

[Transcript] The News Agents / Your questions answered: a listener special

Today, we discovered that we have a 20-year-old Romanian student in the Netherlands who listens to us every day.

Wow.

His name is Tudor, and this is what he wrote in to ask us.

I love listening to the show every day, and for the episode on Friday, I wanted to ask, how do you see the world and democracies in particular getting out the situation we find ourselves in?

Only in the past few years, we've had the rise of populism in Western democracies, Putin feeling secure enough to invade Ukraine, Xi Jinping threatening to invade Taiwan, adding climate change.

I think you can see why so many young people, such as myself, who keep up with world affairs are very worried with what is to come, especially since we are the ones who'll have to fix it.

I haven't lost hope, but I believe things will get much worse before they get any better.

Also, if Donald Trump wins next year, what beverage do you recommend I anaesthetise myself with?

Something very, very, very, very strong.

He goes on, I love the work that you do, and I wish you all the best.

Tudor, thank you so much.

That's from Tudor Tanisescu in the Netherlands.

You've given us a lot there, and we're going to get stuck in straight away.

Welcome to the news agents Q&A special.

It's John.

It's Emily.

And Lewis is somewhere far away on his honeymoon.

Now, Lewis has spent a career as a broadcast journalist.

He is used to working with microphones.

He has been a producer before he became a reporter.

So there's nothing he doesn't know about producing good audio quality.

This is the first voice message we got from him from his honeymoon in Wyoming.

So I think it's only right that all, or at least one, that's in news agents Q&A is always in the car when it does so, as we heard last time.

I mean, what a pile of steaming poo.

I mean, that is just not broadcastable.

So we had to say, good ol', try harder.

Do you know what?

I think we've kind of leapfrogged that bit in the middle where you said he's on his honeymoon.

I mean, I'm just imagining his lovely bride, now wife, sitting in the car next to him whilst he just goes on and on about democracy, freedom, and potential elections while she's trying to sightsee her way around one of America's most beautiful states.

Well, I think it's as a riposte to him that I saw her retweeting something about net zero targets.

So I've kind of got this vision.

Oh my God, they're having a way.

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They're having a ball made for each other.

They're totally made for each other.

Anyway, we'll come back to Lewis in a bit, but I just thought we had to play you that stonking bit of audio that we got from him.

Let's go back to Tudor's question and the serious part of it about the future looks pretty grim.

And yeah, I get that it can do.

I mean, I'm putting myself back, if I can just about remember, from when I was 20, it was the campaign for nuclear disarmament.

It was mutually assured destruction.

There was the big threat of the Cold War blocks facing each other off in a nuclear armageddon scenario.

And I think that possibly wherever you are and whatever time you're living in, there is fear about the future.

Yeah, Tudor, I would say that I grew up in Sheffield, which is famous for many things, not least of which was the film *Threads*, where it was set.

And it was literally a film that I watched as a 12-year-old about the advent of nuclear war and everyone moving into their bunkers.

And it seems extraordinary that we can almost laugh about that now as being an apocalyptic vision because at one time, it kind of didn't feel like that.

And I guess to our parents or to our siblings' generations, the Cuban Missile Crisis felt like that.

We got really, really close to the brink here.

What you're talking about is long-term systemic decay, I guess, when it comes to climate change.

And I think that is really, really serious.

And I wish we could offer something that was more positive, but it seems at the moment certainly in this country, we're working away from that as an issue, not towards it.

I would say in America, I think what you've seen Joe Biden put together in the shape of an infrastructure deal, which is so cleverly about both jobs and green energy and growth to the economy, that it sort of gives me a sense of optimism that there is a rollout plan there.

The same could be done.

Yeah, I just want to add to that because the other point you make is about populism.

And look, you know, I am very firmly of the view that you can't take liberal democracy for granted.

And that all the things that we cherish about it, even with all its faults, the rule of law due process, free and fair elections, peaceful transfer of power, etc, etc, etc. they are not immutable.

They are not permanent.

We saw it on January the 6th, 2020 in Washington of how close, you know, the great democracy came to toppling over.

We've got to fight against that all the time.

But I would also say that in certain places, populism is in retreat.

