny gag," versus, "Oh wow, that's such a... wow, I can't believe they went there with that."

And y'know, like um, there was a time when I believe Elizabeth Hurley, doing an interview for the first Austin Powers movie said, "What's great about Mike's comedy is it doesn't hurt anyone." And it's like, well... y'know, that was a thing one could say at the time.

Kate: Right.

Brent: But now that you look at it, it's like, well... um, but the thing is that like, Todd Phillips made a correct observation, but a wrongheaded and lazy conclusion. Like, yeah, this woke culture is changing the face of comedy. You are correct, sir.

Kate: Yeah.

Brent: And I'm really just kind of piggybacking on what you said. I think that the thing that he said that he was quoted as saying, "I don't have the talent or skill to evolve in comedy," is so emblematic of, I think, what happens to a lot of comedians.

And I don't want to generalize. I think that different comedians do, uh, move and change with the times. And I think that's easier for some than others. Why is it that, uh, y'know, like, minority or queer comedians just seem to be able to roll with things differently than like, your Jerry Seinfelds and your Bill Burrs? Interesting, tell me more. But again, that's also a generalization.

I think that... so like, I have a stake in this. I'm not a comedian, but my career started with a fairly serious, y'know, multimillion view YouTube channel that had jokes in it that I wouldn't make now. And there came a point where I had to go, "Was this ever funny? What's the nature of comedy?"

Like, making Use Your Words, my comedy party game, I played hundreds of hours of this game where people create their own comedy and provide their

own punch lines to jokes. The whole idea that comedy is about truth, like, universal truth, is so... uninformed.

Kate: Yeah.

Brent: It's about the consensus of what the room thinks is true.

Kate: Mm-hmm.

Brent: And so, y'know, like, if we as a culture go, "Yeah, we don't actually think that thing is true anymore." Um, then making a joke that assumes it's true, the premise of it is flawed in a way that it's not funny, and or offensive, or both.

Kate: Right. And like, speaking of like, audiences for comedy, I think that there's a common misconception in statements like the ones that Todd Phillips made that the audiences at large have changed their opinions. And that's partly true, but part of it also is that people who were previously marginalized, and are still marginalized, have gained more of a voice, and their voices are taken more seriously than they might've been a few decades ago, like women, and queer people, and trans people, and people of color.

And so, it feels like those groups are starting to gain more cultural power, even as they're still super marginalized, and like, racism and sexism still exist and are rampant. But so like, people are listening to them saying like, this is not funny. This is offensive. And uh, understanding that better, then they might've been able to like, pre-social media, when I think it was easier to think of someone other than—in another group than you're in as 'other,' as, y'know, not relatable to you.

And that's shifting, and it results in stuff like this, which I think is definitely a step forward.

Brent: Absolutely. And I think that, y'know, as much as bigotry is nothing that I'm fast to forgive, as someone who watches a lot of TV from past decades and past eras... well, 'eras' may be a bit—y'know what I'm saying.

It's interesting how there's this echo chamber of like, was the culture feeding the TV stuff, or was the TV creating the culture?

Because um, y'know, I'm currently on a Golden Girls phase. It's my currently, like, uh, y'know, it's on Hulu. It's like, before bed, I watch a Golden Girls or two. And in some ways, an extremely forward thinking show. The pilot, they had a gay maid who they ended up cutting, because they didn't need any more sassy than Sophia. That was like—that's almost a direct quote, by the way, in case, y'know, just so we're clear.

But um... but at the same time, there will be extremely—like, there was a joke last night about, uh, a character who always, like, told himself 'I love you' in the mirror, and then he went into the men's bathroom and got beaten up. And it's like, that was a laugh line. And it's like, whoa, you realize that's, y'know, like, you're kind of... but like, it wasn't a consideration at the time, which is now 30, 35 years ago.

And I look at that and go, um... is it the chicken or the egg when it comes to the way that culture informs people about what is or isn't funny? I mean, god, stuff like Police Academy, where there's this whole scene at a gay bar where like, a straight guy goes in and like, gets roped into a tango with like a leather daddy. And like, now, what's funny about it is that anybody thinks that's, um, what happens in a gay bar. You just get like, forced into a tango. [laughing]

Kate: Right.

Brent: But um, it's extremely problematic. And then, in Police Academy 2, they made sure and did a callback to it. It's like, "This was funny?" But the culture does change, and if you can't keep up with it, you sort of become this dinosaur that has an increasingly small audience that you can connect with.

Kate: Yeah.

Brent: And um... it's a bummer that this guy—I mean, it seems like he's honest with himself. "I don't have the talent or skill to evolve in comedy." But it's just—

Kate: No, that was somebody tweeting about him.

Brent: Oh. I'm so glad you clarified that. I completely misunderstood. Well then, yes. [laughs] That tweet was correct, and I find myself wishing Todd Phillips had been that self-aware. Clearly, he's not. But that's the issue.

Kate: Yeah. Well, the thing that strikes me about things like what you're talking about, like a joke that implies that gay people do things non-consensually to straight people, um... it's like, not only are they not inclusive, and they're offensive, and all of that, but they're also not funny, because the entire joke is basically just like, "Ha! Gay people exist! Isn't that weird?"

Brent: Right.

Kate: And it's like, this is true for so many of these really outdated sexist, racist, transphobic, homophobic jokes is like, basically, the joke is that these people exist and are different from the presumed audience. Which just, to me, isn't comedy. There's no wit in that. There's no skill in that. There's no craft.

Brent: It's cheap.

Kate: Yeah. It's just like, not skillful. And so, these people complaining that nobody thinks they're funny anymore, like... I don't think these people were ever that funny.

Brent: Yeah. And it's like, if you don't think there's comedy anymore, have you heard of Vine? Have you heard of TikTok? Have you heard of Twitter? Are you kidding? There's comedy everywhere. Just like... anyway, whatever. We're—I think we're both, at this point, I'm certainly preaching to the choir.

But um, hopefully, Todd Phillips will learn something from this. I don't know. I feel like um... we're heading in a direction. I hope Joker is good, but at this point, uh, I can't help but think, like you said, that ticket sales will just not quite be the same after this moment.

Kate: Yep.

Brent: Well, now onto an even grosser story. You may have seen the trending headline from Ars Technica, which was, "Former Yahoo engineer admits using his access to steal user's sexual images." Reyes Daniel Ruiz used to work for Yahoo, and he used his access to the internal Yahoo systems, specifically looking for sexually explicit images and videos as well as other types of data, and he admitted as much to federal prosecutors.

He also added that he targeted accounts belonging to younger women, including friends and coworkers. Through his access to victims' Yahoo accounts, he was able to hopscotch over to their iCloud, Facebook, Gmail, Dropbox, and other services that store data in the cloud. He's currently out on a 200 thousand dollar bond. He faces up to five years in prison, and a fine of up to a quarter million dollars, plus restitution to the 37 or more accounts he accessed; or rather, victims whose accounts they were.

So, on the one hand, it's good that this guy got caught, and that he's clearly gonna be majorly punished. But... this raises questions about cloud storage. Which, apparently, a lot of people have already had and addressed, but I was less aware of myself. I've used cloud backup services, and I've sent and received explicit photos. I think, at this point, a lot of us have. And if not photos, things that we just wouldn't want anybody else to hear, or read, or see, or whatever.

We've recently found out that Microsoft, Google, and Apple, all to various degrees, listened in on various speech to text communications from users on their various platforms that do that. And the users were not asked for permission or notified of that practice.

There are data breaches every other day. It seems like at least once or twice a year, you hear a new privacy related scandal coming out of Facebook. So

like, are we in a post-privacy world? There are implications of consent and privacy and autonomy here, and it's a very serious issue that doesn't seem to have any clear answers, and like... yeah, I don't know. Kate, what are your thoughts on this?

Kate: Yeah, uh, working in sex media, I've seen these conversations happening more intensely since the Anthony Weiner scandal in 2011, and like, he was doing other inappropriate things as well, of course, but we saw back then that someone's nudes leaking can destroy their career, maybe even their life. And um, I think we are moving toward a future where public, online nudity will be more normal and less scandalous, and like, less likely to ruin your career.

And maybe that'll make people less inclined to do stuff like hacking email accounts to gain access to nudes. But part of me wonders if what these dudes are really getting off on is the breach of trust, and the power that they have over their victims, and I feel like that kind of like, unhealthy and predatory drive wouldn't go away, even if nudes were more normalized and more readily available.

Brent: Yeah, it seems like it's a digital peeping tom.

Kate: Yes.

Brent: Like, part of it is... especially if he's targeting women he knows.

Kate: Mm-hmm.

Brent: And it's like, in a way... I mean, first off, it's great that he got caught, and that people are now thinking about this stuff. I do think your point is well taken that, I think that our culture is shifting to be a little bit less pious, a little bit less priggish, and that if we kind of all go, "Hey, y'know, we've all sent a dick pic. We've all sent nudes. We've all this and that." Um, that the scandal element will not be there.

In Anthony Weiner's case, it's like, I don't think the scandal should've been there because of the images. I think that the nature of them, especially as

the scandal went on and kind of, y'know, over the years, he kept doing it in worse and worse ways. That was different. But um, y'know, I mean... and I also think there's elements of privilege that make sort of a, um... I don't know, a hierarchy.

Like, I'm gonna be honest. If my—if my dick pics leak, there it is, folks. I'm not gonna put it on the internet, but it's like, okay. Great. Sure. What do you got? What do you got on me? Not everybody's like that, and many people have much more they stand to lose. I think it really is different with women.

