《盟友变敌人：戈夫踩鲍里斯上位 迫使其退选》

Boris Johnson

Boris Johnson's allies warned there is a 'deep pit in Hell' waiting for Michael Gove tonight after the Justice Secretary stabbed his fellow Brexit champion in the back saying he was not up to being Prime Minister.

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Mr Gove delivered a brutal verdict on Mr Johnson's capabilities and questioned whether his 'heart and soul' were in taking us out of the EU, effectively ending his hopes of succeeding David Cameron, as he announced his own bid for Downing Street.

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Damning his friend with faint praise, Mr Gove said he had 'enjoyed working with him' during the referendum campaign. But he said: 'I realised in the last few days that Boris isn't capable of building that team and providing that unity.

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'And so I came reluctantly but firmly to the conclusion that as someone who had argued from the beginning that we should leave the European Union and as someone who wanted ensure that a bold, positive vision for our future was implemented, that I had to stand for leadership of the Conservative party.'

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He added: 'I thought it was right that following the decision that the people took last week that we should have someone leading the Conservative party and leading the country who believed in their heart and soul that Britain was better off outside the European Union.'

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Michael Gove

As the blows rained down on Mr Johnson this morning, key backers Nick Boles and Dominic Raab defected to Mr Gove's campaign and arch-rival Theresa May won support from Leader of the House Chris Grayling - another Brexit champion.

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Within hours Mr Johnson, who had been the hot favourite, was using an event that had been intended as his campaign launch to rule himself out.

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Tory MP Jake Berry posted on Twitter: 'There is a very deep pit reserved in Hell for such as he. #Gove'

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The Conservatives' ruling 1922 committee has confirmed that the candidates are Mrs May, Mr Gove, Treasury minister Andrea Leadsom, Work and Pensions Secretary Stephen Crabb and ex-defence secretary Liam Fox.

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Mr Johnson saved his shock withdrawal for the end of a lengthy valedictory speech in which he stressed his achievements in City Hall and urged the UK to look towards a brighter future outside of the EU.

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Mr Gove had been expected to play a key role in Mr Johnson's campaign after the pair worked hand in glove to deliver victory for Brexit in the historic referendum. He has repeatedly ruled out making a bid for Downing Street in the past - including memorably offering to record his denial in blood on a parchment.

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