And you could argue that in Britain, where the Johnson government was brought down by

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a series of lies and kind of, you know, deceits about what it would do and what it could do, was it just seemed to be enough.

You've seen the recent elections in Poland, where a more moderate government has taken over.

So I don't think all is despair, but I think the fight is real.

And I think there are bad actors out there who would really love to undermine liberal democracy.

And we have to guard against that absolutely assiduously.

Yeah.

I think it hangs in the balance.

I mean, we'll remember what 2000, early 2000s was the book by Francis Fukushima called the end of history.

And you know, if you talk to Fukushima, he will say now, oh, I think I was kind of misrepresented or I was misquoted.

Sorry, it's Fukuyama, I think.

Sorry, you're right.

It was nuclear.

But essentially, he was heralding what looked like the end of that struggle of the communist bloc, of the rise of authoritarian communism.

And I think we clearly haven't got to a place where any of that looks over and safe.

I think it just waxes and wanes, quite frankly.

If you look at what's happening in France now, really interesting that a centrist like Macron, heralded at one point as the new voice post-mercile of the EU, is now starting to flirt with a much harder line on immigration, on whether he moves away from the European Convention on Human Rights and just starts sending back characters of ill will that they don't like without actually going through the courts process.

If you listen to what our government is saying now and Robert Jenrick was speaking about this, they are not saying outright that they would end the European Convention on Human Rights, that they are flirting, they are definitely letting it be known that if they don't get their way on the Rwanda process, they might keep it on the table as a way out.

I think there is a lot of populist gestures within these governments, even if they are not populist themselves.

Okay.

This is where I think you and I might disagree.

I think there is nothing wrong with governments understanding the will of the people and the concerns that there are over issues like immigration, whereas I think that liberal politicians have tended to shy away, they find the subject unpleasant, they don't want to deal with it, they think it's just a few rabble rousers on the right, and then they find that the right is very popular.

And arguably Brexit happened mainly because of immigration.

It wasn't about taking back control, it wasn't about new regulations coming from Brussels, it was the sense that the borders were open and totally porous.

And I think that actually, if you get sensible politicians like Macron saying, right, we've got to do some measures on this and trying to shift the dial on the debate about illegal

immigration, that's no bad thing.

Okay.

I think there is a big difference between populism, and maybe it takes a line to explain that, and popular policies.

I totally understand why popular policies are where you want your party to be.

Population is about getting rid of the institutions, the guardrails, the things that hold power to account.

And at the moment, one of those is the Convention on Human Rights.

We have signed up to a Convention on Human Rights, we share it with the rest of Europe.

And so I think this is where I would make that distinction.

Are we going to say, as Boris Johnson notably did, I don't care about the Parliamentary Standards Committee, I don't care about the Privileges Committee, I don't care about the judges, they're the enemies of the people.

You remember when Liz Truss was the Justice Secretary, and that headline appeared in the Daily Mail, and she didn't even bother to sort of stand up for the judiciary.

Are we going to say, that is all fine, because these are popular things?

That's not what populism is.

Populism is a way of not caring if all those guardrails to democracy get beaten down.

And I think that's the newer territory that we're in here.

Yeah, I would say that the other thing that defines populism, and going back to Tudor's question, is the idea that the world is just full of simple solutions, if only the politicians were brave enough to grasp them.

And that is the danger of populist politics, that we can solve this.

Donald Trump, Boris Johnson, yeah, we're going to solve the order.

Get the elites out the way and we'll do this.

Donald Trump, listen to him now.

I could solve Ukraine in 24 hours.

Really?

Could you, Donald?

I'm not so sure, to be honest.

Anyway, let us move on to a question from Charlie Robinson, which is, what set of circumstances do you think will trigger an early election?

That's my invitation of Lewis answering this question now.

Oh, really?

Yes.

Have we got anything from Lewis for this one?

Right, we'll let him out of the boot, as he would say about me.

I think that the circumstances that would trigger an early election is if the party thinks its fortunes are on the up.

And I would say that the war a party thinks it is losing or heading to defeat, the later the election will be.

If you see a massive uptick in stopping the boats, i.e. lower migration numbers, if you see a massive downward trend in inflation, if you see massive reductions in people's household bills, and it's something that Rishi Sunak can take to the population and

say, look at me, I did this, then you might see an early election.