Kate: Yeah. I—so I have like, leaked my own nudes, essentially, working in sex media. And that was like, in some ways, a conscious act, because it took away this extremely intense source of fear for me. And I was in a position to be able to do that, because I mostly work for myself and didn't need to worry about getting fired or family finding out, 'cause they knew already.

But y'know, I have friends who work in sex media who, uh, this stuff has been brought up in their custody cases and used against them. I know people who lost—

Brent: Wait, wait, wait. Like the fact that they just have nudes that are accessible?

Kate: Or even the fact that they write about sex online. It's taken as a sign of low moral character or whatever. You can lose jobs over it, et cetera. So, yeah. And I do think you're right that there is a hierarchy in terms of privilege. I think that people who are more marginalized are more highly punished for this.

We saw this too when Jennifer Lawrence and all those other women had their nudes leaked. Like, people were just awful to those women, and said just like, really, really terrible things about them. And it's—it's just like, really astonishing how much power you can have over someone by acquiring their nudes. It's like, really scary.

Like, when sensationalists at the dawn of the internet started talking about how it would inevitably lead to like a 1984-esque total invasion of everyone's privacy, like... in some ways, we're there. And it's really terrifying.

Brent: And it makes me wonder if the nature of how privacy works is going to have to give way.

Kate: Mm-hmm.

Brent: And I think that's kind of what you're getting at, or at least, what interpret when we talk about the nature of how we react to these things. Being less scandalous, less judgmental. And y'know, the internet has an uncanny way of revealing things that none of us realized we all do. Sometimes for better, sometimes for worse, like finding out there's a community of people that do a terrible thing, and you go, "Oh, I'm not alone! This is okay!" It's like, wait, oh no!

But um... yeah. So, I mean... [sighs] It's like, you can choose to not participate in social media, in any kind of online storage of your media. But here's the thing – we're not talking about Dropbox, necessarily. If you have things in email attachments, that's stored in the cloud, as far as I understand it. Or it's stored somewhere.

Kate: Yeah.

Brent: And so like, how many employees does Google have? How do they make sure nobody can access that? Can they? Obviously, if you get caught, you get fired. But like, that's not really what we're talking about. You can get fired, but you still did that.

Kate: Yeah.

Brent: So I don't know. I think that, um... I think that this kind of thing affects me much less. Y'know, like, and I think that the real change in the culture probably needs to be, uh, specifically about women. And also, to a certain extent, people in power. It's all about, like you said, moral character.

Kate: Mm-hmm.

Brent: And realizing, these things do not correlate to moral character, up or down. It's a body that they actually had all along.

Kate: [laughs] Yeah. My hope is that, as this stuff gets less taboo, that the desire to hack people's accounts and whatever will lessen. In the same way as like, if you spend time maybe at a nudist colony, probably like the sexualization that happens in your brain upon seeing a naked body would probably lessen over time. Just 'cause like, it's less taboo, it's more normal.

Um, but then I feel like, predators will just develop other ways to be predators, 'cause that's just the nature of humanity.

Brent: Yikes. Well...

Kate: [laughs] Sorry. A little dark.

Brent: No, but I mean, yeah, hopefully Gene Roddenberry's vision of a Star Trek future where we all just culturally evolve into better people is on the way.

Kate: [laughs]

[theme music plays]

Brent: For this next segment, we've got one of the favorites. I would say a fan favorite. My favorite correspondent on the show, our... y'know what? You're not even a de facto correspondent, Dave. You are our official—

Dave: Oh!

Brent: Resident—

Dave: Oh!!

Brent: UK correspondent, Dave Bulmer. Hi, Dave.

Dave: Hello, there! Hello. Yes, well, it's a bit of a dreary day here in the UK today, and there's a cold going 'round, and I've got it in a big, bad way. So, sorry about my voice. I'll try and speak words anyway.

Brent: Well, we're all really pissed off about it already, so you're really just—how dare you.

Dave: I know.

Brent: No, I think it'll be fine. It's a charming cold. That's how I would rate it.

Dave: Good. Oh, I'm very glad somebody thinks that.

Brent: [laughs] So yeah. For a couple weeks now, there have been developments with Brexit. And we, over here in the states, do not understand them in context anywhere near as well as someone who actually lives over there. So I wanted to have you on to just kind of give us an idea of recent events, and also where things seem to be headed.

Dave: It's been—it's been such a wild and heady rush of political excitement that um, I mean, frankly, it stood to be world news until your lot started off with that impeachment thing.

Brent: [laughs] We always have to win. The biggest, the best, the most tremendous. Believe me. Yeah.

Dave: That's frankly what it felt like at the time.

Brent: [laughs]

Dave: Yes, um, so, here's the story as briefly as I can put it, and it's not gonna be brief, so I'm gonna try and rattle through. Boris Johnson. He's been our prime minister now for two months, so everything you're about to hear has happened in just those two months. Right?

Brent: Okay.

Dave: So to set the scene, you may not know who—last time I was on, we were talking about Theresa May. She was the prime minister. So, see if you can picture this. Imagine... imagine, if you can imagine this, that a grinning, oafish man is put in control of a country. Okay. Are you anywhere close to being able to imagine that yet?

Brent: I mean, I'll try. I'll try to relate. Though, I will tell you, not to ruin your analogy...

Dave: No.

Brent: Trump's not much of a smiler or a laugher, but I see what you're saying.

Dave: No, good point.

Brent: An oafish, funny-haired, uh, white man. Though, 'white' for Trump is, I don't know, near the color he actually appears as.

Dave: Mm-hmm. Uh, an avatar of privilege. A man on record mocking minorities with unpleasant, outdated language. And uh, yeah, like you said, the extremely unlikely mop of blonde hair. And also, a man who most people only really know who he is because he was a fixture on evening light entertainment for several years recently.

Brent: Mm-hmm.

Dave: That's—we're both stuck with one of them right now. And um, ours is called Boris Johnson. He started the job after Theresa May resigned, because Brexit had gone terribly for her, and Boris was already a name attached to the campaign to leave the EU. He was one of its main figureheads. So, he's now the prime minister, and he's kind of a Brexit prime minister, and that's means he's keen to deliver Brexit.

And at first, it's kind of tricky to see what, if anything, he's doing about Brexit. And it quickly starts to look as if he might be... aiming for a no deal Brexit, and that would be bad.

Brent: Now, let's, if we can, because I always assume we may have new listeners, or listeners that have just missed these developments in the past, just to do a quick primer on Brexit to catch people up that might just have, y'know, come out of a coma or something.

Dave: So, the UK is currently part of the EU, which is the word for like, the governing system of a big chunk, y'know, over in Europe. And we are part of this wonderland of trade and free movement, and it's great. But some people don't think it's great, and there was a whole thing about sort of racism that was happening, and a kind of a political party started to form that was saying that there was problems with immigration, and the conservatives were sick of that.

So David Cameron, two prime ministers ago, he went, "Oh, fine. To shush you all up, I'll let you choose in a referendum whether or not to leave the EU, and obviously, we'll choose to stay in, and everything will be fine." That isn't what happened. The UK chose to leave by a tiny little margin, and ever since then, it's been pandemonium, because that isn't something that really you can do. [laughs]

Brent: Mm-hmm.

Dave: And that's called Brexit, because we're all idiots now, and we have to make silly portmanteaus of things, and it stands for Britain Exit.

Brent: Alright.

Dave: Great, isn't it?

Brent: Very nice. Very nice recap. Cool. So, we're up to speed. Now, as far as a hard Brexit versus not...

Dave: Hard Brexit—harder than hard. Oh, back in the old days, when we were last talking to each other, we talked about hard Brexit as the bad thing. Now we're onto no deal Brexit. A hard Brexit was like a hard deal. No deal, that is the one where we crash out of the world economy without any access to food and medicine.

Now, before Boris, no deal was only ever like, a worst case scenario threat of what would happen if we failed to negotiate and agree on a deal. Now, it's like, really quite possible that it's what will happen. And there's already shortages of medicine, now. And there's companies folding, and it's all really terrible. So...

Brent: Alright. You set the stage. Tell me more.

Dave: Back to the story, then. Yeah, it's somewhere between... the point in the story that I'm at, and that we'll be getting back to in a minute, and the present. Can't remember exactly when this happened. But we start to hear, most recently from Rachel Johnson, which is Boris' actual sister, that Boris' financial backers stand to make billions from bets they've made against Britain leaving with a deal. So if you've seen *The Big Short*, same thing is in *The Big Short*.

Um, so...

Brent: Wow.

Dave: That's an ongoing thing. I make no personal allegations at this stage, but that you can look up. So, August comes, and there is shock as we learn that Boris, now the prime minister, is planning to prorogue Parliament early. Now, I'll tell you what that means, 'cause it's a big deal. It means closing Parliament so that we don't have one. Picture Moff Tarkin stalking into the meeting room going, "The Imperial Senate will no longer be any concern to us, because the emperor's dissolved it permanently."

Except, instead of permanently, it's like, "The emperor has dissolved the council until he's done some dodgy stuff that he wants to do for a few weeks."

Brent: [laughing] I want our audience to know, this is part of the Star Trek universe, and not some other country that they don't understand the parliamentary rules of.

Dave: Well, Brent, I mean, it's part of the *Star Wars* universe. [laughs]

Brent: Oh my god, did I say Trek?! Nooo! My journalistic integrity!

Dave: I know you've been thinking very hard about Star Trek recently, and it's an easy slip of the tongue.

