

# Prime Minister Boris Johnson: the jester will take the throne

By [Matthew Flinders](#)

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Heavy is the head that wears the crown, to paraphrase Shakespeare. Heavy because power brings with it responsibilities that are not to be taken lightly - jaunty laughter, bluff and bluster will quickly fall upon the rocks of political reality. Britain is doomed. It has allowed the [court jester](#) to take the throne.



Pork barrel politics? PA/Darren Staples

Too harsh? I think not. Too partisan? Not at all.

The tragedy of this tale is that the idea of Jeremy Corbyn, leader of the opposition, walking into Number 10 also fills me with a sense of doom and gloom.

There is a common assumption that, one way or another, Boris Johnson's promotion will lead to an early general election, in which case the great British public will enjoy a simple choice – chaos with a blond bouffant, or disaster in cycling clips. Just mark your ballot with a grubby little pencil that's tied to an even grubbier piece of string. Why do I sense that large numbers of people won't bother to engage with such a dismal decision?

Heavy are the heads of the party members who voted for the jester. Heavy because it is they who must take some

responsibility. Charisma, celebrity stardust and Churchillian quips are not enough, and when all goes wrong (note “when” not “if”) it will be to the Conservative party that the nation turns and asks: “What have you done?”

Can there ever have been a man more ill-suited to high public office? Take this insider verdict, for example: “That he’s a habitual liar, a cheat, a conspirator with a criminal pal to have an offending journalist’s ribs broken, a cruel betrayer of the women he seduces, a politician who connived in a bid for a court order to suppress mention of a daughter he fathered, a do-nothing mayor of London and the worst foreign secretary in living memory.”

Too harsh? I think not. Too partisan? Not at all. This is, in fact, the view of a [former Conservative MP](#) – Matthew Parris.

Heavy are the heads that held their tongues and lined up behind the jester. “Ministerial-itis” – as [Gerald Kaufman](#) famously explained – is a particularly dangerous disease. The desire for advancement among backbenchers can corrupt even the most sensible member.

## Faustian pact

The ministerial ladder has always been smothered in grease – and it has generally been the prime minister doing the smothering. Ministerial wannabees suggest that the extra risk that comes with Johnson was “priced in” to their decision to support him. Wake up, you fools, from your sleepy slumber! Bargaining with Boris is a Faustian pact you can only ever lose.

Heavy are the heads that held the jester’s hand and led him to the throne. You held him back, shut his mouth and tamed his hair. You knew that the biggest threat to Boris was Alexander Boris de Pfeffel Johnson and you saved him from himself. He [waved a kipper](#) as you sold a kipper; and it’s the British public who will now pay the price.

Democratic politics really is the slow boring of hard wood. It is dull and exhausting, based on delegation and compromise. It is slow and steady, it’s about listening more than talking, it’s about emotional intelligence and a moral compass, and founded on trust, not humour. It’s not a joke, no laughing matter. It demands the conscientious absorption of detail. Can you spot the problem?

The truth is that the jester has ridden on many backs on his way to the throne. But the ride is now over. He’s achieved his ambition. From now on he will live or die on the basis of his own political skill and cunning. The only good thing about prime minister Johnson is that he has nowhere to hide. The ice is very thin beneath the throne and leadership can be a very lonely business.

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