

PERUSAL SCRIPT

# CLEARING BOMBS

by Eric Samuelson



Newport, Maine

© 2014 by Eric Samuelsen  
**ALL RIGHTS RESERVED**

CAUTION:

Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that

## **CLEARING BOMBS**

being fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States Of America, the British Empire, including the Dominion Of Canada, and the other countries of the Copyright Union, is subject to royalty. Anyone presenting the play without the express written permission of the Copyright owners and/or their authorized agent will be liable to the penalties provided by law.

**Script and music copies must be rented from the Publisher and Royalty must be paid to the publisher for each and every performance before an audience whether or not admission is charged. A performance license must first be obtained from the publisher prior to any performance(s).**

Federal Copyright Law — 17 U.S.C. section 504 — allows for a recovery of a minimum of \$250 and a maximum of \$50,000 *for each infringement*, plus attorney fees.

The professional and amateur rights to the performance of this play along with the lecturing, recitation, and public reading rights, are administered exclusively through LEICESTER BAY THEATRICALS without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be made. For all other rights, inquiries may be made to the authors through LEICESTER BAY THEATRICALS. Any adaptation or arrangement of this work without the author's written permission is an infringement of copyright. **Unauthorized duplication by any means is also an infringement.**

**FOR PUBLIC PERFORMANCE RIGHTS YOU MUST APPLY TO THE PUBLISHER OR YOU ARE BREAKING THE LAW!**

The possession of this PERUSAL SCRIPT, does not constitute permission to perform the work herein contained, in public or in private, for gain or charity. Proper prior application must be made, license granted and royalty paid before a performance may be given. Copies of this SCRIPT and all other rehearsal materials may be rented from:

LEICESTER BAY THEATRICALS  
P.O. Box 536 Newport, ME 04953-0536  
[www.leicesterbaytheatricals.com](http://www.leicesterbaytheatricals.com)  
Printed in the United States Of America

**THIS NOTICE MUST APPEAR IN ALL PROGRAMS, ON ALL POSTERS AND PUBLICITY MATERIALS AND INTERNET ADVERTISING/WEBPAGES FOR THE PLAY:**

*“CLEARING BOMBS’ is presented through special arrangement with Leicester Bay Theatricals. All authorized materials are also supplied by LBT, [www.leicesterbaytheatricals.com](http://www.leicesterbaytheatricals.com)”*

NOTE: Your contract with Leicester Bay Theatricals limits you to making copies of this document for persons directly connected with your production. Do not distribute outside of your cast and crew. Following your performance run you must destroy all photocopies, preferably by shredding them. If we sent you the document in printed format, you must return that document to us. If we provided you with an electronic PDF file, simply trash that on your computer so that it cannot be recovered. The electronic document may only be on ONE computer — it may NOT be duplicated. This is also a part of your contract with Leicester Bay Theatricals.

ARTWORK COURTESY OF Plan-B Theatre Company

“**CLEARING BOMBS**” received its world premiere at Plan-B Theatre Company February 20-March 2, 2014. It was designed by Cheryl Ann Cluff (sound), Phillip R. Lowe (costumes), Jesse Portillo (lighting), Jerry Rapier (props) and Randy Rasmussen (set) with dramaturgy by Martine Kei Green-Rogers. CLEARING BOMBS was stage managed by Jennifer Freed and directed by Eric Samuelsen with the following cast:

**Kirt Bateman** as Mr. Bowles,  
**Mark Fossen** as John Maynard Keynes  
**Jay Perry** as Friedrich Hayek.

## **CHARACTERS**

JOHN MAYNARD KEYNES: British economist

FRIEDRICK HAYEK: Austrian economist

MR. BOWLES: Fire warden

**PLACE:** The roof of King’s College Chapel, Cambridge

**TIME:** Night, Summer, 1942

**CLEARING BOMBS** by Eric Samuelsen 3m. About 90 minutes without Intermission. Period Costumes. Exterior Setting. In the summer of 1942, economists Friedrich Hayek and John Maynard Keynes spent a night on the roof of King's College Chapel in Cambridge, waiting to clear away and control German incendiary bombs. In CLEARING BOMBS, they're joined by a fire warden, Mr. Bowles. A play about economics amid mortal danger, about defining the future they could only begin to imagine. Premiered by Plan-B Theatre Company, Salt Lake City, Utah. Nominated for the Pulitzer Prize. **Order #3257**

**Eric Samuelsen** taught at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio before joining the faculty at Brigham Young University in 1992. He became head of the Playwriting program at BYU in 1999. He has also taught as an adjunct faculty member in the Religion department. He retired from BYU in 2012.

As a playwright, Samuelsen has had twenty-seven plays professionally produced in Utah, Indiana, Louisiana, New York, and California. Some of his plays include *Gadianton*, which has seen three professional productions across the country, *A Love Affair with Electrons*, *Family*, *The Plan*, and *The Way We're Wired*. He is resident playwright at Plan-B Theatre Company in Salt Lake City, who designated their 2013-14 season a 'Season of Eric, including productions of six of his plays.

He is a member of the Playwrights' Circle, and the Dramatists Guild. He is three-time winner of the Annual Award in Playwriting offered by the Association for Mormon Letters (AML) and he became president of AML in 2007. In 2013 the organization awarded him the Smith Pettit Award for his lifetime work as a playwright.

He has been a staff writer for the on-line satirical magazine *The Sugarbeet*. He was also featured in the book *Conversations with Mormon Authors*, edited by Chris Bigelow. He is a noted Ibsen translator, and has also published scholarly articles on 19th and 20th century Scandanavian Theatre, and more recently, on LDS drama and film. He blogged at *Mormoniconoclast.com*. Eric died in September of 2019 after a long battle with polymyositis. This has left a huge hole in the Theatre Community within, and outside of, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

## CLEARING BOMBS

*(MR. BOWLES looks up at the sky. Deeply worried. Checks the sand and water buckets, stirrup pump, shovel, broom and asbestos gloves. Enter KEYNES. He labors up to the roof, looks around. Sees BOWLES looking up at the sky.)*

**BOWLES:** Bomber's sky.

**KEYNES:** Beg pardon?

**BOWLES:** Clouds. See, there?

**KEYNES:** And that would be a bomber's sky because. . .

**BOWLES:** Cloud cover at p'raps ten thousand feet to the east. They can make it all the way from France without being spotted. Then they dive down, RAF lads only have seconds to react.

**KEYNES:** But our radar ...?

**BOWLES:** Not this far from London.

*(Moves away, placing another sand bucket.)*

Mark my words. They're coming tonight.