Brent: Oh my god, that is embarrassing. Okay, well, Star Wars universe. Jesus, thank you for not just politely going along with it and resulting in 40 different eye rolling messages on Twitter. Jesus Christ. Okay. So, Star Wars. I keep interrupting you to like—

Dave: We don't have Grand Moff's in UK.

Brent: [laughs]

Dave: Politics. That's not a real thing. So! Anyway, uh, prorogation, right? It's not actually, itself, a bad thing. It's just the word for when Parliament just reaches the end of its normal term, shuts down for a few weeks, any loose ends get automatically tied up, and everyone goes for a rest. That happens anyway normally.

But, to do it early, and to do it this close to Brexit, when everyone's been hanging on because Brexit's coming up... by the way, Brexit happens on Halloween, so it's very soon. It was a transparent attempt to make sure that there wasn't time for Parliament to do any of those democracies they like to do while Boris is trying to no deal us out of the EU, or whatever it is he happens to want to do.

Anyway, everyone's worried about that. He takes his plan to the Queen, 'cause that's the rules, and the Queen agrees to it. Also the rules. And suddenly, there's panic in Parliament. They need to do something quick,

right? So they want to put forward a bill, before they get prorogued, before they close down, that will save us from Boris' disaster Brexit, and he's trying to stop them from doing that.

Now, of course, y'know, everything's done by votes, 'cause it's all sensible and democracy and that. Um, and Boris loses the vote, and he loses it by a historic number of votes, many of which come from his own party. So, he starts to retaliate. He starts to deselect Tory MPs who rebelled against him. Tory, that's the conservative party, that's his party, and deselect is like the closest he can come to firing someone who's been elected into the position by the public.

Including, by the way—

Brent: That's a thing the prime minister can do?

Dave: Well, that's the thing – no, he can't really. But he can deselect them. I don't know what that means, really. I never got a chance to find out, but it's kind of like firing them. I think it means that he takes them off the list of people who get to be like, in the government? I don't know. I don't know what it is. Don't quote me on this, but it's a thing that he does in retaliation.

Brent: Okay.

Dave: And one of the people he deselects is—

Brent: They no longer can be on his dodge ball team. Got it.

Dave: Right. Exactly. And one of those people, just, this is—doesn't really mean anything politically, but is just an amusing aside, is the grandson of Winston Churchill, who is the person Boris is most trying to emulate.

So he continues to lose vote after vote after vote. Crushing defeats. He loses his majority in parliament, live on television, when one of the rebel conservatives, one of the Tory MPs, gets up, crosses the bench, and joins another party right while Boris is talking, for maximum embarrassment.

Brent: Now, was that the guy—was that the guy the um, I saw headlines and an image of him very, I would say, borderline sassily sort of lounging on a bench...

Dave: Oh god, no. That... that is a piece of work called Jacob Rees-Mogg, who is the... what is he? I think he's like the leader of a house or something? Anyway, he's basically a sort of right hand man to Boris Johnson, and I try not to think about him, and that's why I can't recall what his actual job is. He's just a sort of haunted, horrible person, who is very, very Brexit-y. You can think of him as a very, very Brexit-y person.

Um, that, no, he was just showing the normal kind of contempt that he does for things that aren't him. You can ignore that. That was just somebody showing off.

Brent: Okay. So this isn't that. I mean like, that's my personal, trying not to like, mix up images and headlines I've seen with the narrative you're laying out.

Dave: No, that person is very much still a Tory, which, when I say it, you can read to mean bad guy. The person who crossed the benches, that means he got up and left the conservative party, and went and sat down to be in another one. And that happened while Boris was doing a speech, and that was the moment that he lost his majority, and he's ended up with this, y'know, historically low majority.

You need a majority. You have to have a certain amount of people on your side to be able to get anything done. He's got a bad one. So...

Brent: So this is—I mean, that must've been a huge, huge deal. That reminds me of—

Dave: Yes.

Brent: My only kind of comparison would be if a Republican... if, let's say, the Republicans had, y'know... if it was 50/50 Democrat Republican, and one Republican was so disgusted with something on the Republican side, or with

Trump, that he or she or they just decided, "Y'know what? Right this moment, in the middle of, y'know, Senate proceedings, I am a Democrat, and you no longer to have a majority to carry out your will."

Dave: That's precisely what happened.

Brent: Holy shit.

Dave: And not just in the middle of proceedings – in the middle of Boris doing a speech. Like, imagine Trump being up there on the podium and having to watch that last seat walk across and away from him. And imagine the faces and gibbering that would come out of him.

Brent: [laughs]

Dave: So, Boris, he, at this point, tries to hold a general election. And god, it's been weeks. I've forgotten why, at this stage. But given the timing of it, it was a tactical move that ultimately was gonna help him towards his no deal Brexit, and nobody's buying it, so he loses that motion as well. And all of these motions, he's just losing everything.

But then... one bill does pass. This is a really important moment. It's one that Boris fought against hard. It's called the Ben act, because Ben is the second name of the chap who sort of came up with it in the first place. And once passed – and it did pass – it makes it the law that, if we reach the date of Brexit and we do not have a deal yet... as I said before, shortages of medicine, food, all that stuff, right? If we have no deal, then the prime minister must – this is the law – request an extension to Brexit to avoid crashing out. And the EU will probably give us that extension.

This makes Boris'—

Brent: But that would be a humiliating thing for him to go—

Dave: Really.

Brent: He'd have to go to a, if I'm not mistaken, to a country that is not his own and like, basically almost come before the Wizard of Oz.

Dave: Yeah.

Brent: And ask for a brain. [laughs]

Dave: And his—he said, quote, he'd "sooner die in a ditch than do it." And that makes us all a bit nervous, because it's the law that he has to do it. His own brother... we've had his sister complain about him. His brother Joe Johnson resigns from the cabinet in protest against Boris' behavior at this point, citing "unresolvable tension" between his family loyalty and the national interest. So, that's all happening. That's exciting.

Boris has, at this point, been defeated in literally everything he's tried to do as prime minister. And he prorogues Parliament. And there's a very dramatic day where the speaker of the house, John Bercow, the man who goes, "Order!" Tearfully announces his resignation. But he does it with a certain amount of timing involved, that he's gonna do it after all of—y'know, in a few weeks, after this is sorted out. After the October deadline, just to make sure that's sorted out.

And he closes down Parliament. It's his job to do that, but he does it with clear reluctance, which is the parliamentary equivalent of having to be dragged out of the place. And indeed, some MPs actually try and block his exit. And when he's gone, a sign reading 'silenced' is left on his seat. So...

Brent: Ooh!

Dave: Dramatic. Incredible dramatic scenes. We're all watching it live on BBC Parliament, and it's all kind of over. But then... things get exciting again.

So Parliament is closed. It is prorogued. That's the word for closed.

Brent: Yeah, just to make double clear what that is, it's out of—it's out of session.

Dave: Nobody's there, they're not allowed there, the doors are locked, they can't do any parliamenting while they are prorogued.

Brent: And how long is that supposed to last?

Dave: Ooh, good question. Because the date changes all the time. I can't remember, but let's say long enough to screw up any attempt to do any more Brexit sorting out.

Brent: Well, so, are they planning to make it go past Halloween so that Brexit will just sort of roll over? Or is it—

Dave: I think it was going to—I can't remember now, but I think it might've been going to open before that, but only just so there wouldn't be any time for anything. Um, well... anyway, it doesn't really matter because of what happened next.

Because the Scottish court rules, at this point while Parliament is prorogued, that that prorogation was actually illegal. Now...

Brent: Ooh!

Dave: Now, the Scottish court, that's not the highest court in the land, so it gets passed up the chain. But, for some reason as a result of that, Boris is forced to release something called the Operation Yellow Hammer documents. And these are the government's internal papers on what will actually happen that they know will happen, because it's all been very vague, in the event of no deal. And it is... mm, bad.

It's so bad that we discover – and this was something we kind of knew, but it was a rumor – but now it's confirmed that the country, this whole country, does not currently contain enough... this is true... body bags to cope with the number of deaths that will happen if we crash out with no deal. And so, they've put in an order for lots more body bags.

Um, over the next few days, Boris goes on some kind of a tour around towns in the UK, and he's shown in a series of clips on the news getting booed and

heckled by desperate citizens wherever he goes, including a very famous example. This was a moment—by the way, if you want to keep track of the little red flags of things that Boris does that are a bit red flaggy, here's one.

He—the father of a dying child comes out of her hospital room to berate Boris, who is doing a tour of the hospital, to berate him for the strain that the NHS is being put under by government cuts. And it is – they're really, really tearing it to bits. And this father accuses him of coming to an NHS hospital for a press opportunity amidst all this.

And Boris replies, in a video recorded by the press, quote, "Actually, there's no press here." And he glances into the press camera as he says it. So... little red flag there. Red flag on that.

Brent: It reminds me of when Trump said, and I'm paraphrasing, uh... "The stuff you're hearing isn't real." It's just like the most, like...

Dave: Yep.

Brent: "The emperor is wearing clothes" thing to say.

Dave: Yep!

Brent: It's—y'know, like, the word 'gas lighting'—

Dave: I know.

Brent: —has been overused and become a bit of a cliché, but like, I think that's how we use it now, and I think that's what it is.

Dave: But there it is. Yeah.

Brent: Yeah.

Dave: Um, there was a fairly funny bit where he's—Boris is supposed to appear at a press conference with the prime minister of Luxemburg, but the protests were too loud, so he ducked out of it. And the Luxemburg prime

minister just did the press conference anyway, and just made fun of him, gesturing to the empty podium where he should be. So that was nice.