By early, I mean May.

I don't think it's going to be much before April May.

I do think it's interesting.

I heard Damien Green, former Deputy Prime Minister, Conservative, former Minister, saying, what a good job the French had done in stopping the boats.

And you just think, wow, that's not going to be Rishi Sunak's line, or Soella Braverman's line, obviously.

But actually, Rishi Sunak's policy of having a much better relationship with the French is paying off, and maybe that will be an area where we will see falls in the numbers.

I think it's going to be the economy.

I think that if he has a confidence that the next inflation figures are coming down, that interest rates have reached their peak, and they start to tip downwards as well, that might just encourage them to go rather than wait clinging on to the very last second in the hope that something good comes along to salvage them.

What you want to be able to do is say, we're getting this under control.

Do you really trust the other guys not to fuck it up?

And I guess that is where the sort of idea of fear comes from.

If you can instill in the electorate that it's better the devil you know, that they are working on the things you care about, then it's a good time to go.

Do I think Rishi Sunak will go to the electorate early?

The way I see it, and I do believe very strongly that anything can change, I think things can change quite quickly.

But I would say that if you think you're going to the gallows, you walk slowly.

It's very hard to run and jump and skip.

Is that from personal experience that you say that?

I'm sure Confucius said it first.

But I'd also say, and this sounds horrible in a way, and I sort of want to keep it in a political context than in a sort of geopolitical context.

But if things got really bad in terms of war, if we were dragged into a situation, if there was something that had brought this country into a place where our own national security was being threatened, I also think Rishi Sunak might go to the polls at that point.

Because people feel very jittery about something that suggests a change of command in the middle of unstable times.

And God forbid that we're in that situation, but I could also see that happening, yeah.

I would only just counter that by saying that they got rid of Thatcher just as British troops were about to go into the First Gulf War.

It made no difference at all.

Well, you could, you should have counter that.

President George H.W. Bush thought the British had gone stark raving bonkers, that they would ditch Thatcher at a moment like that, but the Conservative Party did, and they changed leaders.

I know it's a different for a general election.

You can play with that, can't you?

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You can say that Bush, W. Bush, probably secured his next four years as a result of the post-911 invasion, right, in the sense that America felt a very, very nervous place in those years following 9-11.

And the rally round the flag effect.

Exactly.

We're going now to page four in the Hymn Book.

The next question is from J.R.

When I see J.R., I think of Dallas, which is probably said in Wyoming, or Dallas in fact.

No, Dallas, I think.

There was a clue in the title.

I'm just going to sail on through that.

Okay, this one says, is there a sufficient appetite in the electorate for extreme political thinking from Braverman?

Will the Tories have a chance of success with her at the helm?

We're now going to hear a short message from our co-presenter, Lewis Goodall.

Before I answer this question, John and Emily, I do feel that I owe you both an apology because I haven't learned from either of you in the way that I should.

I've been on holiday for five days or so now.

And in John's case, you know what, I haven't had lunch or breakfast with any local political figures.

I haven't tried to meet up with the governor of Colorado, or Wyoming, or Montana, and I haven't tried to appear on any local television stations in a panel discussion.

He has.

And in Emily's case, I haven't done any copy for the episodes, which she does tend to do when she's on holiday because after week three, she's bored, and I haven't done any of that.

So I've let you both down, and I'm really sorry, and I'm going to try and improve.

On the question about Soella Braverman, look, on the one hand, it's clear the Labour Party would welcome that as her lead with the opposition, that there would be space for them to vacate the sort of hallowed center ground of politics and force the Conservative Party into extremes and isolate it.

And that could certainly happen.

I think a Braverman victory is actually quite likely as leader of the opposition in terms of her becoming leader of the opposition in terms of what the Conservative Party does next.

I would just say, though, that the Conservative Party in Britain can win from its extremes in the way that the Labour Party cannot.

And that is because of the way that the British politics is hardwired about the way the media operates in Britain, the way politics overall operates in Britain.

The Labour Party's bandwidth to even go to even a vague sense of its own radicalism or lean into its own radicalism is much more limited.

The system is set against it in terms of the media in particular.

In the Conservative Party's case, as we've seen borne out, year after year, in recent

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years in government, the papers will support their moving to more extreme positions. Much of the media, and quite a bit of the media, will follow suit as a result.