**KEYNES:** Interesting.

*(Enter HAYEK, lugging a stirrup pump.)*

**BOWLES:** Another stirrup pump. Good.

**KEYNES:** Freddy.

**HAYEK:** Keynes.

**KEYNES:** So we're for it, it seems.

**HAYEK:** It would appear so. Of all the unlikely faculty assignments ...

*(Mock pontificating.)*

You are expected to tutor, to lecture on occasion perhaps, to research and publish, and from time to time, spend a night on the rooftops of the buildings to prevent them being destroyed by incendiary bombs.

*(KEYNES chuckles; they shake hands. Both turn to BOWLES.)*

**KEYNES:** Maynard Keynes. And it's Mr. Bowles, is it not?

**BOWLES:** Andy Bowles, at your service. And you're Professor Hayek?

**HAYEK:** *(Shaking hands.)* Reporting for duty.

*(They shake hands somewhat awkwardly all around.)*

**KEYNES:** Mr. Bowles here was saying he found the cloud cover a bit ominous.

**HAYEK:** Indeed?

**KEYNES:** Seems it's rather ideal for a bomber attack. Wouldn't that be fun.

**HAYEK:** Fun?

**KEYNES:** One for the memoirs, at any rate.

**HAYEK:** I suppose.

**KEYNES:** Though why Hitler would choose our college and its old church as his target.

**HAYEK:** The Baedeker bombings. That's what they're calling it. In the Times. They say it's as though Hitler plots his bombing runs based on a tourism guidebook.

**BOWLES:** He thinks he can break our spirit, Hitler does. Bombing St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey and the like. Not bloody fucking likely.

**KEYNES:** No indeed.

**HAYEK:** I should say not.

**BOWLES:** And while he's wasting time bombing our churches, Monty and Alexander advancing in Africa. So keep it up, Adolf!

**KEYNES:** Certainly.

**BOWLES:** Bloody wanker.

**KEYNES:** Yes. Still.

**BOWLES:** Be glad he's hitting churches. Makes it easier to beat the bastard.

**KEYNES:** Indeed.

*(Notices HAYEK, still contemplating the sky.)*

Freddy?

**HAYEK:** It just feels strange. I was in the city until recently, Mr. Bowles, teaching at the London School of Economics. It just became automatic, a reflex; you heard an alarm, you looked for a tube station or basement. All my instincts urge me underground. 'Take shelter,' they shout.

**BOWLES:** It does take getting used to. Being above ground.

**HAYEK:** Much the same for them, I expect. Facing bombs. In Vienna and Salzburg. Berlin.

**KEYNES:** As we strike back. Yes, I expect so.

**HAYEK:** *(Shouts.)* Here I am, Adolf! Here!

*(Embarrassed pause.)*

**KEYNES:** Well.

**HAYEK:** Yes.

**BOWLES:** Right. Well, you've got your sand buckets, stirrup pumps. Shovels and brooms. You've been through the training?

**KEYNES:** Yes indeed, both of us, right, Freddy?

**HAYEK:** We are trained.

**BOWLES:** Right. So, we wait.

**KEYNES:** Indeed. So, Mr. Bowles? You were part of the St. Paul's night watch, I'm told. As fire warden

**BOWLES:** Just doin' me part, sir. Just doin' me part.

**KEYNES:** Of course.

*(Another pause.)*

An odd question occurs, Mr. Bowles, if you don't mind.

**BOWLES:** Ask away.

**KEYNES:** Well, as my good friend Hayek was suggesting ...we're up here, watching the sky, are we not?

Will we see them? The bombs I mean. Falling. What I'm asking ...

**HAYEK:** Can we ...dodge around? Somehow?

**KEYNES:** Thank you, Freddy. Yes. I mean, not me obviously. At my age, I'm hardly ...nimble. But as a general rule ...?

**BOWLES:** A bit. We 'aven't much time, you know. Once you see them. But you can shift about.

**HAYEK:** That's actually something of a relief, Mr. Bowles. Thank you.

*(MR. BOWLES stares at HAYEK mistrustfully.)*

**KEYNES:** You needn't mind Freddy, Mr. Bowles. He's Austrian, but as a loyal an Englishman as ever you'll find.

**BOWLES:** *(Suspicious.)* I'm sure. As for hoping for a quiet night, don't know. Don't like that sky. Looked just this way last week. Ten buildings lost, and three killed.

**KEYNES:** Yes. Dreadful.

**HAYEK:** You've lived here your whole life, Keynes. Did you know any of them, the victims?

**KEYNES:** I didn't, no. I did know a woman killed on Edward Street, when they hit Vicarage Terrace, in '40. Our gardener's niece.

**BOWLES:** It's affected us all.

**HAYEK:** Indeed it has.

*(Pause.)*

**KEYNES:** So, as I recall, the Germans use several sorts of incendiary devices, damaging little beggars, but not something we need fear actually blowing us to bits.

**BOWLES:** Quite right, Mr. Keynes. What you'll hear is a crash, then a kind of sputter. They're phosphorus, mostly, burning at four thousand degrees. So we use the sand.

**HAYEK:** But we have these pumps.

**BOWLES:** The pumps are in case a fire does start to spread. The chapel here has a wooden roof; if it ignites, it will burn the place right to the ground. So we spray around the flame, isolate it, like.

**HAYEK:** But we're not to spray the phosphorus itself, not with water?

**BOWLES:** Indeed not. You'd just spread it. Sand for the accelerant, water for the wood.

**KEYNES:** But we can also pitch these beggars over the side?

**BOWLES:** The asbestos gloves

*(indicating them.)*

If you get to it before it ignites, pitch 'em. To the west, down to the lawn, if they land at that end of the church.

**KEYNES:** *(Nodding.)* Or south, toward Front Court. But not onto the Gatehouse, east.

**BOWLES:** So gloves, buckets, pumps and brooms and shovels. We saved St. Paul's, and we can save this ol' bugger of a church.

**HAYEK** *(Deep breath, looking around.)* You feel the history up here, don't you? Henry VI, and all those centuries of Etonians.

**KEYNES:** Yes, the cowed and terrified offspring of the aristocracy.

**HAYEK:** You're an Etonian yourself, are you not?

**KEYNES:** On King's scholarship. Giving me a natural antipathy towards Oppidans.

**HAYEK:** I suppose so. And your father, likewise a Cambridge lecturer?

**KEYNES:** Turned administrator. And he would never forgive me if this church were to burn.

**HAYEK:** Mr. Bowles. And what would you advise if the Germans don't use incendiary devices? What if it's, I don't know, a cluster bomb, or one of those new HE bombs they drop on us?