Brent: [laughs]

Dave: And then, on Tuesday of last week, a very exciting day where I found it difficult to get any work done at all. The UK Supreme Court – that’s the biggest one, at the top – ruled that Johnson’s prorogation of Parliament was illegal, and the phrase going around everywhere at the time was that he lied to the Queen. ‘Cause, y’know, he went to her to explain why he wanted to prorogue Parliament. And he, y’know, he didn’t tell the truth about that.

Now, and he’s the first prime minister ever to be found guilty of that. Now, I looked into it – that’s not actually something I think that the legal language technically accused him of, as far as I can tell. But the reasons he gave for the prorogation were false, and that’s illegal, so the prorogation is illegal.

And what that means is... Parliament is not prorogued. Not because they put it back – it never was, because it wasn’t legal. So...

Brent: Ohh. Okay.

Dave: Yeah. We have a very exciting political day, that day. Somehow, the system worked, which is something neither of our countries, yours or mine, is used to recently. [laughing]

Brent: [laughs] No, not nowadays. Certainly.

Dave: So, MPs start flocking from all over the country to return to Parliament. They’re racing to be like, y’know, who can get there first and take the first selfies. And...

Brent: [laughs]

Dave: While this, whatever the opposite of an exodus is, uh, Boris Johnson incidentally is not even in the country. He’s in New York. He’s been

photographed—he's being photographed with Trump, who is doing sound bites about what a very good prime minister he is.

Brent: Ohh god. [sighs]

Dave: So. Last Wednesday, Parliament reconvenes, and ever since then, pretty much all hell has broken loose. Boris starts—he was lashing out straight away. He started getting into all the language like, "Parliament versus the people." Red flag, 'cause Parliament represents the people.

Brent: Right.

Dave: He's described—he starts describing the Ben act. That's—do you remember the law that forces him to go to request an extension, rather than Brexit with no deal? He starts calling that "the Surrender bill." Red flag, 'cause he's trying to make the EU sound like an enemy we're at war with, rather than the massive super group we're one of.

All very Trumpian. Red, red flag. And it reached a head when... and this, I mean, I've been—I've been sort of presenting this as lots of silly parliamentary fun, but this was... we were all genuinely very cross about this, and we still are. Um, a number of female MPs pointed out to him, when he started talking like that, the frightening link between that kind of rhetoric, that kind of war rhetoric, that kind of 'surrender,' all that stuff... and the death threats that they've been receiving as the Brexit pressure cooker starts to really rattle.

And um, one of these people in particular was a friend of a woman called Jo Cox, who was a Labour MP, but she was murdered by a far right terrorist during the run up to the Brexit referendum. And he was quite, y'know, clear about why he did it. And um, this friend of hers pointed out where that kind of rhetoric, y'know, can lead.

Brent: Mm-hmm.

Dave: And Boris... [laughs] Boris told her that that is humbug. That's the word he used. And that the—

Brent: Classic.

Dave: Yep. The best way to honor the memory of Jo Cox would be to get on with Brexit.

Dave: Ugh.

Dave: And since then... I mean, honestly, there's been questions—the main thing people are asking is, whether Johnson's actually going to obey the law, the new law, and seek the extension to avoid no deal Brexit, or whether he isn't. The answers haven't been satisfyingly clear from his camp, which is kind of another way of saying that he keeps saying he absolutely isn't gonna do it. But that would be illegal.

So nobody knows exactly what he means or he's gonna do, so we're facing the danger, now, that our prime minister, who's already been found guilty of an illegal act as prime minister when he prorogued Parliament, might not intend to follow the laws recently enacted, precisely to stop him from acting the way he's acting.

And then, yesterday, at time of recording... I think it was yesterday? Maybe it was the day before, now. Everything moves so fast. He's announced... he's proroguing Parliament early again! Hooray. So that's happening.

Brent: Which, wait, was—is this somehow legal whereas the other one wasn't?

Dave: I guess we'll have to wait until he tells us!

Brent: Jesus.

Dave: I mean, I haven't heard any excuse or reason that he's given that isn't the same as the last one that he gave that was judged to be wrong and illegal, which was that he needed time to prepare a Queen's speech, which is where the Queen says the stuff that the government plans to do and stuff.

Um, and I don't know. I don't—at this stage, I don't know if there's any difference. It seems a bit brazen to me, but uh...

Brent: Now, am I right in thinking—I mean, I've heard some speechy rhetoric he's made that almost makes it sound like he considers himself nearly a single issue prime minister. Like, he's coming in to make Brexit happen, one way or the other. That's his goal.

Dave: I think that's reasonable. That's certainly the way it feels to the rest of us. Um, at this—right now, it's... [laughs] Well. I was gonna say, it's tricky to see what else there is to do. Actually, buried under all of this has been an important discussion of a domestic abuse bill that people are trying to work on.

And I don't know nearly enough about that, because it's hardly got a look in at all. There's been some quite rousing speeches that have been emerging, so I think that's going on today. So I can't tell you anything about that, except that it's the exact sort of thing we could be doing if we didn't have to deal with all this Brexit stuff.

Brent: Right. I mean, so... one thing that has been conflicting to me over the course of this is just the matter of principle. Like, I try in politics to have principles that guide me, instead of doing that thing where you cheer for your team, and the other team sucks, y'know? Like, trying to apply the same principles to both. And I fail, as we all do, but I try.

Dave: Of course.

Brent: Now, the thing that has bugged me about this all along is the fact that, despite the false pretenses that people like Boris Johnson and Nigel Farage sort of—under which they sold Brexit, like for instance, the extra money will go toward our healthcare system, and all those kinds of things.

Dave: Mm-hmm.

Brent: That at the end of the day, the referendum was, if I'm not mistaken, a fair and square will of the people vote. And so, on principle, like, I sit here

and go, Brexit's a terrible idea, they never expected it to happen, and it somehow did, and now...

I mean, it's not unlike the idea of uh, Trump's Muslim ban or the wall. Like, it's a silly idea on its face, but it is now, y'know, like... the wall and the Muslim ban aren't exactly the same, but—

Dave: No, of course.

Brent: Like, do you... what are your thoughts on the fact that, at a certain point, if there was a way around Brexit, that it would set a precedent that national referenda don't necessarily get enacted?

Dave: Yeah. That's one of the big—that really is one of the big, uh, things that we're facing. It is. It's a fair point. Now, it's slightly mitigated by the fact that the referendum, and—god, I hardly even—this is such a cliché, I hardly even want to say it. But it was advisory only. It wasn't the sort of referendum that is the law when you choose it.

What should've happened, and the way that these things should work is that you have the referendum that is passed to MPs, and they all go, "Right. Well, the people seem to want this. Can we do that?" And they think about it, and they find out if they can or not, and then they make a decision based on what would actually be good for the country, and then they...

Brent: So it wasn't binding.

Dave: Well, that—no, theoretically. But here's the thing – it's one of those things that like, nobody saw it that way. It was not advertised that way. It was advertised as, we're gonna do this or not. And so, a lot of the people who were voting kind of thought that it was binding. That's one issue. Here's another issue.

Imagine if there was a referendum on Trump's wall, right? And imagine if that, all it said on the referendum was, "Wall?" Question mark? "Yes or no?" And let's say, 'yes' won that, right? And then... and then... then you start to find out, and this is the case, right? As far as I understand it, that there kind

of isn't enough material in the world to build a wall that big. It's like, a very, very long stretch of land.

So, they start calculating what will actually happen, and like, it turns out that, well, we can build the wall, but we'll have to build it out of, like... your bones and stuff. And then...

Brent: [laughs] All three little pigs will be involved.

Dave: And then, at that point, people start going, "Oh. Uh, actually, we kind of don't want that."

"Ahh, but you voted for it!" That's kind of where we are. Because the thing about the referendum is that, they never said in it, "There'll be no medicine." They never said in it, "There'll be no deal." In fact, what they actually said, and it's the same people. Y'know, it's the—Jacob Rees-Mogg and people like that. You can find quotes of them saying stuff that completely contradicts the Brexit that they're trying to do now.

In fact, what they're doing now that's Brexit is nothing like what was advertised to the people who voted for Brexit... by a long shot. Like, to the point where like, half of them were even saying that we'd, y'know, stay in the single market and things like this. And so, now—and half of them weren't. Like, there was all sorts of different versions of Brexit.

So now, when you say, "Well, the people voted for XYZ," that doesn't mean anything. Because there was no single thing that people voted for. And yet, on the ballot, it was just yes or no, leave or remain. And so, of course, you can't actually politically, like, enact that. 'Cause it isn't. It isn't anything.

There's an even bigger problem, and I hope this doesn't go on too long, but I have to talk about Ireland. Because that... that is the big, big, big problem. So...

Brent: Mm-hmm.

Brent: Ireland, the island, has two countries in it. And one of those is the Republic of Ireland, which is not part of the UK. And the other is Northern

Ireland, which is part of the UK. And there's no actual—there isn't a border between these two countries. You can just saunter from one to the other, and many people do that several times a day.

And when I say there's no border, I don't even mean there's a bloke who waves you through. There's no border, any more than there is between, y'know, two ends of a field. As far as I know. I don't live there. Not really qualified to talk about Ireland, so take or leave it.

Brent: Yeah, sounds like when you're driving through a highway in the states, and it says, "Welcome to Delaware." There's no one there to—

Dave: Yeah, no, that's exactly what it is.

Brent: --stop you from entering Delaware.

Dave: That is exactly what it is. There is a sign up, just as if you were entering a new town. But that's—but that's all, right? So.

