

WAKAYIMA TAKES P.E. CLASS

By Ernest Bazanye

Wakayima was in a very jolly mood when he got to school, unlike the other students, because, unlike everyone else, he didn't have to worry about being late, or being in class, or even doing homework.

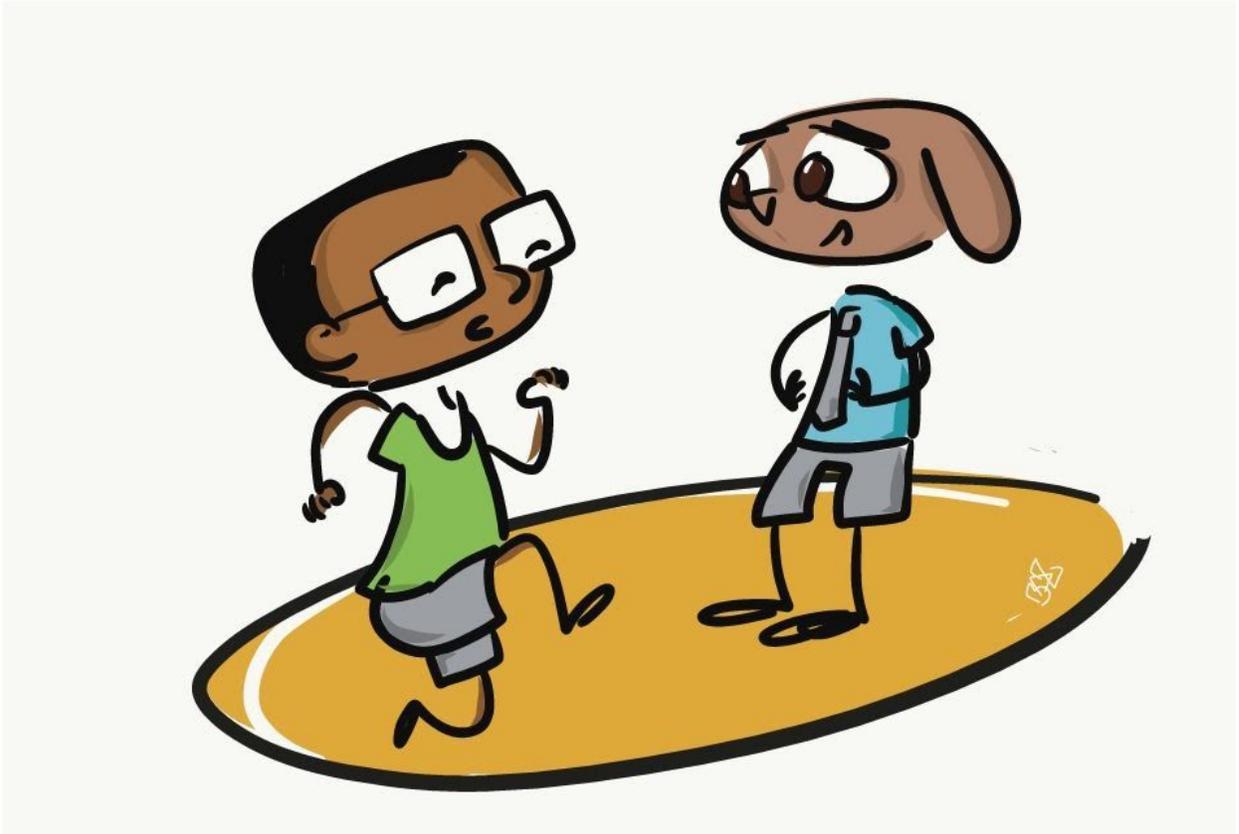
He had been sneaking into Tropical Academy Primary School on a regular basis for the past few months. He would pull his ears down, stretch his nose a bit, twist his back and lengthen his legs and arms. Then he would smear the oil of the Tsifolio wood tree onto his fur. The oil would make the fur shrink into his skin. It was lucky that the humans had not yet discovered the Tsifolio tree or it would make their barbers and hair salons go out of business.

After Wakayima did all this, he would put on a pair of grey shorts, a blue shirt and a grey tie, and there you go: he looked just like a normal schoolboy.

Then he would hop round to the school, sneak into the school yard and, pausing to remind himself, "Dude, no hopping. Walk," he would walk around pretending to be a human schoolboy and trick all the other human kids into giving him their lunch.

Wakayima was fine with the fruits and vegetables in the forest, but he looooooved human snacks.

On this day, Wakayima walked up to one of the students, Roger, who had become his best friend at the school. "Hey My Guy! How are you? What a warm day! I am hungry. I can't wait for lunch!" he said, smiling eagerly and greedily.