The Conservative Party can win from its extremes.

All it would need is a Labour Party in government to fail, and there is going to be a lot stacked against Kyrrgyzmar and the Labour Party in government.

So I think if anyone is sat there thinking from the Labour Party's point of view, well, we hope to see where the wins, just be careful what you wish for.

I would say, I mean, I think that last point is absolutely right, that it's very easy as soon as Labour starts to appear to fail in power, this is an imagining of sort of post-to-general election Labour victory, for the Tories to say, here we've got the answer.

My thought is that the Tories in opposition, if they are in opposition after this, will actually go through a succession very quickly of sort of two or three, three or four leaders trying to work out who they are.

And it's a bit, as we were talking about the Republican Party yesterday, the Tories knew who they were, I think, under Boris Johnson, because it was a stonking majority.

And since that moment, they haven't actually put that test to the polls.

They haven't found out which format in a post-Brexit world their Tory Party is, because it doesn't seem to be Liz Truss, it doesn't seem to be Rishi Sunak, we maybe proved wrong at the ballot, who knows.

I think they're going to do a little bit of kind of reshuffling actually and finding this stuff out.

Although I do know a former Conservative Prime Minister has all their bets on Suella being the next leader.

Wow.

Yeah.

That's really interesting.

Look, I think Suella Broughamann is a very considerable politician.

I think that she's written off too easily.

And I think Lewis is absolutely right to say, you know, be careful what you wish for, because I don't think that she's, she's no one's fool.

And she knows what she's doing, and she tailors her message, and she knows who she's trying to reach with that message.

I suppose my point would be, I totally understand why Rishi Sunak wants to have a Suella Broughamann

in his cabinet to do all the heavy lifting on quite sort of unpleasant issues like that, where you can give out the dog whistle messages to the tractor people.

Well, I was going to say, it's quite different, though, to be...

It's a bit like having a Doberman chain to your gate, right?

Yeah, exactly.

Because if you've got a Doberman chain to your gate, you're going to think twice about leaping over that gate and seeing if you can break into that house.

But on the other hand, do you want to have Suella Broughamann as the prime minister or as the leader of the opposition?

Because I think that becomes a very different role.

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And if the Conservative Party looks at polling data, look, if she becomes leader of the opposition, it is because the Tories have lost the last election.

If they have lost the last election...

Something wasn't working.

Something wasn't working.

And was it because they weren't right-wing enough?

Or was it because people felt, you know what, we've had enough of this Conservative policies and we want something more centrist?

Therefore, to move further to the right might be the most counterintuitive thing in the world to do. The hammer-n-egg strategy.

You reject hammer-n-eggs, so what you say is, shout it louder and you give people double hammer-n-eggs.

Yeah, I remember watching the Tory leadership race between Michael Portello, Ken Clark and Ian Duncan Smith.

And at that time, we were all absolutely certain that if it wasn't Michael Portello, it would be Ken Clark.

And I think most people thought it would be Ken Clark.

And sure enough, Portello is out and then it was Ian Duncan Smith.

And Ian Duncan Smith was very little known at that point.

I do think the party has an ability to surprise even itself because quite often you forget to look outwards.

You forget to ask yourself, what's the electorate thinking?

Or what are normal people thinking about the candidates we're putting forward?

And you start thinking, who is the person that might get most traction with the Daily Mail?

And then it becomes a self-reinforcing cycle.

And if that person is going to be bigged up by the tabloid newspapers,

then they're clearly going to get prominence and then the prominence leads them to suggest that they're popular.

And actually, these things become very detached from the reality of what people actually think.

Having said that, we were talking to Ben Riley Smith earlier this week who said,

Suella's speech in Washington went down pretty well with the party faithful.

We're going to go to the break in just a second.

There's one thing we haven't discussed though.

Are we just going to allow Lewis Goodall to take the piss out of us like that at the start of that answer?

Surely that's got to be edited out.

I don't think that was taking the piss.

I think he was acknowledging how hard you whine and dine on your holidays.

And certainly makes me look quite sad because all I do is sit there writing bits of copy and coming up with title names from the comfort of my son, Lounger.

So I think you get out of this better than I do.