**BOWLES:** An HE bomb? It blows us to bits, and ignites the bits into ash.

**HAYEK:** I see.

**BOWLES:** We could get lucky. Two HE's hit last week, but failed to explode.

**KEYNES:** But that's not likely.

**BOWLES:** Not likely, no.

**HAYEK:** And a chapel full of children below.

**BOWLES:** Children?

**KEYNES:** Hundreds of them, out of London, housed in the Chapel.

**HAYEK:** All of them issued chamber pots, our chamber pots.

**KEYNES:** Yes, indeed. Most amusing—the Church commandeered every chamber pot in Cambridge for the use of the children. Each child has his own, along with a trunk and a cot. All lined up neatly downstairs.

**HAYEK:** With the river so close, it's easy enough to wash 'em out daily.

**KEYNES:** One fervently hopes so.

**BOWLES:** But they're not down there now?

**KEYNES:** We have provided bomb shelter in the Gibbs.

**BOWLES:** The Gibbs ...

**KEYNES:** Building just to our southeast.

**BOWLES:** Good.

*(Shakes his head)*

Children. Well, lads, we'll have to scamper. I'd hate to have children on my conscience.

**KEYNES:** Quite so.

**BOWLES:** Well. Nothing for it but to wait, I presume.

*(The men each find a stool. KEYNES pulls out a hand-written paper, looks upwards in dissatisfaction.)*

**HAYEK:** Insufficient light for reading, I think.

**KEYNES:** I'm afraid so.

*(Indicates the paper.)*

Meade's latest. On international balance of payments; I started it after supper, but hadn't finished, thought perhaps I could read up here. But no chance.

**HAYEK:** I did bring a pocket torch. But. . .

**BOWLES:** Blackout rules, Mr. Hayek. Can't be signaling the Luftwaffe—' here we are, Jerry, right over here.'

**HAYEK:** Of course not.

**KEYNES:** I suspect it would be all right. I've flown a bit, back and forth to the States; I doubt a pocket torch can be seen from ten thousand feet.

**BOWLES:** Flown?

**KEYNES:** Courtesy BOAC4. Have you ever flown in a DC-3, Freddy?

**HAYEK:** I have not.

**KEYNES:** Fastest aircraft on earth, and not remotely comfortable. And noisy like a boiler factory. But it can get you to New York in just seventeen hours.

**BOWLES:** That's fast.

**KEYNES:** Mr. Bowles, German bombers won't see a small torch.

**BOWLES:** That's as may be. But blackout rules are the law.

**KEYNES:** I do think

**BOWLES:** Sorry, sir.

**KEYNES:** Yes. Yes, all right.

*(Another pause, then reluctantly, he puts away the paper.)*

So, Mr. Bowles. Tell us about yourself. Married, one presumes? Children?

**BOWLES:** Married thirty years this December.

**KEYNES:** Well. Good for you. Children?

**BOWLES:** Five children, three boys, two girls.

**KEYNES:** And they're serving. . .

**BOWLES:** All serving. My girls are both nurses.

**KEYNES:** QAs?

**BOWLES:** Indeed, nursing sisters, Susan at Hatfield House, and Delores at Omskirk. And my lads are each in a different branch of service. Ned, 'e's with the Royal Navy. Aboard HMS Forester, a destroyer; she's with the Russian convoy. Tommy's an ERK, stationed at North Stoke, near Bristol. And Michael's a gunner. With the 7th armored division.

**KEYNES:** A desert rat, then. With Alexander?

**BOWLES:** You know about the 7th?

**HAYEK:** Keynes has dealings with the War Office.

*(BOWLES nods, impressed.)*

**KEYNES:** An ERK, Hayek, is an aircraftman 1st class, in the RAF. And the Desert Rats are the fiercest troops in North Africa. You must be very proud of them all, sir.

**BOWLES:** Just doin' our bit.

**KEYNES:** And they're all safe and well?

**BOWLES:** Forester took heavy fire in an action in the North Sea, lost her captain and nine crew. But Ned made it through. 'e got leave while she was in dry dock at the Clyde; shipped out last month. It were good to see 'im.

**HAYEK:** I can well imagine.



**BOWLES:** We'll win this if we all do our bit. That's what Mr. Churchill says, and 'e's right. We all of us do what we can.

**HAYEK:** Indeed you are right, Mr. Bowles. We serve where we can. Mr. Keynes here, well, without him, we'd have no chance at all.

**BOWLES:** And 'ow is that?

**HAYEK:** He's paying for it. Every ship, shell and ration.

**KEYNES:** Nonsense.

**HAYEK:** You arranged for the last war loans.

**KEYNES:** You make it sound like I personally wrote a cheque. I'm merely part of a team.

**HAYEK:** Head of the team.

**BOWLES:** Mr. Keynes! Well, I didn't know, really, I didn't.

**KEYNES:** Simply doing my part, as you said.

**BOWLES:** And you, Mr. Hayek? What's your part?

**HAYEK:** (*Intensely embarrassed.*) Well. I ...teach.

**BOWLES:** Ah.

*(Painful pause.)*

**KEYNES:** You volunteered, didn't you Freddy?

**HAYEK:** I did volunteer. I thought perhaps, as a German-speaker, I could have some use writing propaganda. Or some such.

**BOWLES:** Indeed.

**KEYNES:** They ought to have taken you up on it, really they ought to have done.

**BOWLES:** Certainly.

*(Pause.)*

Well, teaching, that's certainly ...of value.

*(Another painful pause.)*

**HAYEK:** The last war, I may have been of service. I was a spotter.

**BOWLES:** Well, then. A spotter. May well come in handy.

**KEYNES:** Yes, assuming the Germans are still using the aeroplanes of the last war.

*(Mockingly.)*

'I say, chaps, it's a Fokker tri-plane! Blimey if it's not the Red Baron himself!

*(A barb, and it hits home. HAYEK looks at him, puzzled and a bit hurt.)*

**HAYEK:** I did not claim to have kept current on war planes.

**KEYNES:** You see, Mr. Bowles, Freddy here is trying to persuade us all that it's likely to happen again.

**BOWLES:** What? War?

**KEYNES:** Not just war. This war, world war, a war against fascism. Or perhaps, next time, against Communism. Or some other ism, yet to be discovered. Bad economics leading to conflagration.

