

BREXIT NEGOTIATED

Brussels 2016.

The scene is a large sumptuous conference room. On one side of a large sumptuous conference table sit various serious-looking gentlemen in dark suits. On the other side sit more serious-looking gentlemen in dark suits.

To the side of the room sit translators with computers and tablets. Outside the door no less than four heavies in dark glasses stand guard.

Each set of serious-looking gentlemen clearly has a leader. They listen carefully to him whenever he speaks. They are careful not to interrupt him when he speaks.

One of these leaders is Sir Brian Shuffle, leader of the British Brexit Negotiating Team. The other leader is Monsieur Gaston de Poubelles, leader of the EU negotiating team. Monsieur de Poubelles has a little dog at his feet, to which he occasionally gives a biscuit. Sir Brian Shuffle studies the huge file of papers before him, occasionally scratching his head. At 09.30 precisely Monsieur de Roncevalles speaks, in immaculate English.

GdeP: What subject do you wish to broach first, Sir Shuffle?

BS: Um. Well. I thought we might start with immigration.

GdeP: Ah non! That is for later.

BS: Oh, right. Then, um, what about human rights?

GdeP: Last. It is the least of our concerns.

BS: Quite. Then may I suggest trade?

GdeP: Excellent! Proceed, Sir Shuffle.

BS: Actually it's Sir Brian.

Gdep: When we know each other better. Possibly.

BS: In so far as the overall trade situation is concerned, the people of Britain and my government wish to maintain the excellent relations we have had for the last forty years. To our mutual benefit.

GdeP: Spare me the wishes of your people, Sir Shuffle. It is of no concern in these negotiations. But, you speak of mutual benefit. What do you mean?

BS: It's quite clear, really. We agree a trade treaty that gives the European Union and my country satisfaction.

GdeP: H'm. So. Please start.

BS: I'd like to start with the automobile industry.

GdeP: Non! That is a German issue. For you to discuss with Herr von Richthofen, later. Let us start with the wines and cheeses. This is of paramount interest to France.

BS: Um.. shouldn't the Italians be involved? They produce lots of wine and cheese.

GdeP: For that, you meet the Italian delegation in the ristorante 'Calabria e Sicilia', later tonight.

BS: Really?

Gde P: Yes, really. That is how they like to do business. And you will meet their capo di capi. Signor Corleone. Now. Please. French wine and cheese. Here is a draft of our suggested treaty. It is quite long – 462 pages, I believe. So I suggest you take time to read some of it before we re-commence, this afternoon. In any event it is now lunch-time. The wine should be at the correct temperature by now.

BS: But it's only 12 o'clock.

GdeP: We re-commence at 3 o'clock. Allons!