We'll be back after the break.

This is The Newsagents.

Welcome back.

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This is from Shamari, who's written,

Hi, newsagents, do you think Keir's Labour would be willing to go into a coalition with anyone?

If so, who?

Well, I mean, I guess that the Liberal Democrats, if he doesn't win an overall majority, that would be the easiest coalition to go into.

It's clear that Ed Davy, the leader of the Liberal Democrats, is not going to support a minority conservative government come the next election if that's what the electorate delivers as a result.

And so it would be with Keir Starmer.

I guess the question is at what price would Ed Davy ask that?

And it may be that, you know, the old question of proportional representation comes back onto the agenda with a thud if that happens.

It is interesting, isn't it?

What a dirty word coalition seems to be in this country, even though we had a pretty successful one.

I mean, if you look around Europe, coalitions are what most of them do.

You know, they've managed to find a way of including a lot of different political views and political parties in the same government.

And yet here it's always sounded like a sense of defeat or failure.

And I think the one thing we know is that the Lib Dems will not in any form go into coalition with the conservatives again.

And we know that the way coalition was used against Ed Miliband in 2015, where he appeared as a little tiny midget in the pocket of Nicola Sturgeon, was a way of trying to warn voters against Labour, i.e. they'll be in the pockets of the SMP.

So my sense is you will never, ever hear Keir Starmer mention coalition.

You will never hear him mention the Lib Dems.

I would assume that there is enough ground for them to find a way to make things work.

Obviously, coalition is a very formal structure.

You can have a supply arrangement where they just agree to back anything to do with the finance, the economic bills.

You could have a minority government if they don't get a big enough majority.

My sense is there is enough common ground.

But if you look back, the kind of things that were being extracted by the Lib Dems last year were really interesting.

I mean, Nic Legge would not have let David Cameron go to a referendum on Brexit.

I think if they'd won a coalition again in 2015,

arguably, he might have saved Cameron's skin by being in government with him at that point.

House of Law's reform was another one that Nic Legge felt very strongly about.

And then he ended up getting bashed down on, as we know, tuition fees,

which essentially began the beginning of the end of Nic Legge's sort of Lib Dem rally.

I think there are two things that I would want to say about the last coalition government that we had in 2010.

One was, for all that people slag off first past the post as an electoral system,

it delivered exactly what the British people wanted.
They wanted Labour gone.
They didn't have enough confidence in David Cameron leading the Conservative Party, but they thought they wanted to move in that direction.
And they delivered this hung parliament that just about managed to work together a coalition.
And I thought that this is the second point.
The creativity of civil servants and the politicians to work together was something fantastic to behold in 2010, where there was enormous creativity about the way it was all forged and brought together.
Gus O'Donnell, the Cabinet Secretary at the time, and Cameron and Clegg working to find a way through this was really, really brilliant.
The trouble is, if you're the Lib Dems, you see that you've got absolutely crucified for it in the 2015 election and were absolutely hung out to drive.
Although they could point, for example, to their childcare measures, which are still part of government policy today, that they brought in, they were the brakes on the Conservative government up to a point.
Maybe they fell too much into the austerity trap.
I think you could argue that they did, but they thought they were the brakes.
I remember in 2010, Craig Oliver, who we have on quite often, the former comms director for David Cameron, was at that time the head of elections at the BBC.
And my job was to present the results as they came in with this big touchscreen map. It looked like a giant iPad. It was the first time we'd used it.
And I remember him talking us through the kind of language that we had to use, and he said, look, it is very unlikely that Labour will hold on, and it is almost impossible for the Tories to get a majority.
And that was exactly what happened.
And there was one constituency called Heimbern, where I remember the swing was an average of 6.9%.
And we had to explain that that was an extraordinarily high swing to expect universally across the whole country, if that was going to happen, and sure enough, it didn't.
So we do have the mechanisms to sort of foresee these things, even though they're the strangest things when they actually happen.
And you're right, we got what we asked for.
Now, next question.
This next one is from Brian's Puddle in Dorset, great name.
Brian's Puddle.
Brian's Puddle.
He should have kept control of his bladder.
It's probably one of those English words that I've mispronounced horribly, and everyone in Brian's Puddle is laughing at me now, mispronouncing it.
No, it's like one of those great English names, like Nether Wallop.

