

Explain Financial Tsunami

To A Moppet

如何和
5岁娃娃
解释金融海啸

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2009年1月7日英国金融时报网站刊登了以读者投书的形式向Dear Economist (亲爱的经济学家)问了这样一个有趣的问题: My five-year-old son came home from school and asked me: "Mummy, what's a credit crunch?" How can I explain this? (我5岁的儿子放学回来后问我:“妈咪,什么是信贷崩溃呢?”我该如何解释呢?)对这个问题,曾经写过《卧底经济学》(The Undercover Economist)的经济学家、《金融时报》的专栏作家提姆·哈福德(Tim Harford)编了这样一个童话,我用自己的话翻译了一下:

很久很久以前,有一个很傻很天真的女孩叫费姑娘(Consumerella),她想买很多很多喜欢的东西,可是没有那么多钱。这怎么办呢?于是,她就找她的仙姑求助,仙姑也没办法就打电话给一个名叫“侏儒怪”(Rumpelstiltskin)的人求助。这家伙住在华尔街,说是有本事把稻草编织成黄金。“侏儒怪”将装有把稻草变黄金的关键词的锦囊寄给了仙姑。可是这个锦囊里的字写得很小、很小,看不清楚,仙姑就没有看,反正跳大神儿交易委员会(Sorcerers' Exchange Commission)已经审查过了。

仙姑讨了个便宜,以低价拿下草类衍生物(strawderivative),然后贷给费姑娘所需资金的125%。费姑娘买了一件大袍子、一座貌似宫殿的大房子,以及一辆大奔,剩下的钱买了香槟酒。该还钱了,第一笔还款应该在当日午夜缴纳,可是费姑娘手里没有钱还账了。有人说这是她生活奢侈的结果,但有人说这全都因为名叫佩斯顿(Peston)的祝酒司仪的乌鸦嘴。费姑娘的信用等级只相当于南瓜,锦囊里的关键词不管用了,保险箱里藏着的不是黄金,而是黄草。

费姑娘身无分文,这时圣诞老人带着童话般姓名的助手比如达林(Darling)和伯南克(Bernanke)及时雨般地出现了,他们开始分发礼物。1月份,费姑娘收到了信用卡账单消费账单。她惊奇地发现,圣诞老人借了她的身份证申请了一笔贷款,用来购买了那些礼物。从此,所有的人都过上了悲惨世界的生活。

Dear Economist: Is the credit crunch suitable for children?

By Tim Harford 2009-01-07

Dear Economist,

My five-year-old son came home from school and asked me: "Mummy, what's a credit crunch?" How can I explain this?

Ms LG, London

Dear Ms LG,

Once upon a time, there was a blameless girl called Consumerella who didn't have enough money to buy all the lovely things she wanted. So she went to her Fairy Godmother, who called a man called Rumpelstiltskin who lived on Wall Street and claimed to be able to spin straw into gold. Rumpelstiltskin sent the Fairy Godmother the recipe for this magic spell. It was in tiny, tiny writing, so she did not read it but hoped the Sorcerers' Exchange Commission had checked it. The Fairy Godmother carried away strawderivative at a bargain price and lent Consumerella 125 per cent of the money she needed. Consumerella bought a gown, a palace and a Mercedes - and spent the rest on champagne. The first repayment was due at midnight, which Consumerella missed. (The result of overindulgence, although some blamed the pronouncements of the Toastmaster, a man called Peston.) Consumerella's credit rating turned into a pumpkin and the spell was broken: the vaults were not full of gold, but straw.

All seemed lost until Santa Claus and his helpers, men with fairytale names such as Darling and Bernanke, began handing out presents. In January, Consumerella's credit card statement arrived and she discovered that Santa Claus had paid for the gifts by taking out a loan in her name. They all lived miserably ever after. The End.



这段童话故事里面涉及了几个人物,如Consumerella, Peston, Darling, Bernanke和Rumpelstiltskin, 他们的背景需要介绍一下。

首先,主角费姑娘的名字是Consumerella,是从童话Cinderella(灰姑娘)的名字变化而来的,我翻译成“费姑娘”,首先是因为consum-是消费这个词的前半部分,还因为很多网上朋友习惯把“非常”念成“灰常”,所以“费姑娘”念出来与“灰姑娘”就差不多了。

Peston 的全名是Robert Peston,是英国广播公司财经编辑,本来算不上大牌,不过自从美国次贷危机直至金融海啸以后,Robert Peston频频出镜,专门分析解释金融海啸的来头和影响,混个脸熟,成了名人。

达林(Darling)和伯南克(Bernanke),前者是英国财政大臣,后者是美联储主席,现在正张罗着筹钱救市,所以以圣诞老人助手的面目出现。

至于住在华尔街的侏儒怪(Rumpelstiltskin),他是德国神话故事中的一个小妖。说是从前有一位爱吹牛的老农夸口说他的女儿能把稻草纺成金线,国王听了以后就把他女儿招进宫中,命她三天内把稻草变成金线,否则她父亲老命不保。这时候侏儒怪出现了,他说他有办法帮助女孩,但是有交换条件。第一天拿走了女孩的戒指,第二天拿走了女孩的项链,第三天女孩已经一无所有,侏儒怪提出只要女孩把她将来生的第一个孩子给他,他就帮忙。女孩为了救父亲的命没有办法只好答应了。结果稻草真的变成了黄金,国王也娶了老农的女儿做王后。于是,当王后怀孕生了孩子的时候,侏儒怪来索要这个孩子。王后愿意付出自己所有的财富,只求侏儒怪放过这个孩子。侏儒怪说,如果王后能在三天内猜出我的名字,就放过这个孩子。在接连两次都猜错之后,幸亏一名仆人从侏儒怪唱的歌声中听出了他的名字(歌词是: Today I brew, today I bake/Tomorrow the Queen's own child I take/This guessing-game she'll never win/For my name is Rumpelstiltskin),王后的危机才得以化解,侏儒怪悻悻而去。■