

ON THE WAY HOME...



It was a sunny Sunday morning. The golden sunshine came streaming through Upali's bedroom windows. The magpies were singing sweetly. Charmingly beautiful roses were peeping at Upali through the window. "Wow! What a beautiful day!" said Upali to himself. Then there came Upali's wife rushing into the room with a turned down mouth, carrying his morning coffee. But, She looked more industrious than ever. "Upali! You have to go to the market quickly. We are having visitors today and you have to bring the things I need for lunch. Please don't get late they said they are coming around 12 "O" clock. You have to be back from market at least by 10 "O" clock. Otherwise I won't have time to make all the dishes." She went on.

“Visitors? who's coming?” Asked Upali, a little annoyed at being disturbed while enjoying the early morning sunshine.

“The new couple, the new couple is coming, Sujee, my office mate and her husband. Not only them, but also Sujee's parents, and two brothers are coming along, we need to give them a grand lunch, please be quick and here is the list of things I need.”

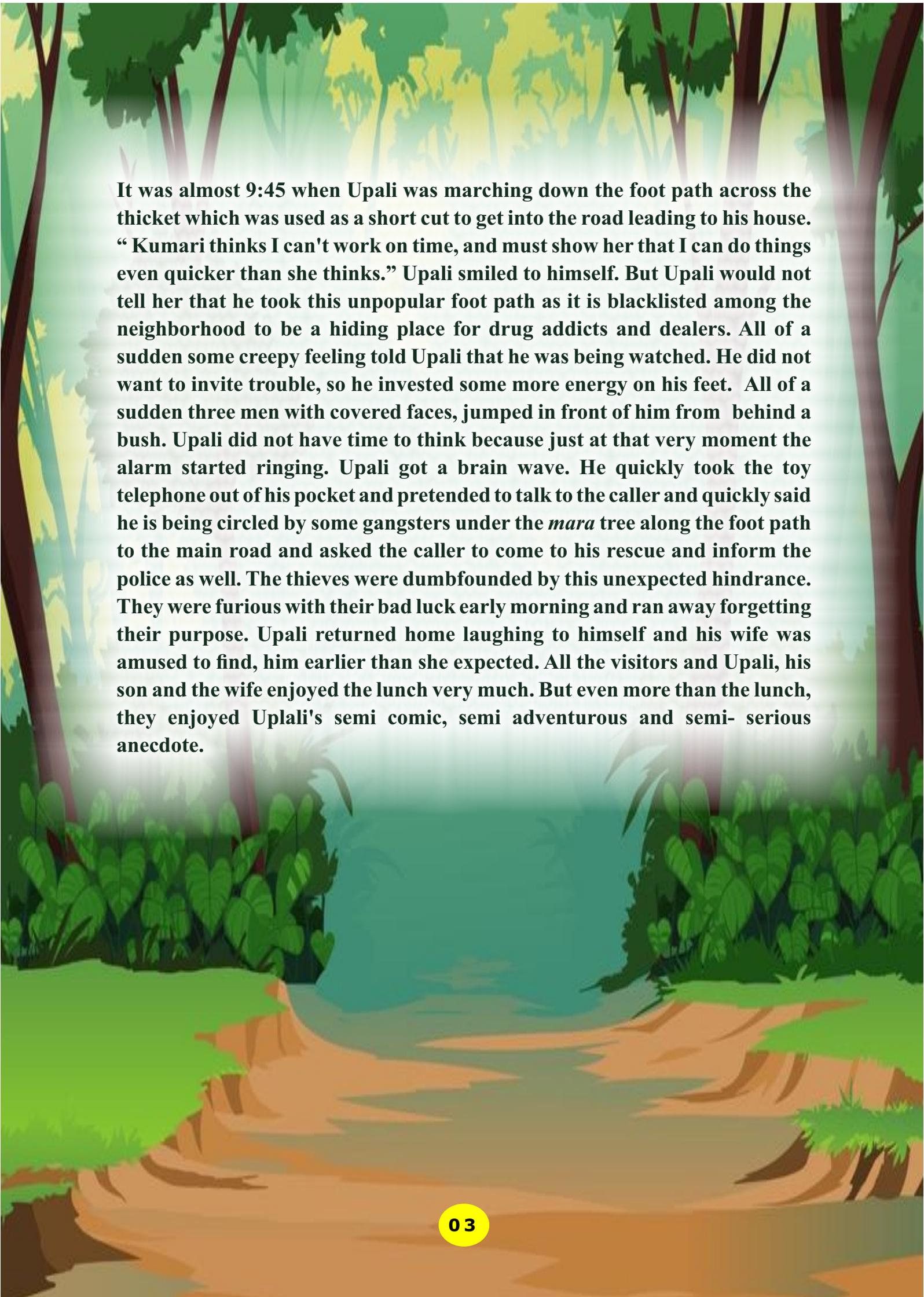
“Kumari seemingly was planning to display all her culinary talents to her office mate” thought Upali to himself, and at the same time felt excited at the thought of getting an opportunity to enjoy something delicious for lunch thanks to Kumari's newly married office mate.

“Ok, then let me have my market bag,” said Upali while going into the wash area.

So Upali got ready as quick as a flash. “*Thaththa*, I want you to bring a toy telephone today.” That was Upali's son , Kavindu. He was still in his bed rubbing his sleepy eyes. “Ok putha” said Upali and placed a kiss on his son's forehead. As he was about to set out, Uplai's wife came running with his bedroom alarm clock. “Here, Upali, I have set the alarm for 9:45 on this clock because your wrist watch is not working. Don't take long, please. So you leave the market latest 9.45”. She pleaded.

“Ok Kumari, I will do as you say” said Upali ,as he was such a loving husband who never wanted to disappoint his wife. After all, he knew what Kumari said was correct that his wrist watch is there for the writst watche's sake. It was no use for him, though he wears it out of habit day in and day out.

On the way to the market Upali's feet moved quite fast. The first thing that caught his eyes, however was a toy mobile phone which looked exactly like a real one. *Putha* will be delighted to have this one,” he said to himself and without second thoughts he bought it and put it into his pocket thinking the vegetables and other groceries might spoil it in case he puts it into the same bag with them. He bought all the items in the list even without waiting to say hello to some of the acquaintances whom he met buying things at the market.



It was almost 9:45 when Upali was marching down the foot path across the thicket which was used as a short cut to get into the road leading to his house. “Kumari thinks I can't work on time, and must show her that I can do things even quicker than she thinks.” Upali smiled to himself. But Upali would not tell her that he took this unpopular foot path as it is blacklisted among the neighborhood to be a hiding place for drug addicts and dealers. All of a sudden some creepy feeling told Upali that he was being watched. He did not want to invite trouble, so he invested some more energy on his feet. All of a sudden three men with covered faces, jumped in front of him from behind a bush. Upali did not have time to think because just at that very moment the alarm started ringing. Upali got a brain wave. He quickly took the toy telephone out of his pocket and pretended to talk to the caller and quickly said he is being circled by some gangsters under the *mara* tree along the foot path to the main road and asked the caller to come to his rescue and inform the police as well. The thieves were dumbfounded by this unexpected hindrance. They were furious with their bad luck early morning and ran away forgetting their purpose. Upali returned home laughing to himself and his wife was amused to find, him earlier than she expected. All the visitors and Upali, his son and the wife enjoyed the lunch very much. But even more than the lunch, they enjoyed Uplali's semi comic, semi adventurous and semi- serious anecdote.