**HAYEK:** You want to argue? Now? Under these condi—

**KEYNES:** You know me, Freddy, I'd rather argue than breathe.

**HAYEK:** I don't know that I

**KEYNES:** I can't say I blame you. I'm not sure I'd be up to defending the indefensible either.

**HAYEK:** What are you doing?

**KEYNES:** We have time, we have leisure, and best of all, an audience.

**BOWLES:** Beg pardon?

**KEYNES:** You see, Mr. Bowles, Freddy's written a book. As yet unpublished ...

**HAYEK:** It's only just finished!

**KEYNES:** And it's an important book, Mr. Bowles. What happens after the war. How we should proceed.  
Economically.

**BOWLES:** Yes ...

**KEYNES:** And it's bloody interesting, don't get me wrong. It's just not economics.

**HAYEK:** Well, it's the intersection of economics and politics ...

**KEYNES:** A grim prediction of an increasingly unlikely future.

**BOWLES:** War?

**HAYEK:** Fascism, another Hitler.

**BOWLES:** And that's your book?

**HAYEK:** Well, yes.

**BOWLES:** Well then. Good for you, lad. I'm sure I couldn't write a book myself.

**KEYNES:** If only your argument held up.

**HAYEK:** And there he goes.

**BOWLES:** And what's it called?

**HAYEK:** The Road to Serfdom.

**BOWLES:** Ah. Well, let's hope it doesn't come to that.

**KEYNES:** It won't.

**HAYEK:** It could.

**KEYNES:** Don't get me wrong, Freddy. It's passionately written. I simply lack your attraction for ...tragic inevitability.

**HAYEK:** You say that? You, of all people?

**KEYNES:** Me? I think I make a rather unlikely prophet of doom.

**HAYEK:** But you were one, you were uncanny once. Prescient. You see, Mr. Bowles. Bad economics led to Hitler, as predictably as clouds lead to rain. Hyperinflation leading to social disintegration leading to authoritarianism. Well, one person in all of Europe saw it coming, all of it, told everyone what was going to happen and how to prevent it.

**BOWLES:** Churchill.

**HAYEK:** No, sir, well before Churchill. In 1919, when Churchill was busy playing tennis with the Duke of Westminster. Keynes here. This chap, here, on this roof. The Economic Consequences of the Peace. About the treaty of Versailles, the personalities and policies that negotiated it.

**KEYNES:** That forced it down German throats.

**HAYEK:** Quite so. He predicted massive hyperinflation in German, the rise of fascism. . .

**KEYNES:** What utter nonsense.

**HAYEK:** You did ...also the appearance of a strongman dictator using racial, anti-Semitic slurs to unite his people, the rearmament of Germany, and its consequent appetite for conquest.

**KEYNES:** Did I indeed?

**HAYEK:** He predicted Poland, and France. He got everything right except Hitler's last name.

**KEYNES:** Though I did rather think it might start with an H.

**HAYEK:** You wrote. . .”

**KEYNES:** You make me sound like some enchanted combination of Maskelyne, Palledino, and, and ...Harry Houdini.

**HAYEK:** You predicted ...

**KEYNES:** The failure of reparations, and consequent economic difficulties.

**HAYEK:** You predicted catastrophe. With each successive disaster, we all nodded. “Keynes,” we would say.

**KEYNES:** I wasn't trying to predict anything. I was there, at Versailles, and it wasn't difficult to see how badly things were going. It amused me.

**BOWLES:** Amused?

**KEYNES:** The preening foolishness on display at Versailles. Clemenceau and Lloyd George. All those portly chaps with mighty walrus moustaches, excusing their own incompetence by blaming everything on the Kaiser.

**HAYEK:** But the economics ...

**KEYNES:** The Allies wanted a scapegoat for the war beginning, and the Germans wanted a scapegoat for having lost it. The reparations of Versailles were punitive, and unpayable. The only chance the Germans could see was to debase their currency, which led to further demoralization and, not incidentally, ruinous inflation. And grown-ups behave badly when they've seen their children starve.

**BOWLES:** True enough, that.

**HAYEK:** And I was in Austria, and saw what you predicted come true. I saw starving German children, violence in the streets, unrest and fanaticism. I saw the SA brown shirts marching. It ...defined me.

*(Pause.)*

**KEYNES:** So you're writing one too. You saw what my book did for my career. You think you'll try your hand at it.

**HAYEK:** I'm ...I'm ...

**KEYNES:** Making a name for yourself.

**HAYEK:** You told me you liked it!

**KEYNES:** I do like it. I like it enough to wish it were better. And to warn you.

**HAYEK:** Warn me?

**KEYNES:** My book angered all the old men in power, and empowered everyone under twenty five. And it defined me too, for better or for ill. I became the chap that wrote the book.

**BOWLES:** Isn't that good?

**KEYNES:** That wrote. Past tense. You can easily become ‘old-hat.’ ‘A fossil.’

**BOWLES:** But your General Theory ...

**KEYNES:** The way to combat premature senescence. Write other books.

**BOWLES:** But aren’t you working to fund this war?

**KEYNES:** Yes, that’s the other thing that happens, they put you on committees. I’d rather make money. I rather like investing.

**BOWLES:** You ...invest.

**HAYEK:** He’s made quite the tidy sum.

**KEYNES:** I have to pay for my theater.

**BOWLES:** You own a theater.

**KEYNES:** With a bloody useless restaurant attached. Own and manage. The Cambridge Arts Theatre.

**HAYEK:** I saw his wife perform there.

**KEYNES:** Lydia is a most accomplished dancer.

**HAYEK:** And actress. I thought her Ophelia was wonderful.

**BOWLES:** Blimey.

*(KEYNES nods in acknowledgment. A pause, while they all look about.)*

**HAYEK:** Nothing so far.

**KEYNES:** It’s early yet.

**BOWLES:** Naught to do but wait it out.

**KEYNES:** You see, Freddy, I had my day of gloomy prognostication. An economic Jeremiah, predicting wrack and ruin. You’re next, you hope. My book looked backwards and got it all right—yours looks forward, and gets it all wrong.

**HAYEK:** Obviously, I disagree.

**KEYNES:** It’ll make your fortune, I have no doubt. But these are different times. Mr. Bowles, do you vote?

**BOWLES:** Do I vote?

**KEYNES:** Local and national elections. Do you vote?

**BOWLES:** I certainly do.

**KEYNES:** You see, Mr. Bowles, the last time we found ourselves in this position, absorbed with the strategies and logistics of war-waging, very few people actually took the time to consider what would come next. One who did was that Presbyterian scold, Woodrow Wilson, but his ideas were too much in a muddle to persuade men who were in any event uninterested in any programme but vengeance. It was a great waste of propitious opportunity.

**BOWLES:** At least the bloody Kaiser got ’is.

**KEYNES** *(Hiding a smile at this.)* Yes. There are men who see our present circumstance as providing an equally promising opportunity. For change both fundamental and astounding. Mr. Bowles you’ve assured us that you vote.

**BOWLES:** Without fail, sir.

**KEYNES:** And how do you vote? If you’ll forgive my impertinence.

**BOWLES:** Well, that's a bit of a poser. I did vote the Liberal ticket. But they're a spent force, I think.

**KEYNES:** I'm afraid so.

**BOWLES:** With the war on, I'm for Mr. Churchill. All the way, 'til Hitler's dead and freedom's won, and I won't hear a word against 'im.

