

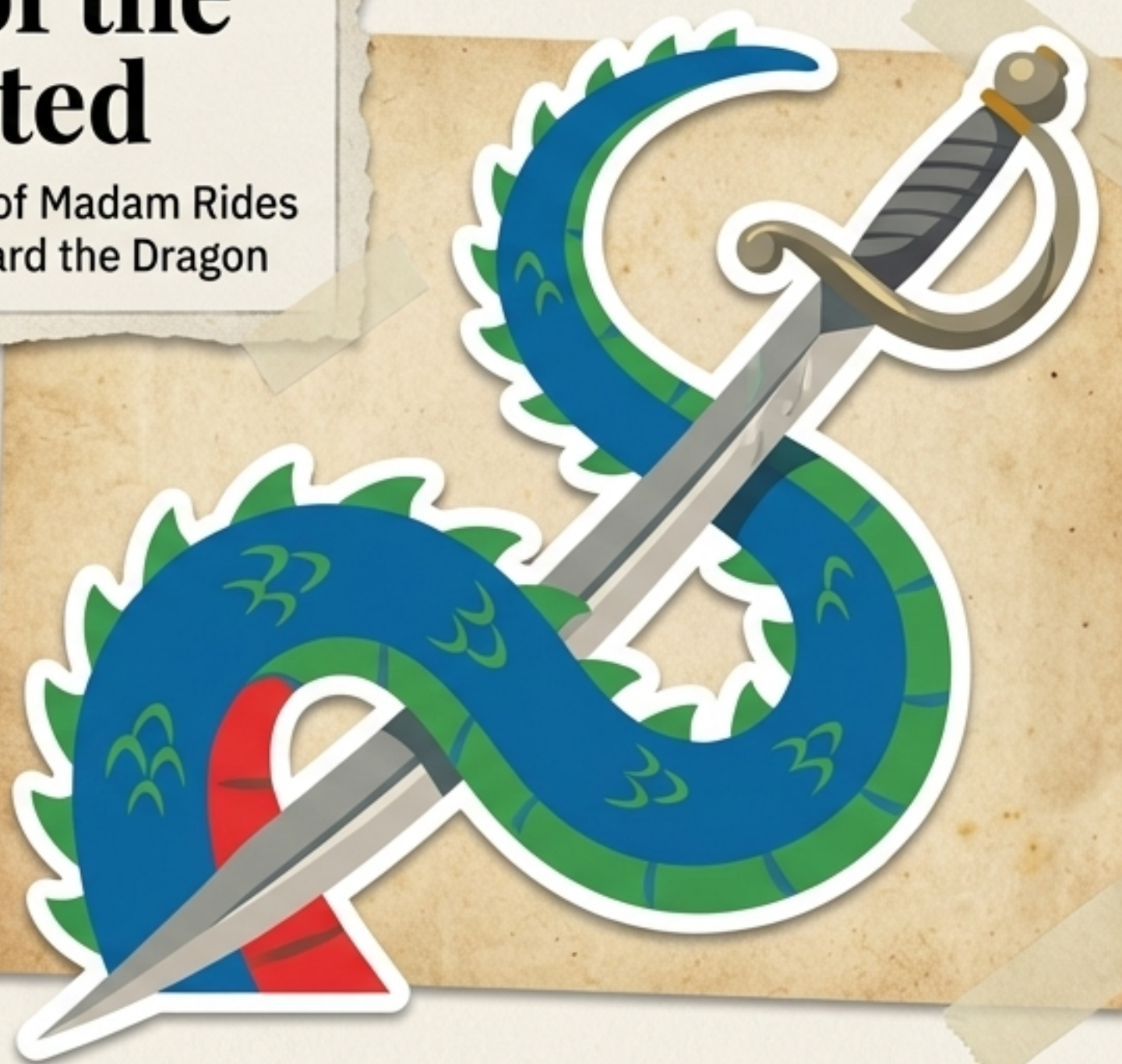
# Journeys of the Unexpected

An Analytical Deconstruction of Madam Rides the Bus and The Tale of Custard the Dragon