Brent: Gotcha.

Dave: Both of these countries are on the same island, and both are currently part of the EU. And they were part of it when the Good Friday agreement was brokered, and that was what ended the war between them. Remember, the troubles, where everything was terrible? Well...

Brent: It's a thing Americans aren't that familiar with, but wasn't it essentially a Protestant versus Catholic holy war? Is that oversimplifying?

Dave: That's—well, it is, because it was a—but that's kind of how it... that's also sort of what it was. But also, it fell between, y'know, who wants to stay in the, y'know, Union in the UK, and who doesn't. And there was all sorts of things going on. And it kind of—for most of my life, for all of my adult life, it hasn't been a thing anymore, exactly because of the Good Friday agreement that fixed it, more or less.

Well... if we leave the EU, then suddenly, there's the biggest threat to that peace that there's ever been. Because the Republic of Ireland will still be in the EU. But Northern Ireland will be out, which means that suddenly, y'know, they're both on the same bit of land, so there has to be borders now and customs and all that, 'cause they'll suddenly be completely different places. And that's bananas. And nobody in England apparently took this seriously when Brexit was proposed.

So... so, if all of the negotiating with the EU went well, and it hasn't. It hasn't. But if it had, then there would've been something sensible worked out about how people and stuff can move through that border. But if there's no deal... well, then what? Then what do you get, a Berlin wall? What? So, for years, there's been this idea of a backstop, which would be a backup plan to fall back on if none of the deals worked. Y'know, none of Brexit deals.

So, in this backstop, Northern Ireland, as I understand it, would stay in the EU, sort of, for a few years until a better deal can be sorted out. And the EU's idea is just to move the border into the sea altogether so that nothing need happen on the island itself, but that was rejected in London, so not that.

I'm not—I'm not even sure they worked out what to do about it. I don't know if they ever figured out exactly what the backstop would be. Thing is, the Republic of Ireland, that will still be an EU country. So, therefore, it's the EU's whole job to fight for their rights. And those rights include not being thrown right back into the troubles by the tensions surrounding the border, which is really important to them. Not having a physical border there is like a vital bit of why peace is working and all of this. And this is, y'know, in massive amounts of jeopardy.

Well... well. So, Ireland has always been kind of the most important part of all of this. And this week, the latest—this is the latest news. This is kind of new, so I don't really know... I think this is actually just a few hours old, so I really don't know what to make of this yet.

But Boris has gone all blustery, and he's announced that he's sending his final offer to the EU, take it or leave it. And in it, he's gone against what the Republic of Ireland and the EU have always said is really the basic stuff they

want. And it's so flagrant that, y'know, I'm seeing people saying that he's trying to get this deal to fail so they can crash out.

Other people are saying he's trying to maneuver it so that it's his deal or no deal to frighten Labour into backing him, and others are saying other stuff, because nobody knows what's happening now. It's all—it's all really confusing. And uh, the latest, which really is just a couple of hours ago, this is uh, the evening of the third of October.

The EU Parliament's Brexit steering group have issued a statement that says, uh, "The Brexit steering group..." This is EU talking. "... does not find these last minute proposals of the UK government, of the second of October, in their current form, represent a basis for an agreement to which the European Parliament could give consent.

The proposals do not address the real issues that need to be resolved; namely, the all-Ireland economy, the full respect of the Good Friday agreement, and the integrity of the single market. While we remain open to workable, legally operable, and serious solutions, the UK's proposals fall short and represent a significant movement away from joint commitments and objectives," which is a massive burn coming from them.

Brent: [laughs] Yeah. I mean, so, if there were to be a... I guess, successful is the word I want to use, Brexit of some kind... well, Brexit with a deal on Halloween.

Dave: Yep.

Brent: What they're saying is, "Y'all need to figure these details out to our satisfaction very, very quickly."

Dave: This ain't it. Not only is this not it, this isn't close to it. Now, I have seen some people who know a lot more about the legal side of things saying that, actually, if this had been proposed years ago, it could've been the start of it. Like, by now, we could've hammered this into some kind of shape, and it might actually be something.

But it's last minute. It's just—it almost seems like stalling for time, because there's no way. There's no way that this can work. So, that's where we are. Like, that—it isn't any good yet. So...

Brent: Well, here's a question that I think gets lost in all of this. So, if you take away the fact that it seems like the Tories and perhaps, other smaller parties, uh... if you take away the fact that they perhaps feel obligated to represent the will of the leave voters, what's in it for them?

Dave: [laughs]

Brent: How do they benefit from a Brexit happening?

Dave: That is a very good question, and unfortunately, the only way to answer it is to sort of get a bit, y'know, conspiracy minded. There's been talk.

Brent: Speculative?

Dave: Yeah. There's been talk of the fact that, just after when the Brexit deadline is supposed to be, the EU is bringing in some sort of laws that would... not be beneficial to the taxes of political millionaires. That sort of thing. Um, so, I don't know. I wish I knew.

And the thing is, it's seemingly less and less, because all the people who aren't sort of slaveringly loyal, um, are leaving and speaking out against it, and things like that, and y'know, going and sitting on the other bench, and things like that. Quite a lot of them did that.

So, yeah. That is... yeah. Very good question. Don't know. There doesn't seem to be anything in it for anyone. The only reason—it's—it's just turned into a kind of, um... it's just a... it's not—Brexit isn't really a thing now. It's just tribalism now. It's just who wins, and the people who voted for it... they are—

Look, I don't want to... I can't put words into their mouths, and this is... well, maybe I'm just being silly by even projecting this at all. But it just seems as

if there's been so many people who've changed their minds since, as the actual evidence of what happens with Brexit comes out. Because, y'know, we're talking about no deal Brexit now, but even deal Brexit is still—like, we still lose a lot.

And you wonder if it isn't just that... well, y'know, if you feel silly that you voted for the thing, you have to be louder about making that thing seem like it was a good idea. Because goodness knows—

Brent: Interesting.

Dave: It's been a while since I saw someone... and okay, I'm only looking on either politics or Twitter, right? Or Vox Pops. Y'know, I'm not looking at the greatest minds in the nation explaining why they've done this. But... been a very long time since I've seen anyone pro-Brexit, in the places I have seen those people, who've made a lick of sense about it at all.

Brent: [laughs]

Dave: My favorite was yesterday, when almost the first thing I saw on Twitter when I woke up was this awful story about, um, a Polish family who are having to leave and move to the EU, because there's absolutely no certainty. Their business, they have no idea if it can survive this, and so on and so on. And it was this story—y'know, this really empathetic story. Do I mean that? Really sympathetic story about this family.

Brent: [laughs]

Dave: And the reply from a Brexit person opened with the phrase, "Why should I have empathy?" And that's Brexit.

Brent: Ooh! True colors emerge. Wowza.

Dave: And that's—I've picked that because it's the most flagrant example, but like, that's Brexit. Why should I have empathy?

Brent: Do you think that's a little bit more of like a... y'know, a British thing? Like, I feel like the British, uh... Britain's history is much more one of a class system. And I think about Ebenezer Scrooge, y'know?

Dave: Mm-hmm.

Brent: Like, "Are there not work houses? Are there not prisons?" Y'know, just this flagrant... now, again, I'm not trying to like, put the entire nation on blast. But it seems like the states at least have this illusion of, we have no real second class citizens. Anybody could be president, anybody could succeed if they just work hard.

And do you feel like there's...

Dave: A look.

Brent: A little bit more of like, at the tippy top of an aristocratic viewpoint, that perhaps there's a little bit more of an open coldness in British culture? Or—I mean, which is funny, because y'all have such a better healthcare system and are much more, I would say, um, liberal and not the bad parts of religious than us. But it also seems like there's a classism that lives on in the culture. Is that fair?

Dave: Oh, yeah. Yeah, it is. And yeah, there's a—and in fact, right now, the more this goes on and the more the Tories do, the more of the – and I'm sure you've seen this in America – the sort of rich idea is starting to take hold. But the thing is, Brexit, it actually kind of is a way of us emulating the American, y'know, anyone can... whatever it was you said.

Because, um... because... [sighs] Honestly, Brexit is upper class posh people trying to appeal to working class people to get them to do what they want. And that's what Nigel Farage is. Y'know, he presents himself as a—well, not so much anymore, but he's not so important anymore because of what's going on. But he always presented himself as a sort of like, man of the people, down the pub with a pint.

But y'know, he went to the same school the rest of them did. He's just as upper class as the rest of them. And um, so it's a kind of pantomimey, like... it's using class, but it's not a class war in the sense that it's one of them against another one of them. But it is using it as—yeah, as this sort of underlying thing.

I mean, it's using—it's utilizing every single little bit of simmering resentment. That's what we have in the UK. We're good at simmering resentment, and we keep it on a simmer. We keep it right on that low boil, and we never let it quite go away, and Brexit is just a way of turning up the heat on that.

Brent: So, my... my guess, and tell me if I'm wrong, is that... I guess I'll put it this way. What this reminds me of, in terms of the Tories and Boris Johnson continuing to try to complete Brexit...

Dave: Yes.

Brent: Is sort of like when, y'know, George W. Bush decided we were going to Iraq, and in the wake of 9/11, a lot of people in Congress, including plenty of Democrats, got behind it. And then, we found out that there were no weapons of mass destruction. We found out a lot of things that made the reasons for going to war seem totally silly, and we were hearing about thousands of Americans and Iraqi civilians dying.

And so then, the justification kept changing, but the reason for that seemed to be, essentially, the pride of the Republican party, and the desire to not look dead wrong on the part of the president.