*(Staring at them belligerently.)*

Or the King!

*(Seeing nothing to offend him, he continues.)*

But for by-elections, or council elections ...

*(Shakes his head.)*

I look for a good bloke, an honest bloke. One with no funny business to him. A chap you could share a pint with, if you take my meaning.

**KEYNES:** And there you have it, Hayek! The honest British elector! A chap you can share a pint with!

**BOWLES:** If you're just going to laugh ...

**KEYNES:** Not at all, Mr. Bowles, I meant no offense.

**BOWLES:** Well ...

**KEYNES:** I would merely like to suggest to you ...

*(Pause.)*

**BOWLES:** What?

**KEYNES:** When you vote, Mr. Bowles, bear this in mind. You believe you're voting for a chap, a good bloke. You like his message, not considering that all elections hinge on experts carefully crafting messages of optimism or fear-mongering, or of both simultaneously. And that's all right—Mr. Churchill is a master manipulator of opinion, but he's also right and Hitler must be defeated; we both support him. Don't we Hayek?

*(HAYEK nods solemnly.)*

But none of that ultimately matters, not the person, not the literature or platforms or slogans. You are voting for a set of economic principles. You are voting for one of several competing economic theories, each with its own policies and programme. And if you vote foolishly, if you vote for a theory that is wrong, that inadequately describes the world, that attributes to human beings behaviors they do not engage in, or inadequately accounts for behaviors we do in fact engage in, if you vote the wrong way, for the agreeable chap you could imagine sharing a pint with, but who, as it happens, believes in a bad theory, an unworkable theory, a chap who will, if elected, attempt to implement an foolish economic programme based on an untenable theory, you could, in very short order, drive your nation off a cliff into disaster.

*(BOWLES stares at him.)*

We have voted wrong, before.

**BOWLES:** For Chamberlain, you mean?

**KEYNES:** For Ricardo and von Mises.

**BOWLES:** Who?

**KEYNES:** But. If we manage things properly, we'll get it right next time.

**BOWLES:** Ricardo? Von whoever? They weren't on the bloody ballot.

**KEYNES:** Economists. And their ideas were as surely on the ballot as 'Labour' or 'Conservative' were.

**BOWLES:** Well ...I had no ...what am I to do?

**KEYNES:** Learn economics, preferably.

**BOWLES:** Lovely. How am I to do that?

**KEYNES:** How do you learn anything?

**BOWLES:** I work. All day! Evenings, I spend with the family, or at the pub, or best of all, at the pub with family. I haven't time to ...

**KEYNES:** Read a book or two? Of course you do.

**BOWLES:** His?

*(Indicating HAYEK.)*

**HAYEK:** I hope so.

**KEYNES:** Indeed. But, Mr. Bowles. You strike me as a sensible man. We have the evening before us.

**BOWLES:** But ...I don't. . . oh, all right. Pass the time.

**KEYNES:** Exactly.

**BOWLES:** Ah, now. Wait a bit, though. What 'ave I got myself in for here? Mind, I've had enough of being shouted at.

**KEYNES:** I wouldn't say we're either of us terribly party conscious, would you Hayek?

**HAYEK:** I would agree.

**KEYNES:** The Conservatives are the party of stupidity; Labour, the party of silliness.

**BOWLES:** That's right enough.

**KEYNES:** If I were to say, Mr. Bowles, that we need a middle way, made up of the few sensible people on either side.

**BOWLES:** And you two. Mr. Keynes and Mr. Hayek? That's you? Sensible?

**KEYNES:** Not quite. You see, on economic matters, we quite strenuously disagree.

**HAYEK:** That's not entirely true. We both believe in free markets. We're both liberals.

**KEYNES:** We agree that the end of laissez faire need not lead inevitably to communism.

**HAYEK:** But I do not concede that the day of laissez faire is past.

**KEYNES:** Which is why we disagree. What you fear is too much government; what I fear is too little. You're against it, as a matter of principle.

**HAYEK:** Not at all.

**KEYNES:** In the realm of economics

*(HAYEK nods.)*

Let's not mince words, Freddy. I think you're dangerous. I think you're wrong. And you think the same of me.

**HAYEK:** Yes.

**KEYNES:** Good. It's best to be clear about things, I think.

**BOWLES:** Bloody hell.

**KEYNES:** Mr. Bowles. We are at war, after all. A war caused by bad economics. Might be worth a conversation.

**HAYEK:** And Mr. Bowles, I wish, fervently wish, I could say that it will never happen again. This horror show, this bloodshed, this madness that's turned Europe into a charnel house. I wish I could reassure you. But I look at Keynes here, my brilliant friend, and I see ...economic programmes leading inevitably to thus and such missteps, errors compounding errors, leading inevitably to the abyss. We're closer to Germany than we like to admit.

**KEYNES:** But this time, perhaps, we'll have learned something.

**HAYEK:** We're humans, we never learn anything.

**KEYNES:** We do too.

**HAYEK:** No. We don't. Have you read the Beveridge report?

**KEYNES:** I have.

**HAYEK:** And there it begins again.

**KEYNES:** Perhaps.

**HAYEK:** It's going to be popular. The mob will be all for it.

**KEYNES:** The mob? The informed British electorate, you mean.

*(And they both turn to look at MR. BOWLES.)*

**BOWLES:** So that's it, then? That's to be my night, trapped up here with you two?

**KEYNES:** I expect you'll find it rather fun.

**HAYEK:** Very much so.

**BOWLES:** Good God above.

*(Sighs.)*

First time I've hoped for bombs.

**KEYNES** *(Gesturing to HAYEK.)* So make your case. Make it now. Make it here. Tonight.

**HAYEK:** I suppose there's nothing for it.

*(Deep breath.)*

Mr. Bowles. We're all British people together, here, a people at war; we three are here tonight to fight, in our own small way, a battle in that war. When the war ends--and it will end--and when Britain has won—and the Allies will win—it's in all our interests to prevent it happening again.

**BOWLES:** All right.

**HAYEK:** Let's talk about what's to come.

**BOWLES:** Yes, that's all right, I suppose. But ...

**HAYEK:** What?

**BOWLES:** Well ...not to be rude ...

**KEYNES:** Yes?

**BOWLES:** You're bloody economists! Of course you disagree. You use big words and fancy theories, but it has fuck-all to do with life.