US TICKET  
P 30  
Paise

**Valli's Longing:** The Call of the Unknown  
**Symbolism:** The Bus Journey as Growth



**Custard's Paradox:** Fear vs. Courage  
**Theme:** Appearances are Deceiving

# The Eight-Year-Old Observer

**Fiercely Independent:** Highly sensitive to being treated like a child.



**Name:** Valliammai (Valli)

**Age:** 8

**Core Desire:** To ride the bus to the town (a symbol of the outside world's mystery).

**Intensely Curious:** Her favorite pastime is watching the street for unusual experiences.

**Meticulous Planner:** Capable of complex logistical execution far beyond her years.

# Tactical Logistics of a Childhood Dream



## Step 1: Intelligence Gathering

Listens discreetly to neighbors. Determines distance (6 miles), travel time (45 minutes one-way), and fare (30 paise each way).



## Step 2: Resource Acquisition

Accumulates a fortune of 60 paise.  
**Sacrifice Required:**  
Resists peppermints, toys, and the village fair merry-go-round.

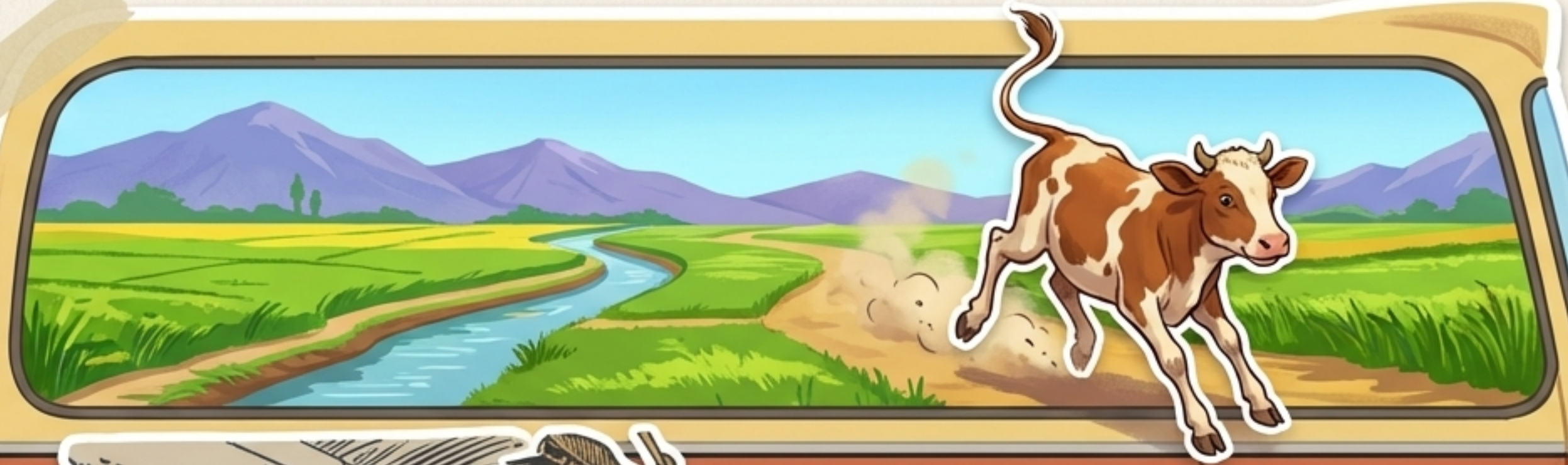


## Step 3: Tactical Execution

Identifies a blind spot in adult surveillance.  
Slips out undetected during her mother's daily 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM nap window.

# The Dual Worlds of the Outward Journey

Outside  
the Window  
(Wonder)



Inside the  
Bus  
(Autonomy)



- Fiercely guards her independence.
- Refuses the conductor's physical help.
- Rejects the patronizing title of madam.
- Rebuffs a repulsive elderly woman chewing betel nut.