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You know, they think, oh, he's had a bit of a wallop in the Nether regions.

Right, it's from Jamie McMillan anyway.

There seems to be a trend among Democratic commentators to state that 2024 presidential elections could more or less destroy democracy in the USA if Trump wins.

Isn't this a somewhat wild exaggeration?

No, I don't think it is.

I think that in 2020, Donald Trump lost the election by every measurement possible.

Legal cases challenged and failed by the Trump campaign, and then they tried to do it by means that were nefarious,

which has resulted in a number of prosecutions

and a number of lawyers pleading guilty.

He tried it in 2020.

In 2024, you never know, might be better organized this time round,

might have more people willing to bend to the will.

I'm going to tell a quick story of a guy I met, very senior Democrat,

very well connected, and he said to me, and he's close to Biden.

He said, if I had two doors and one door is marked Biden Trump 2024,

and you open the door and it's a toss up about who wins.

And the second door is any of the other Republicans who are running, but they run unopposed.

He said I would take the second door

because of the threat to democracy that Donald Trump poses.

And I thought that was an astonishing response from a very senior Democrat

that anyone would be better than Trump,

and he would rather have a more moderate Republican,

even a right wing Republican, but who obeys constitutional norms

than the risk of Donald Trump returning to the White House.

It's really interesting, Jamie, because you say more or less destroy democracy in the USA.

And, you know, it does sound kind of end of days that as an idea,

but honestly, if claiming that you've won something,

if claiming that you've won an election that you clearly lost

isn't the destruction of democracy, I'm not sure what is.

If you end up with people rioting, if you end up with people getting killed,

if you end up, as we are doing now with court cases,

literally talking about electoral interference,

then how on earth could you re-elect somebody

who has shown so little belief or faith

in the constitution of the country they govern?

I guess that's what you're left with.

Plus, you add in the vindictive stripe that we know Trump has,

and whether he would then try and take out

what he thinks are witch-hunt trials on his opponents.

I mean, it wasn't so long ago.

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It was 2016 at the Republican Convention
that they were all chanting, lock her up, lock her up, lock her up,
about Hillary Clinton's emails, right?
And I guess you could say, well, they didn't lock her up.
Obviously, they weren't going to lock her up for her emails.
That didn't happen.
But if there is that vindictive stripe that says,
you've made me look really stupid, Joe Biden,
I'm going to stop at nothing.
And I remember Jim Comey,
you know, who was the former director of the FBI,
saying he fears, actually, he wakes up thinking,
do I have to leave America because Trump's coming after me
and because I'm on his hit list?
That's not a great place for a democracy to be.
We're now going to hear from our correspondent
who has arrived in a Republican state.
So we've now arrived in Prey, Montana,
which is not far from Yellowstone,
and we arrived in the place we're staying for the next few days,
which is a shipping container.
Never let it be said, I can't show a girl a good time.
Anyway, the question around presidential elections
and whether the next election,
it is a hyperbole to say it could be the end of American democracy.
On one level, obviously, that isn't the case that would happen
because America's constitution,
which is very rigid and formalized, would remain.
America would remain, to some extent,
or other, a nation of laws.
But I think it is true to say that clearly,
Trump would be unbound in his next presidency.
He's made it very clear that he would use the full means
of his office to quite literally prosecute his political enemies.
And there was a wider question as well,
which is that when you have one of the custodians
of American democracy, either Republican Party,
in a system which is so strongly bisected
as the American political system is,
a strong two-party system,
and one of the primary components,
the custodians, one of the main parties, is so sick,
is so unhealthy, as we're seeing play out this week
with the Speaker election,

then there is just a wider, much bigger question mark about the health of American democracy.

And there has been democratic backsliding in America for a long time, and that precedes Trump and it will go on after Trump.

And that's because there is a wider structural question in American politics, which is, how long can the Republic kind of continue as it is when you basically have a system which enshrines quasi-permanent minority rule, which was not envisaged when the Constitution was written nearly 250 years ago, but which is putting permanent stress on American democracy year after year after year.

It's all uplifting, isn't it?

Do you think that Lewis's wife has grounds for divorce?

This is the honeymoon.

The shipping container.