**KEYNES:** Economics is life, everyday life, everyday decisions ...

**BOWLES:** I don't see it. It's all a lot of words. Big words, to confuse us. Every day in the papers, it's the same; "economists say ..." Prices will rise, or not, joblessness improves, or it doesn't. You're in the predicting business, you are, your science says what will happen in future. And you don't know, any more than we can trust the bloke who predicts the weather, any more than I'll know if a bomb hits us, before it does. We're here, on a building housing children, about to be bombed. That's what's real. It's got naught to do with economics.

**KEYNES:** And there we have a third opinion, Freddy! You can't say this isn't fun.

**HAYEK:** Mr. Bowles, our presence here, waiting for these bombs to come, has everything to do with economics.

**BOWLES:** You say that, you've said it already, and I say: bollocks.

**HAYEK:** Keynes, help me here.

**BOWLES:** Bollocks! Hitler started it. He invaded Poland. That's that.

**HAYEK:** And what drove him to it? And what drove the Germans to trust him?

**BOWLES:** I don't care. We're going to kill him and end it all, sooner the better. And that's it. And to waste this night on more big words, more stupid arguing ...

**KEYNES:** He makes a strong case, Hayek. Isn't that rather true?

**HAYEK:** You're an economist!

**KEYNES:** And he thinks that makes me ludicrous. I can't think how to persuade him otherwise.

**BOWLES:** Now see here. I didn't say ...

**HAYEK:** But you do purchase things. Sell things.

**BOWLES:** All right. But that's just me and other blokes, shopkeepers. . .

**KEYNES:** So how about the Great Depression?

*(BOWLES looks stubborn.)*

We're just emerging from it, a long period of sustained joblessness. Clearly, a case of economics gone bad, wouldn't you say?

*(BOWLES nods sullenly.)*

So what happened? What went wrong?

**BOWLES:** You're the economist. You tell me.

**KEYNES:** Factories weren't hiring. Not enough jobs, so blokes went without.

**BOWLES:** Right. Right!

**KEYNES:** What if I were to say: Economists who were wrong, got us into it, and economists who were right, got us out.

**BOWLES:** Well ...

*(A pause, then all in a rush.)*

And your school, or your arguments are the right ones. I'd say it's all a load of bollocks.

**KEYNES:** Yes! You heard him, Hayek. He thinks our profession is bollocks. That's the popular view, that's the corner into which you Vienna school theorists have painted us. It's all a load of bollocks. Thank you, Mr. Bowles; I couldn't have put it more splendidly myself.



**HAYEK:** I know what you wrote in your General Theory.

**KEYNES:** I wish I'd had that phrase to hand. "Load of bollocks." The book would have been a bestseller.

**BOWLES:** Look, we have to work together tonight. I don't appreciate being made fun of.

**KEYNES:** Mr. Bowles, I'm not making fun of you. I agree with you entirely. I think you're right.

**HAYEK:** Keynes?

**KEYNES:** Involuntary unemployment leading to a decline in aggregate demand. That's what classical economics declares impossible; that's what the Vienna school denies can even exist. Now, Mr. Bowles hears that and he doesn't understand the terminology. But when we break it down for him ...well, let me demonstrate.

**HAYEK:** This is pointless.

**KEYNES;** Mr. Bowles. What I suggested in my book was this: that what sustained the Great Depression was a decline in aggregate demand.

*(BOWLES starts to protest.)*

In other words, people stopped buying things, because they couldn't afford them. And they couldn't afford them, because they were out of work, out of work through no fault of their own.

**BOWLES:** Right.

**KEYNES:** You agree with what I just said?

**BOWLES:** Yes ...

**KEYNES:** People don't have money to spend, so factories have no reason to produce goods, leading to fewer jobs for factory workers, and the cycle continues.

**BOWLES:** I'm with you so far.

**KEYNES:** But according to classical economics, to the economics taught in every school in the country, taught by David Ricardo and Ludwig von Mises, found in every textbook, was that a decline in aggregate demand was impossible. Involuntary unemployment was impossible. Unemployment, again according to mainstream economic theory, was caused by ordinary people refusing to work for the proffered wage, not due to any other factors. That in a real sense, the unemployed were to blame for their misery, that their greed for high wages brought it about. That plus foolish government intervention. Because, and this is the crucial point, because, left to their own devices, economies achieve a perfect equilibrium of full employment. If left entirely alone. And to that, you say ...

**BOWLES:** Bollocks. Stupid bloody nonsense. Stupid ...

**KEYNES:** But that's what they believed and that's what they taught.

**HAYEK:** There are many causes for unemployment, Keynes, as well you know. Lack of business confidence, over-regulation blocking entrepreneurship. The dole, welfare, generous unemployment ...

**KEYNES:** To suggest that generous unemployment benefits cause unemployment is akin to saying that the existence of hospitals causes soldiers to be wounded.

**BOWLES:** This isn't a matter for jokes.

**KEYNES:** No indeed.

**BOWLES:** You've never seen it. Day-wage workers queuing up. The milk-or-meat decisions by our wives. The backyard potato patches and rabbit snares. I had skills and a trade, and was luckier than most. But I

saw it. We did what we could, stopped by with a bit of broth for those in our parish in need. But their misery wasn't due to greed, let me tell you.

**KEYNES:** You see?

**HAYEK:** And there you go, playing to the crowds, over-simplifying everything. Classical economists, your favored straw men, based on a grotesque misunderstanding of a highly complex theory of employment. And with no one to defend it. The Vienna school ...

**KEYNES:** The Vienna school is wrong.

**HAYEK:** You say that, you always say that, you wrote the General Theory to prove it, but all you really demonstrated is how little you understand of classical economics.

**KEYNES:** And you point to minor differences in terminology and tell me it suggests an all-encompassing ignorance ...

**HAYEK:** When you obstinately persist in defining terms as no other economist in the field. . .

**KEYNES:** I'm reinventing the field, so obviously the terminology must change as radically as the ideas. Mr. Bowles, I learned my economics from one great teacher above all, Alfred Marshall<sup>11</sup>. As kindly and sweet a man as ever walked the earth, even-tempered, unfailingly courteous. He was the great expounder of equilibrium, its greatest expositor. And nothing intruded upon his serene world of economic plenty and full employment. Nothing, including a World War and the Great Depression! They were accidents, happenstance, and he gave them no place in his theories. Order, balance, reason, were the hallmarks of his economics. You're not unlike him, Freddy; you see this war as an aberration. As something outside your theory.

**HAYEK:** I am more interested in how a healthy economy functions than an unhealthy one. That's so.

**KEYNES:** It just strikes me as strange to talk of economic equilibria while sitting on a roof awaiting German bombers, sent by a madman trying to kill us. Change! Change is what defines the human species! Radical, violent, disruptive, destructive change! And we can change with it, must change, adjust our policies, adapt and respond, so as to minimize the damage and provide what help we can for our fellow citizens.