# The Catalyst for Growing Up

Innocence

Experience

## The Journey Out (Innocence)



**State:** Unblemished joy. The cow runs with its tail high in the air. Valli laughs until there are tears in her eyes.

## The Journey Home (Experience)

**State:** Induction into the mystery of death. The cow lies lifeless, legs spreadeagled.



**Insight:** The realization dampens her enthusiasm entirely. She sits glued to her seat, refusing to look out the window. Her worldview has permanently shifted.

# A Secret Hidden in Plain Sight

## Adult Perception

*“Just a chit of a girl, she is... and yet look how she pokes her nose into our conversation, just as though she were a grown lady.”*

**Context:** The chatterbox aunt assumes Valli is merely pretending to understand the adult world.

## Valli's Reality

**State:** She returns safely by 3:40 PM, her secret entirely intact.

### The Irony

Valli has grown up today. She navigated the logistical world alone, confronted mortality, and processed profound grief—all under the adults' noses. Valli simply smiles to herself.

# A Ballad of Absurd Proportions

## The Text

*The Tale of Custard the Dragon* by Ogden Nash  
(a master of comic verse)



## The Form

**A Ballad:** Traditionally, a rhythmic poem that tells a serious narrative story of courage, heroism, or tragedy.



## The Twist

**A Parody:** Nash uses this highly structured, heroic form to tell an absurd story about a cowardly dragon, a boastful mouse, and a wooden-legged pirate.

# The Grand Illusion of Bravery

## Character

## Claimed Bravery

## Actual Reality



Belinda

Brave as a barrel  
full of bears

Hides behind her pets.



Mustard

Brave as a tiger  
in a rage

Easily flustered.



Ink & Blink

Chased lions down  
the stairs

Run and hide at  
the first sound.



Custard

Terrifying appearance  
(spikes, scales, dagger  
toes, mouth like a fireplace)

Cries for a nice  
safe cage.

# The Crisis Reversal

## The Threat Arrives

A pirate climbs through the window with dual pistols, a cutlass in his teeth, and a wooden leg.

**Gasp!**

**Help!**

**Meowch!**

## The Heroes Flee

Belinda pales and cries for help. Mustard yelps and runs. Ink trickles to the basement. Blink strategically mouseholes.

## The Coward Strikes

Custard leaps up, snorting like an engine. He clashes his tail like dungeon irons and attacks the pirate like a robin at a worm, gobbling him whole.

**Snort!**

# The Post-Crisis Rationalization Matrix

	Character's Excuse	Actual Post-Crisis Statement
1.	Mustard's Excuse	I'd have been twice as brave if I hadn't been flustered.
2.	Ink & Blink's Excuse	We'd have been three times as brave, we think.
3.	Custard's Response	Readily agrees that everybody is braver than me and resumes asking for his cage.

**Insight: True courage acts when necessary; false courage boasts when safe.  
Custard's lack of ego makes him the ultimate secure hero.**

# The Anatomy of Ogden Nash's Verse

## Simile:

Elevates a mundane bird to a dragon's attack.

Snorting like an engine,  
Clashed his tail like irons in a dungeon,  
With a clatter and a clank and a jangling squirm,  
He went at the pirate like a robin at a worm.

...

For there was a pirate, climbing in the winda,  
A realio, trulio, little pet dragon.

## Poetic License (Invented Words):

Forced to rhyme hilariously with Belinda, and emphasizes the absurd, childish tone.

## Onomatopoeia:

Auditory chaos of the dragon's assault.

# The Shared Burden of the Misjudged

## Valli

Judged by adults as a naive chit of a girl.

Reality: Fiercely capable of navigating the logistics and emotional weight of the outside world alone.

Both texts masterfully expose the gap between appearance and reality. The world fundamentally misjudges them based on superficial traits, yet neither protagonist feels the need to prove themselves to their critics at the end. They simply smile and return to their routines.

## Custard

Judged by peers as a cowardly, pathetic pet.

Reality: A lethal force capable of stepping up to save everyone in a true life-or-death crisis.