He's taken her to a shipping container and he's spending his whole bloody time sending us voice messages about what his latest thoughts are on this or that.

I think it's very romantic, actually.

I think it's dark, cosy.

Well, I'm taking you to a candle that's shipping container, darling.

Oh, thank you, thank you, thank you.

Food amazing.

Food amazing.

Right, we've got a couple more.

This one is from Dom Waghorn.

If each of you had two predictions for the next 12 months, what would they be?

One you'd bet your house on, and the other a curveball that could come true.

Oh my God, I hate these.

Okay, I'm gonna go with my...

Go, go on.

I think Matt Hancock is almost certainly going to appear on Strictly Come Dancing.

Well, there's the only reality show he hasn't done.

I left and it's okay.

The only one he's got left, isn't it?

I know, I'm just waiting for that to happen.

Yeah, okay.

So that's your bet your house on it.

Yeah, you bet your house on it.

Yes, I bet my house on it.

What's the other curveball?

I mean, I'm gonna go for the curveball.

Go on.

My curveball is that Trump gets elected president

from a prison cell, that he is convicted,

he is inside, and he still wins

the presidential election,

and what on earth does America do next?

Okay, my curveball on that level would be,

I think we are still to see someone else

enter the presidential race of significance.

Yeah, I'd take that one as well.

I'd accept that, it's a very strong possibility.

Why are we dodging UK politics then?

What's our curveball?

Well, I mean, I suppose the curveball is,

Rishi Sunak wins the next election,

despite being behind in the polls for a very long time.

It is not impossible.

Inflation gets down, he ticks off his five things.

And he's got this narrow path,

and just as you were saying earlier, Emily,

better the devil, you know, don't take a risk.

Look, time for a change is a potent message in elections,

which is what Keir Starmer is going to be doing,

but he's gonna offer change with reassurance.

Rishi Sunak is gonna say, you know what?

Labour could screw this all up.

Don't risk it now.

And now back to the shipping container, the glamour.

So we've made it.

We've made it to the Wonderland Cafe and Bistro

in Gardner, Montana, just over the border from Wyoming.

I'm about to tuck into some bison ravioli.

Before that, accompanied by live music,

time for two predictions, actually three.

One, the non-curveball, the election's gonna be

in December 2024 or January 2025,

as I've been saying for a while.

Second, sort of connected to that, Rishi Sunak,

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bit of a curveball, Rishi Sunak is challenged at some point over the next 12 months.

He survives because he's still got the majority of the parliamentary party on his side, but decides to resign before the election anyway because certain defeat is coming and he can't face the prospect of the party going down to flame, in such flames, and that that's his legacy.

Oh, and the third one, a bonus one, that John Soaple will manage to go more than four to six weeks without taking a holiday.

See you soon.

Right, she says the man eating bison ravioli from a Bistro.

Yeah, I also love the idea that that was him playing the guitar and just playing it to his wife while answering the question as well.

I'm just gonna strut my guitar, I'm gonna strut my guitar, darling, I love you very much, but I'm just gonna do this voice note for the news agents.

Right, we'll leave you with those dulcet tones and that perfect image.

We'll be back for one last question in a moment.

["The News Agents"]

This is The News Agents.

Our final question.

So, when is the live tour coming?

Could you come to Leadbury?

How many holidays are you all going to take next year?

Well, if you listen to Louis Goodall and me, quite a lot.

Do you think your 100%ers should get a say in when you're away?

And have you got the swear jar yet?

Soon, yes, many, yes, no.

Sorry, are you speaking English or what?

That's my answer.

We're going to come on live tour very soon.

Could we come to Leadbury?

I think so.

How many holidays, many?

Do you think your 100%ers should get a say in when you're away?

Definitely, we don't have a fucking swear jar.

What I have done, though, Helen,

and I want you to be reassured with this,

you see it now when you go on to London Underground

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and there are buskers
and they actually take credit card payments on there.
I'm going to pay for the whole News Agents team
to go to the Bahamas this Christmas
just on Emily and her swearing.
And I just hold up my phone, she flashes it
and I get an extra two or five quid from her
because she just can't stop swearing.
That is my legacy to the team, a wonderful sunny holiday.
Could you ask for more?
We'll see you next week. Bye-bye.
Bye.