**BOWLES:** Listen.

*(They stop, look up at the sky. An airplane drone is faintly heard.)*

**HAYEK:** From the east.

**BOWLES:** I think they're heading south.

**HAYEK:** What's south of here?

**KEYNES:** Worth bombing? Not much. Haverford. Stevenage. Bishop's Stortford. Some rather nice golf links!

**BOWLES:** Britain's golf links can look out for themselves.

**KEYNES:** Well. And London, of course.

*(A pause as this sinks in.)*

**BOWLES:** *(Challengingly to HAYEK)* You're a spotter. What do you hear?

**HAYEK:** *(Listens carefully.)* I'm not really ...

**BOWLES:** Listen.

**HAYEK:** (*Listens.*) I have no real expertise ...Heinkel, perhaps.

(*Another pause.*)

London's a good 80 kilometers south. We wouldn't hear an attack on London.

**KEYNES:** No.

**HAYEK:** Definitely a smaller bomber.

(*Another pause.*)

**KEYNES:** This is good, I think. Bombing just south of us makes no sense. Nothing of military importance, nothing of cultural value, sparsely populated. If we can hear planes just to our south, and Cambridge is not being attacked, it means they're off course.

(*They relax a bit.*)

**BOWLES:** That's so.

**HAYEK:** Actually, there's rather a nice pub in Stevenage. Edward the Confessor is said to have dined there. Dickens, as well.

**BOWLES:** Be a shame to lose that.

(*They share a nervous laugh.*)

**KEYNES:** There's a pub in St. Albans that claims it was the hiding place for Charles the Second during the Civil War. I believe it too, as the meat pie I was served there was surely made from Charles' horse.

(*A better laugh this time.*)

**HAYEK:** Where were we?

**KEYNES:** Equilibria. You were explaining equilibria.

**HAYEK:** I don't think ...

**KEYNES:** Freddy?

**BOWLES:** What do you ...?

**KEYNES:** I've tried to show how my economics works, I think it's only sporting to give Freddy here his innings.

**BOWLES:** I don't know that I. . .

**KEYNES:** My bowl. Freddy: defend equilibria—

**HAYEK:** All right!

(*Recovering himself.*)

Um. Where to start? A city, perhaps, a smallish city. About the same size as Manchester.

**BOWLES:** Never been to Manchester.

**HAYEK:** Well, any city, really. What middling towns do you know?

**BOWLES:** My sister married a bloke in Sheffield.

**HAYEK:** That'll do nicely. Sheffield then. So you go there, and you look, and you notice ...Shops. A greengrocers and a bakery and a tobacconists and ...

(*At a loss.*)

**KEYNES:** Fish and chips shops.

**HAYEK:** You like fish and chips?

**BOWLES:** Indeed I do.

**HAYEK:** Yes. Good. The point is this: what if you need to purchase something, perhaps you're doing repairs and you need a new spanner? Or nails. Or perhaps an umbrella.

**BOWLES:** All right.

**HAYEK:** What did Napoleon call us? "A nation of shopkeepers?" And that's remarkable, is it not? Any item, any product you may need. They are to hand. You can find the store which sells them. Any item. Not because anyone planned anything or directed it so, but because some chap thought "I wager I can make a good living for myself and my family by selling ...spanners." And perhaps someone thinks "I can sell better spanners than his, and cheaper too." And he goes into business, and perhaps they both thrive, or perhaps one of them fails.

**BOWLES:** Right.

**HAYEK:** Good. And it's not just something simple, like fish and chips. Take ...

*(At a loss.)*

**KEYNES:** Pins.

**HAYEK:** Adam Smith, well done! Yes, pins. One craftsman, working alone, could perhaps make ten pins a day. But ten craftsman, each trained to perform part of the task of pin-making, they can make a thousand pins. And each prospers.

**BOWLES:** Right. Until pins go out of style. For zippers, say. Then that factory goes bust.

**KEYNES:** Well done, Mr. Bowles: you've just elucidated succinctly the economic principle of creative destruction.

**BOWLES:** I did?

**KEYNES:** There once was a booming industry in the manufacture of buggy whips. Do you follow me?

**BOWLES:** Buggy whips.

**KEYNES:** Yes. For horse-drawn buggies. But now. . .

**BOWLES:** Now it's all motorcars.

**KEYNES:** Quite so. So, the energies and innovations and capital, that's to say, money, that once was being employed to improve the efficiency of buggy whips is now being used to do something else.

**HAYEK:** Something altogether better. Better for all society, perhaps.

**BOWLES:** Bad luck to the buggy whip chaps.

**KEYNES:** Well, yes, it is rather.

**BOWLES:** Some blokes lose everything. Their homes, their gardens. . .

**HAYEK:** Temporarily yes, certainly.

**BOWLES:** And you're saying that's good?

**HAYEK:** Necessary, yes. As society improves.

**BOWLES:** And just bad luck to all the blokes out of work.

**HAYEK:** Well, yes. Temporarily. They find something else, a new industry.

**BOWLES:** Unless they don't.

**HAYEK:** But they do. Look at Sheffield, or Manchester, think about any city. The genius of cities.

Everyone employed usefully, every need met. The individual choices of free men, each pursuing his own wishes and happiness, each just trying to care for his family. In Soviet Union Russia, Stalin has these committees, and they study and they say ‘this area needs so many spanners, this area needs so many fish-and-chips.’ Or woolen blankets or men’s hats or ...brassieres. And goods are shipped around the country, and nobody has enough, there’s scarcity everywhere, and waste, and poor quality. But in Manchester, if you sell a faulty spanner, word gets round, people hear of it, you go out of business soon enough. And another chap opens his shop, takes your place. And it may look like a bad thing for the one forced out. But it’s not. It’s the genius of *laissez faire*. And it’s a beautiful thing.

**BOWLES:** But we don’t have that.

**HAYEK:** We have had. And we will again.

**BOWLES:** I can hardly remember it. We have chaps out of work. We have shuttered factories. Full employment? My sons could only find work as laborers, before the war. Now, they’re making their four shillings a day in the service, doing their bit, and I’m a proud father. But before the war, we hadn’t any such luck. And if I want some kind of special spanner for a job, I’m lucky if I can find a way to get a rationing board to approve it.