Dave: Yep.

Brent: Is that similar to why they're still trying to make this apparently dumb thing happen?

Dave: It just must be, because it's the only thing left. Yes, Brexit is all about pride. That's all it ever was. And there's versions of what that means, there's versions of, y'know... I mean, y'know, y'know 'make America great

again,' right? Well, the British equivalent of that is, "Give us Winston Churchill again!" And, "Let us be defeating someone!" And, "Let's—we'll go on rations, but it'll be to show those other people that we're imagining what's what for, and that we're strong!"

And y'know, there's so much talk. So much talk all the time from Brexit people, where they'll say like, "Well, we survived World War II! I don't know what you're complaining about! You're talking about shortages – we survived World War II!" And the thing is, the people who survived World War II... we don't have anyone yet who was old enough to really remember.

Sorry, we don't have anyone left who is old enough to really remember that. They were all little kids. My grandparents were kids in World War II, and I'm older than people. Do you know what I mean?

Brent: Yeah.

Dave: So like, this is all just—it's all just imaginary! And loads of people didn't survive World War II! Loads! It's almost the main—it's probably the most famous thing about World War II!

Brent: And the trauma, and y'know, the trauma of it... it just seems like a silly... a silly thing to say. This is why like, I sort of roll my eyes when I hear people use the phrase "the greatest generation," 'cause I go, "Yeah, they are the greatest generation. Just ask them."

Y'know, it's like, there's a glorification of war and post war, and I Love Lucy, and the '50s that American culture seems to sometimes almost believe that was the protoplasm from which our entire culture grew. But it's really just that it's the oldest TV that we have, so it's the oldest thing we can show on TV that was moving and being. Y'know what I'm saying?

Dave: I do.

Brent: Like, I'm—I'm over generalizing, which is a thing that there's always someone in our audience that helpfully tells me I was slightly wrong. Thank you.

Dave: And if we're doing that, when I said that my grandparents were kids in World War II, I meant they were younger than me. They weren't actual children, but they were younger than me now. And y'know, yeah, they were involved in it, but like, they were very young.

Brent: Sure.

Dave: So, we don't—

Brent: Yeah, my grandma was—it was 1940. So that was just as things were really ramping up. And she would've been a little kid when it ended. So yeah, of course.

Dave: Well... so, it's all silly, and I think that's what I always end up saying when I come on this. [laughs] It's all silly, Brent.

Brent: So, could you briefly – 'cause we, as we always do, have done a robust segment – um, but like, what, in short...

Dave: [laughs] Good luck.

Brent: ... are the ways that the next month could go?

Dave: Well, yeah. Exactly. Either in a couple weeks' time, we'll have crashed out. But the thing is, nobody wants that. Even like Boris, and the people who, for some reason, seem to be gunning towards no deal, that's probably just threats to get their way.

Brent: Now when you say crashed out...

Dave: No deal.

Brent: Okay, so just—but when you say no deal, you mean, there will not be a deal yet, and therefore, he will go to the EU by force and ask for an extension?

Dave: Well, that's exactly the thing. Yes. That's what we're waiting to find out and what we're desperate to find out. By law, if there is no deal by the time we have to leave, then yes, he has to go to the EU and ask for, beg for an extension, and they might give it to us. I think the understanding is that they will.

If they don't, then we crash out, and all the medicine's gone. Or if he doesn't, and it looks like he's trying to maneuver to find a way to do that – he's certainly boasting that he's not gonna do that, but that's just the bluster again. That's just the Brexit thing again. Then... then we crash out, and that's bad.

But what could happen is that he does go, and—or, as I understand it actually, there is a way. If he says, "I'm not going!" I think I heard that there is a way for Parliament to kind of step in and go like, "Well, then, we'll work around you," or something. Or the courts might say, "Well, y'know, we're onto your game." That's kind of what that decision, where they decided his prorogation was illegal.

There was a certain flavor of like, "We've got our eyes on you," about that decision. So, it could be that we do get our extension. And in that case... [blows raspberry] I don't know. Then we get a general election, then, so we've all got to have a general election, and who wins that? We don't know. Who gets the majority? What kind of government could be formed? We don't know, 'cause it's all up in the air. We've got two main political parties, and one third sort of side one. The conservatives are obviously gonna be for Brexit.

The Labour position is that they're gonna be neutral, but then hold a second referendum while campaigning for remain. And then, there's the liberal Democrats who have gone on record to say that like, "Well, we will actually be campaigning for like, full on remain, revoke article 50, all of it." And that sounds cool. And you think, "Oh, right. Well, what if we all vote for that?" But, mmm. The snag with the liberal Democrats is that, last time we did vote for them in enough numbers that they got power, they decided to give it to the Tories and make them be the government from then until today.

So, there's a certain amount of distrust, shall we say, surrounding them. Um, so, who knows? It's all gonna be really weird!

Brent: There is—there is the looming specter of the possibility, still, of no deal and the EU is like, “Go fuck yourselves,” and the crash out, the big bad, worst case scenario. And the spectrum goes all the way over to, there is a possibility that, if a certain number of things happen just so, that Brexit could sort of be prevented or skirted in ways that are legal, and that perhaps would not be thought of as cheating or undemocratic in the long run.

Dave: Yeah. And it—and I'm sure you can imagine what will happen in that case. People will be very cross. And in the other case, people will be very cross. And there have been, y'know, the Brexit people have been putting a few little nuggets of rhetoric on the table about riots and the like, and like, it's all gonna be really ugly, yeah. Whatever happens, there's gonna be a lot of anger and upheaval and all sorts of business going on. We're not looking forward to it, whatever it is.

Brent: Wow. Well, it is dramatic, and I think this was a good time to hear from you on this, because you've really set the stage for where we've come from on this, and what the near future could hold, so... thanks again for coming on, and before we switch to the next segment, would you please tell our audience where they can find you and your other stuff you do?

Dave: Absolutely, I may. I mean, will. [laughs] I'm Dave Bulmer. You can find me on Twitter, and Twitch, and YouTube, and the like as DemonTomatoDave, one word.

Am I allowed to advertise a non-Maximum Fun podcast, or shall I skip over that?

Brent: Yes, of course. Yes, of course. I do it every week now.

Dave: Yes, but you're sort of sanctioned. [laughs]

Brent: [laughs] Yeah, go ahead. Go on.

Dave: My fortnightly podcast, Sonic: The Comic: The Podcast is about that time in the '90s when Sega, contrary to what Americans might think, really ruled the roost here in the UK, and really had an extremely strong hold on the console war and what our lives were like. And it's a sort of a time portal back to 1993, as we talk about games, and Sonic, and things like that, and also the comics that were coming out. That's the main thing.

And uh, I have another irregular podcast that comes out sometimes, called Serious Disness, where we talk about those Disney remakes that are being made. Or, if it's the sort of thing you're looking for, I think six whole hour-long episodes just talking, in a great deep dive, about Frozen. So... goodness knows what's gonna happen when the sequel comes out.

Brent: [laughs] If you happen to have a cross-country train ride...

Dave: Yeah. It'll take you the whole way.

Brent: But honestly, y'know, like, it's good stuff. And people that are enthusiastic about Disney culture, but also like, y'know, for good and bad, I think there's a lot of great content there.

Dave: Mm, thank you.

Brent: Alright, well, again, Dave, thank you so much for catching us up. We will be watching this carefully.

Dave: Ooh, ooh, ooh, ooh!

Brent: As the adventure unfolds. What? What?

Dave: I forgot my comic! ImaginaryGumbo.com! You gotta go and see it! The first issue is all up online. Imaginary Gumbo, as in the stew, but one word, dot com. Read a comic. It's for all ages. It's really sweet. You'll love it. Okay, now I've finished.

Brent: That might be my favorite thing you do, honestly.

Dave: Well, we are... we are brushstrokes away from issue two being done. It's nearly done!

Brent: Well, it's wonderful. I've been following it, and I own a few small issues in print. So, Imaginary Gumbo. While everything else, go and check it all out and absorb it and throw money at it. However. Imaginary Gumbo perhaps is my favorite, just, y'know, as long as I'm chiming in.

Anyway! Thanks for coming on, thanks for your insight, and uh, hope to be hearing more from you, and hopefully seeing if this turns out well soon!

Dave: Yeah. Yeah, make no mistake – if it doesn't turn out well, we are 100% mega screwed, and you may never hear from us again.

Brent: Well, yeah. Fingers crossed, or whatever you do in the UK. Toes crossed and tongue out. Stiff upper lip and chin up. I don't know.

Dave: Yep. That's it. We pull all sorts of aces. Goodbye!

Brent: [laughing] Bye.

[theme music plays]

Brent: Alright, folks. This segment is just me, you, and a week's worth of updates on the Trump impeachment situation. But first... I said last week that I would get specific about Biden's corruption. I'm not trying to make it sound like Trump is at all justified in trying to get dirt on Biden from foreign governments – that's definitely illegal. And it's very easy to argue that there are several other impeachable offenses on Trump's record.

So the point is not to create a one to one false equivalence here. The point is that lots of these mainstream media outlets are saying, "Oh, there's no truth to Trump's claim about Joe Biden! That's a conspiracy theory!" Okay, well, some aspects of it are made up. At least, in terms of the totality of information Biden was trying to get; or rather, Trump was trying to get. Especially the idea that the company crowd strike is somehow gonna be able to deliver Hillary's emails? But, okay.