**HAYEK:** But that’s all just temporary. An exigency of war.

**BOWLES:** But the war will end. With Hitler clapped in irons, or dead. And my boys come ‘ome. To what?

**HAYEK:** Well, tell me about your boys. You have a son named Ned, have you not? Tell me about Ned.

**BOWLES:** Ned? Well, he’s handy, isn’t he?

**HAYEK:** Handy? Good with his hands, then? A good carpenter, perhaps.

**BOWLES:** He’s done a spot of carpentry.

**HAYEK:** Well, there you have it. There’s a marketable skill. He can find employment there.

**BOWLES:** If there’s work to be had. If construction starts up. It’s all possibly this and maybe that.

**HAYEK:** But there will be jobs! This is my point—there’s a natural state of equilibrium that economies reach on their own, a rough balance between labor and industry, between capital and investment, between opportunity and demand. And that equilibrium tends to include full employment. And yes, there are business cycles, temporary downturns, moments of creative destruction. But in time, if we leave it all alone, equilibrium is resumed.

**BOWLES:** And how do we make that happen?

**HAYEK:** We don’t. If we interfere, if we intervene, we disrupt the invisible workings of markets.

**KEYNES:** The invisible hand.

**HAYEK:** There’s always the temptation to force things along, to accelerate natural processes. But given enough time and patience, in the long run, we will achieve equilibrium.

**KEYNES:** In the long run, we are all of us dead.

**HAYEK:** I know you don’t agree.

**KEYNES:** I disagree with propositions for which no evidence exists.

**HAYEK:** No evidence?

**KEYNES:** I notice, for example, how hard you work to avoid Mr. Bowles’ questions.

**BOWLES:** That’s right!

**KEYNES:** You just blithely assure him: “markets will provide.” Why not fairies or unicorns, why not angels from heaven?

**HAYEK:** You’d have the government provide. You’d tax the successful to give Mr. Bowles’ sons a job.

**BOWLES:** I never asked for nowt!

**HAYEK:** But you want assurance, a job, from somewhere. And I’m saying trust the hand of the market. And your sons, if industrious, will find employment.

**KEYNES:** Unless they don’t.

**BOWLES:** (*Belligerently*) Unless they don’t!

**HAYEK:** And I’m saying there’s no reason for ...

**KEYNES:** There are lots of perfectly good reasons. Liquidity traps, demand-side recessions.

**HAYEK:** Which, if left alone, solve themselves.

**BOWLES:** Says you!

**HAYEK:** Say most major economists in the field.

**KEYNES:** Every happy sailor on the Ship of Fools.

**HAYEK:** Now you’re just abusing me.

**KEYNES:** Defend yourself then!

**HAYEK:** How can I? I say ‘if we pursue this course of action, these will be the results.’ You say, ‘no, this other course of action will be more successful.’ We have to choose, and each choice precludes other possible choices. That’s why economists must be driven by theory, must be consistent in our theories.

**KEYNES:** I think Mr. Bowles would prefer results.

**BOWLES:** Right! Damned right!

**KEYNES:** Which is why we now must speak of madness. Of raw animal spirits.

**HAYEK:** Ah yes.

**KEYNES:** Any investment is foolish. The act of entrepreneurship is itself foolish. To take perfectly good money safely drawing interest in savings, and give it to some hare-brained scheme? Madness! But that glorious insanity we call investment is our salvation as well. Entrepreneurs taking risks!

**HAYEK:** I would say rather that markets behave rationally.

**KEYNES:** We certainly want them to. But we don’t. I’ll grant that we try to behave rationally. We plot and plan and think things through. But then, don’t we just ...leap? Don’t we just spontaneously decide to ...try something mad.

**BOWLES:** Not I, Mr. Keynes.

**KEYNES:** And why is that, Mr. Bowles?

**BOWLES:** The wife. She’d take my ’ead off.

**KEYNES:** But you know people for whom irrational spontaneous optimism comes naturally.

**BOWLES:** My brother-in-law.

**KEYNES:** And what did he do?

**BOWLES:** He’s always trying summat. Latest is pigs. Bought a preppers sow, and hopes to make it back in bacon.

**KEYNES:** And how does he fare, generally?

**BOWLES:** 'E's richer than I, that's for certain.

**HAYEK:** Fine, there's an element of irrationality to investment. Yes.

**KEYNES:** And we rely on it, on that inspired madness.

**HAYEK:** But does not cumulative madness lead to rational order? Do not all those individual investment choices, in combination, lead to equilibrium?

**KEYNES:** Sub-optimally. All right, economic equilibria. How about this? How about the inedible rubbish we call British cuisine.

**BOWLES:** What, may I ask, is wrong with our food?

**KEYNES:** It's bloody awful, that's what. Listen carefully. Industrial revolution, London grows into a leviathan, and its food arrives largely via canals; horse-drawn barges. It's a long trip, we had to develop foods that could travel. So: tinned meats and vegetables, fish, potatoes, salt pork. So, bangers and mash—sausages and potatoes. Or fish and chips—fish and potatoes. But mostly, when you've got tinned meats and vegetables, your best bet is to bake it into a pie.

**BOWLES:** I like a good steak and kidney pie.

**KEYNES:** Indeed you do, Mr. Bowles, because it's what you're used to. It's what all of us are used to. Bad coffee, overcooked vegetable mush, horrid little meats, washed down with warm beer. Jellies to help the meats go down, puddings to use up the drippings. It's what we demand, and therefore, it's what is supplied. We're stuck in a suboptimal equilibrium, centuries old. Rubbish demanded, rubbish supplied. Now, you, Hayek

**HAYEK:** Me?

**KEYNES:** You're Austrian, you're from Vienna. Your people wouldn't put up with it. You slam down your collective fists on your figurative tables, and demand all those strudels and streusels and schnitzels. You're achieved a far more optimal equilibrium. A cuisine that's the glory of your culture.

**BOWLES:** No, Mr. Keynes. It's the rationing. You've forgotten there's a war on. We all have to do our bit, including in the pantry.

**KEYNES:** Yes, indeed, Mr. Bowles. We all suffer alike.

**HAYEK:** The tastelessness of British cuisine has nothing to do with economic equilibrium. They're entirely separate subjects.

**KEYNES:** Not at all. Equilibrium arrives when supply and demand are balanced. Our food is rubbish, but it's all we know; we demand nothing better. It's suboptimal. As equilibria always are. Until human beings act foolishly, and invest. Which they will only do if they sense the possibility of demand for their products.

**HAYEK:** Which comes of it own accord.

**KEYNES:** But it doesn't. You think investment is rational and that government interventions are madness. I see government as behaving sensibly when it creates opportunities for investor madness.

**HAYEK:** You see chaos as the only constant.

**KEYNES:** We've survived a world war and a Depression, with another war dropping bombs on our heads. What else could I conclude? Your implied metaphor is that of a see-saw. For every rise a fall, for every

fall a rise, so it's best to ride out the downturns, knowing all will set itself to rights, through sheer momentum.

**HAYEK:** Certainly.

**19 more pages to THE END**