None of that disproves the fact that there is absolutely corruption between Biden, his son, and the Ukraine. So, Hunter Biden. To be clear, he's not Beau Biden, who tragically passed away a few years ago. He's Beau's younger brother who has somewhat stumbled through life, and had a hard time getting and keeping his shit together. But in 2014, Hunter became the director of the largest natural gas producer in Ukraine, a company called Burisma.

He had zero prior experience in that industry, nor with Ukrainian regulatory affairs. So what was his qualification? He was the son of then current vice president, Joe Biden. And remember that, just before that, Ukraine's government had collapsed in a revolution that led to it becoming more democratic, which meant, suddenly, Ukraine's fossil fuels gained new strategic significance.

But the fact that Ukraine had a new and fledgling government made a connection to Biden absolutely crucial for them. So this sort of thing, let's be clear. This sort of thing happens all the time, and it's not technically illegal – though, it's clearly shady as hell. And the fact that it's legally above board is not necessarily good or right.

It's sometimes called influence peddling, and connected people who become so-called advisors in these types of deals can make a very tidy profit, again, because of the nepotism of who they're connected to, and not because they're actually qualified to be involved.

How tidy might these profits be? Well, in Hunter Biden's case, he was paid up to \$50,000 a month as the director of Burisma in the Ukraine. So, this is not just, "Hey, could you do me a favor and give my son a position at your malt shop? He's a good kid." This is huuuge amounts of money, simply because he's connected.

And while the jury is somewhat out on this next bit, publications from the New York Times to NPR have either reported or implied that, back in 2016, Biden told the Ukraine they had to get rid of a particular prosecutor if they wanted a billion dollars' worth of US aid. Some say it was to aid in the

investigation of Ukraine's corruption. Others say it was to avoid anyone looking into his son.

Now, everything up to this point in my reporting has been a matter of record, but this bit is confusing, because other publications like the Washington Post have since stepped in to say, "No, this is how rumors get started. Joe Biden was not doing a quid pro quo to get his son out of trouble." But the Biden family has been tangled up in, or adjacent to low-key corruption for like, nearly half a century.

And to be fair, you also see this kind of thing in cabinet appointments. Does Rick Perry understand the energy industry enough to be energy secretary? What about brain surgeon Ben Carson running HUD, or Betsy DeVos who probably never set foot in a public school before her appointment, being appointed secretary of education?

So, yeah, Joe Biden's son traded on his dad's name to involve himself in an industry he had no business being in in a country infamously steep in corruption, by the Biden family's acquisition in 2006 of a company called Paradigm global advisors. And you can read more about all this in the Politico story, *Biden Inc*, from August 2nd, 2019, and also the story in the Atlantic, *Hunter Biden's Perfectly Legal, Socially Acceptable Corruption*, from September 27th, 2019.

Alright, now onto the latest with Trump's impeachment. So many headlines have come out of this past week that in order to explain what happened, I'm gonna have to be a bit rapid fire with all of these little bits. So, we still don't know who the whistleblower is, who tipped off the intelligence inspector general about Trump's illegal contact with Ukraine. And that's good, because that's how it's supposed to work.

But there is a swath of pro-Trumpers who have literally been shown to carry out violence to defend him. If the whistleblower were identified, their life would be in danger. The life of the whistleblower, that is. So last week, Trump was caught on tape implying the whistleblower was actually a spy, and saying, "What about when we used to kill these types of people?"

By the way, I absolutely spaced out on the fact that our country *did* execute the Rosenbergs for that reason in the '50s, so thanks to those of you who reminded me of that via social media. In any case, the attorneys who represent the whistleblower have put out a letter saying Trump is endangering their client's life by invoking the idea execution, and the idea that uh, they may be treasonous.

And remember, this whistleblowing situation went exactly as it was supposed to. They approached the intelligence inspector general months ago, the IG looked into it, said it was the type of claim that required the notification of Congress. And all the while, it wasn't leaked. It was by the book.

Meanwhile, Rudy Giuliani has been subpoenaed by the House Intelligence Committee to provide certain documents and information. Remember, Giuliani was also in contact with the Ukrainian government, and was mentioned specifically in the conversation in question between Trump and Ukrainian president Zelensky, even though he's not, uh, a federal employee. He is Trump's personal lawyer.

Fox News has been increasingly splintering among its hosts and correspondents, particularly in the cases of anchor Shepherd Smith, who regularly debunks Trump's claims, as well as long-time Fox legal correspondent Judge Andrew Napolitano, who was clear about the fact that once Trump admitted he had this phone call, he admitted to a crime.

A little bit later in the segment, Napolitano pointed out that if Trump's phone call were to be interpreted as bribery, which would be consistent with the evidence in the transcript, that would be a clearly impeachable offense, and not the high crimes and misdemeanors kind. No, the Constitution states that the president, and I quote, "shall be removed from office on impeachment for and conviction of treason, bribery, or other high crimes and misdemeanors." All that from Fox News, no less.

Trump also told reporters that not only should the Ukraine investigate the Bidens, but China should as well. This is just a comparatively subtle way to do the crime that led to the impeachment inquiry. He's asking foreign

governments for dirt on his opponent in his election campaign. That's a crime. That's the crime.

On Wednesday, Trump held a press conference at the White House when the president of Finland, Sauli Niinistö, was visiting. During the presser, Trump called the congressman who is heading up the impeachment inquiry, Adam Schiff, a "low life." He also repeated previous attacks on the whistleblower, further endangering the whistleblower, should they ever be identified.

But arguably, the most dramatic moment from that press availability is when Jeff Mason, a reporter for Reuters, asked a question that Trump didn't like. Notice how Mason asks his question, Trump basically doesn't answer it for an extended period, and when Mason repeats the question, Trump angrily deflects again. I'm gonna run the whole clip. Let's listen.

Mason: Can you just make clear, right here, what do you or what did you want president Zelensky to do with regard to Joe and Hunter Biden?

Trump: If you look at what he said, okay? And he brought it up. I think he brought up the name Rudy Giuliani. What I want is the following, and I've said this loud and clear. We have our ambassadors here. We have Mike Pence here. Why are we the only ones that give the big money to the Ukraine? We give money to Ukraine. And it's bothered me from day one, and you have plenty of people, just here. I say, "How come it's always the United States that gets ripped?"

Frankly, Ukraine, we want to help them. And I do like the new president. You know why I like him? 'Cause he was honest. Because he said there was no pressure at all exerted on me, meaning him, by the president of the United States. He said it. By the way, that one sentence should stop this.

Speaker 1: What about Mr. Biden? What did you want about Biden? What did you want him to look into on Biden?

Trump: Look, Biden and his son are stone cold crooked. And you know it. His son walks out with millions of dollars. The kid knows nothing. You know it, and so do we. Go ahead, ask your question.

Mason: The question, sir, was, what did you want president Zelensky to do about vice president Biden and his son, Hunter?

Trump: Are you talking to me?

Mason: Yeah, it was just a follow up of what I just asked you, sir.

Trump: Listen, listen. Are you ready? We have the president of Finland. Ask him a question.

Mason: I have one for him. I just wanted to follow up on the one that I asked you, which was—

Trump: Did you hear me? Did you hear me?

Mason: What did you want him—yes, sir.

Trump: Ask him a question.

Mason: I will. But—

Trump: I've given you a long answer. Ask this gentleman a question. Don't be rude.

Mason: No sir, I don't want to be rude. I just wanted you to have a chance to answer the question that I asked you.

Trump: I've answered everything. It's a whole hoax, and you know who's playing into the hoax? People like you and the fake news media that we have in this country, and I say, in many cases, the corrupt media. Because you're corrupt. Much of the media in this country is not just fake, it's corrupt. And you have some very fine people, too. Great journalists, great reporters. But to a large extent, it's corrupt and it's fake. Ask the president of Finland a question, please.

Mason: Okay, I'll move on now.

Brent: So it's definitely a question Trump didn't want to answer, and we've seen a fair amount of this blatant non-answering lately from Trump and his team. But particularly, when Laura Ingram asked Giuliani why he even needed to be involved in contacting the Ukraine, and Rudy said, "Why am I doing it, Laura? Can't you figure it out?" [laughs] Anyway.

Also at this press conference at the White House, Trump said, "I had a transcript done by very talented people, word for word, comma for comma, done by people that do it for a living. We have an exact transcript." Just one problem with that – the transcript summary memo itself says, "Not a verbatim transcript of a discussion," as well as, "A number of factors can affect the accuracy of the record, including poor telecommunications connections, and variations in accent and/or interpretation."

So, that's just another Trump lie. But you can tell he's running scared. So many of his tweets lately, and Jesus, we could do three hours just on his tweets from the last week. He frames it as a witch hunt, a Democrat scam, and presidential harassment. That old chestnut.

Finally, there's a new piece of evidence that may move the ball down the field in terms of the impeachment inquiry. Fox News of all sources broke a story featuring text messages between Kurt Volker, former envoy to the Ukraine, acting ambassador, William Taylor, and ambassador to the EU, Gordon Sondland.

As far as I can tell, and I'm slightly cribbing from Jank Uger's reporting here, but it seems like Volker is not particularly a Trump fan, whereas Gordon Sondland has been more of a protector and supporter of Trump in his position.

Okay, so, here are the texts in question. They are from September 9th, before the Washington Post broke the story of the whistleblower. Taylor texted, "As I said on the phone, I think it's crazy to withhold security assistance for help with a political campaign."

To which Sondland, the Trump crony texts, "Bill, I believe you are incorrect about president Trump's intentions. The president has been crystal clear. No quid pro quos of any kind. The president is trying to evaluate whether Ukraine is truly going to adopt the transparency and reforms that president Zelensky promised during the campaign. I suggest we stop the back and forth by text."

Now, it doesn't take a conspiracy theorist to interpret that response as Sondland saying, "Hey! Shush about that, we're communicating via text here. Don't leave a paper trail saying that, you fool." So, is that the smoking gun? Eh, maybe. But as Trump said during his 2016 campaign, he could shoot someone on Fifth Avenue and not lose one voter. So, could Teflon Don escape punishment despite the mounting evidence here? Maybe.

But there's a lot of smoke coming out of that gun.

[theme music plays]

Brent: And now I'm back with Kate for a brief tidbits segment. We are going to tid the bits, bit the tids.

Kate: [laughs]

Brent: And uh, just a bit of that. Um, I'm sorry. I took it one step too far. Alright, Kate, hit me with a bit.

Kate: [laughing] Yeah. So this one should be interesting to your uh, Brental Floss fans, all the video game nerds out there. After 19 years in the video game business, the Japanese game studio best known for developing the Mario and Luigi RPG series, Alphascream, has filed for bankruptcy. The studio has apparently been affected by high development costs and slow sales.

Last year, they reported debts of nearly four million dollars. Yikes. Their last project was an RPG for the 3DS called Mario and Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story. I didn't know that people were this not into Mario and Luigi anymore.

Brent: Well, the thing is that, um, in this particular case, there are all these different Mario brands within the huge umbrella. It's kind of like, um, Mickey Mouse has the House of Mouse show on the Disney channel, but also, they've got those—occasionally they make like little short featurettes with Mickey Mouse, before, y'know, before movies, and there's like a different kind of flavor of Mickey Mouse at Disneyworld...

So like, there's sort of the flagship Mario games. Mario Sunshine, Galaxy, Odyssey... and these were sort of an RPG side series that had a very specific style, and were a little bit more in the realm of games like, uh, Super Mario RPG for the Super Nintendo, or just like, a little bit closer to your Earthbound, Final Fantasy, these kinds of things.

And so, y'know, it's a bummer, because this was a really cool kind of side franchise that, I mean, gosh, y'know, it outlived... I would say outlived Paper Mario, and all these other—and like, y'know, more successful and beloved than like, your Mario Party, for instance.

But um, y'know, I think as something of a game developer, I think it's just one of those things where sometimes, you can make really great things, and it's just like, the money situation doesn't quite work out. You just have a few that didn't quite, um... I mean, it's diminishing returns. At a certain point, these games are fun, but maybe did not differ enough or provide enough fresh stuff, and people felt like, y'know, we're kind of playing the same game.

The last game they made was Mario and Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story, but that was even a remake for the 3DS of a game for the DS. So, y'know, these things happen. It's a real bummer. But I guess, if nothing else, we'll never, uh... we'll never suddenly not have the Mario and Luigi RPG series. You'll never know.

Maybe when we're like 50 years old, somebody will be like, "Hey, let's use the futuristic version of Kickstarter to make a new one of these. It'll be like Fuller House. Um, but better." But yeah, that's a bummer. Pour one out for Alphasdream. I hope they all find a way to get hired at other, uh—for other video game jobs, 'cause it's a rough world out there. But um...

Kate: Yeah.

Brent: Shifting gears into a different kind of story. It feels like we report on a regular basis about another unarmed person of color killed needlessly by a police officer, and another, and another. And so often, the officers in question get off with a slap on the wrist, and a big part of that is the fact that prosecutors and law enforcement work hand in hand. So even the most egregious examples can end without a conviction.

But this week saw what I would consider to be justice in this realm when former police officer, Amber Guyger, was convicted and sentenced to ten years in prison for the murder of innocent black man, Botham Jean. You may remember that Guyger was Jean's downstairs neighbor, and she entered his apartment and shot him ostensibly, under the impression that he was actually in her apartment unit. At the same time, she was still in her police uniform.

Jean's brother forgave and hugged Amber Guyger and wished her well at her sentencing. She is the third Dallas area police officer to be found guilty of murder in the past two years, with a fourth such trial on the way.

Kate: Wow.

Brent: Yeah. Um, I'm a Dallasite. I grew up in the greater Dallas area for the first 18 years of my life, and while I'm embarrassed at the number of convictions, I'm also hopeful that this is a bellwether of change that will continue across the country as more people become aware of just how bad the situation is.

Like, it's been a while since Ferguson, but... I think that changes, at least in awareness, have moved forward, and I'm hoping, again, that this signals the fact that we are... I mean, y'know, let's not rest on our laurels, there's a long way to go. But at least that things might be moving in the right direction.

And y'know, Amber Guyger, she cried as she argued her case toward the end of the trial. She cried when the verdict was announced. She cried at the sentencing. And to that, I say... good. Bye.

Kate: [laughs]

[music plays]

Laurie: Hi, I am Laurie Kilmartin.

Jackie: And I'm Jackie Kashian.

Laurie: Together, we host a podcast called...

Jackie: The Jackie and Laurie Show.

Laurie: We're both standup comics. We recently met each other, because women weren't allowed to work together on the road or in gigs for a long, long time. And so, our friendship has been unfolding on this podcast for a couple of years. Jackie constantly works the road, I write for Conan, and then I work the road in between.

Jackie: We do a lot of standup comedy, and so, we celebrate standup, and we also bitch about it.

Laurie: Yes. We keep it to an hour. We don't have any guests. We somehow find enough to talk about every single week. So find us – you can subscribe to The Jackie and Laurie Show at MaximumFun.org, or wherever you get your podcasts.

Jackie: `Kay, bye.

Speaker 1: Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the Match Game! Our contestants, Nnekey and James, from the hit podcast, Minority Korner!

Nnekey: Heyyy.

James: Heyyy.

Speaker 1: I'll ask you questions in a rapid fire round. Favorite character on a Shonda Rimes show?

Nnekay: Olivia Pope.

James: Ooh, I said Olivia Pope's wig.

[buzzer sound]

Speaker 1: Oh, so close! How do you feel about Disney?

Nnekay: They need to pay reparations to black people because Mickey Mouse was based off of blackface.

James: I said get rid of the racist rides – Jungle Cruise, Splash Mountain.

[buzzer sound]

Speaker 1: Who are you voting for in the primaries?

Nnekay: It's too damn early.

James: I'm just getting to know these fools!

[buzzer sound]

Speaker 1: Ooh, no dice. What celebrity do you side-eye the most?

James: Kevin Hart. Can we get a real apology for your homophobia?

Nnekay: Justin Timberlake.

James: Nipplegate.

[buzzer sound]

Speaker 1: Favorite superhero movie?

Nnekay: Black Panther! Wakanda forever!

James: [simultaneously] Black Panther! Wakanda forever!

[dinging sound]

Speaker 1: Congratulations! But you still lose.

Nnekay: Now I'm side-eyeing you.

James: [simultaneously] Now I'm side-eyeing you.

Speaker 1: That's Nnekay and James, the wonder twins of podcasting, on Minority Korner, every Friday at Maximum Fun.

Brent: Well, that's gonna do it for another episode of Trends Like These. Huge thank to guest substitute hosts and correspondents, Dave Bulmer and Kate Sloane.

Kate: Thank you for having me.

Brent: It's been awesome. Of course. Been awesome doing the show with you. Um, make sure and listen to all the other amazing podcasts on the Maximum Fun network, and see more of them at MaximumFun.org. We'd appreciate it if you'd subscribe on Apple Podcasts, give us a rate and review there. It doesn't take you very long, but it really does help us out.

Uh, the Trends Like These theme song is a ringtone, available for Android users at BrentalFloss.Bandcamp.com, and Apple users, uh, you can just get it on the iPhone iTunes app. If you just put in Trends Like These, it's a ringtone. So um... but Kate, would you please tell people where they can find you on the internet?

Kate: Yeah. I am @Girly_Juice on Twitter and Instagram. I have a sex blog at GirlyJuice.net, and I co-host two podcasts, one of which is called the Dildorks, and it's about sex, dating, and masturbating, and the other of which is with you, and it's called Question Box. It is the game show podcast of shockingly personal questions.

Brent: Yeah! And by the way, for those of you that don't know, we've had Travis and Courtney on Question Box.

Kate: They're some of my favorite episodes. They're really, really great.

Brent: Yes. Travis talks about some body part situations, and uh, Courtney talks about... well, they both talk about, uh, quite a few things. Pretty dramatic stuff. Our website is QuestionBoxShow.com, but basically, Question Box is now on all of the major podcast thingies. And it's really fun. It's a little bit different of a tone. Y'know, it's not doin' the news, so... but sometimes people are very vulnerable. Very funny. Um, and we—

Kate: And other times, Travis says stuff like, "Gun to my head, I couldn't tell you what my asshole looks like." Perhaps my favorite sentence ever uttered. [laughing]

Brent: [laughing] Yes, and we plan to have more cool people that you may have heard of. No details, but that you may be familiar with in this realm of podcasting, in the future. So, yeah. Check out Question Box on your favorite podcast thingy.

Uh, but, I think that's it for another episode of Trends Like These. Kate, I'm not gonna ask you if I forgot anything, 'cause it's just not a thing I want to do today. We didn't forget anything. We got it all. High five.

Kate: [laughs] Good job.

Brent: Alright, everybody. See you next time.

[theme music plays]

Brent: [sings a tune] Oh—this is what I get for tryin' to write flub stuff in real time. Brent interrupts Brent is uh, what it says. That's not true.

Kate: [laughs] I mean, sometimes you do do that.

Brent: Constantly.

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