“But Wakzi, where have you been?” asked Roger. “I don’t understand how you do it. You are never here in the morning. You don’t show up until around noon. Don’t your Zeeyis get you here on time? And then teachers never notice that you are late. How come?”

How come was easy to explain. It was because he had learned something about the difference between the world of humans and the forest world. In the forest, animals pretty much made up the rules day by day. One day the jackal would be a carnivore, the next the jackal would be eating berries and fruits. One day the owl would be nocturnal, the next day she would be flying around in the daytime bothering squirrels which thought she was asleep. But the humans had rules which stuck. They took them seriously. They wrote them down in books and stuck to them day after day after day.

Now, since he wasn't actually a student at the school, his name wasn't on the roll call. That meant that he couldn't be punished for being late or for being absent. You see, the human system made sure students who are supposed to be in school don't run away from it, but they had no system to make sure students who are not supposed to be in school don't run into it.

But since Wakayima couldn't explain this to Roger he just changed the topic by asking, "What? Zeeyis?"

Roger looked at him suspiciously. "Zeeyis. Parents. Bazaire? Dad, mum or guardian?"

Wakayima sensed that he was making Roger more suspicious, not less, so he changed tack again. "What do you mean I am not here in the morning? I was at roll call. I was in the back."

"I didn't see you in the back," said Roger.

"Did you look at the whole back? Did you look behind the back?" asked Wakayima.

Roger stopped. He had never thought of such a thing as behind the back of the assembly hall. He had to admit that he did not look there.

"See?" said Wakayima. "That's where you should look before you start asking questions. So, when do we eat?"

"After this next lesson, I guess," said Roger. And Wakayima's face fell. Now he would have to sit in class for a whole period before he could get some biscuits or chips from anyone. Even though Roger claimed he got to school late, he felt he got there too early.

"Which class is it?" he sighed. "Which class do I have to sit through now?"

“Oh, you won’t sit in class,” said Roger. “We have P.E. today.”

“What? A whole lesson for going to the loo?” Wakayima was shocked.

“I said P.E. Not pee. Physical Education. We go and do exercise and sports. How come you don’t know what P.E. is?” Roger asked, suspicious again.

“Of course I know what PE is! I was making a joke. How come you don’t know how to see a joke? Maybe you should go for J.E., that is Joke Education, and learn how to laugh when someone says something hilarious, instead of looking at them like they are crazy.” Why was Roger so suspicious? He kept asking questions.

Wakayima made a mental note to remember to make up some stories about a pair of Zeeyis and talk about them a lot in front of Roger. But first there was a class to attend.

The class gathered in the sports field in front of a teacher. Teacher Jolly. She was a tall, thin lady dressed in a black and grey tracksuit and she had a whistle that hung from a chain around her neck. When she blew it it sounded slightly familiar to Wakayima. It reminded him of the time the weaverbirds in the forest had an argument.

Now, weaverbirds are small, yellow, noisy birds and they are the most talkative birds in Africa. They are also the most quarrelsome. This becomes a huge big problem when their nesting season comes round.

There comes a time every year when all the weaverbirds in the forest decide to build nests. The problem is that they all decide to build their nest in the same tree.

One day, much to his dismay, the weaverbirds chose the tree just next to the burrow where Wakayima lived.

By the way, hares live in burrows-- they dig a little space underground and that is where they live. Wakayima's burrow was very cosy. It had his bed, it had a cupboard where he kept his favourite foods, a hanger for his school uniform which he would change into when he was going to school to steal food and, of course, his power bank.

There was no electricity in the forest, so the only way he could keep his phone charged was with a power bank.



I know you are surprised to hear that the hare had a power bank, but he was very fond of youtube cartoons and the only way he could watch them when he wasn't in the city was with a phone. And the phone needed a powerbank. So he had a powerbank.

It was a nice, cosy burrow, perfect in every way. Until one morning he was rudely woken by a huge burst of shrill, squeaky, loud birds arguing at the tops of their voices.

"That's my branch. I saw it first!"

"I don't care if you saw it first or even if you saw it before first. I *got* here first, so it is mine."

"What are you guys doing? That is my branch. I am putting my nest there."

"No, you are not. I am putting *my* nest there. I booked it last month."

“You are lying. You didn’t book last month! Last month wasn’t nesting season!
Can you believe this guy?”

“Birds, do we have to fight like this over a single branch? We are in a forest,
banange, there are branches everywhere!”

“Yeah! So let him get another branch!”

“Has anyone seen my wife? Where is my wife? Kariuki, have you seen my wife?”

“Why are you asking me? Is she the Miss Uganda of birds so we should all be
looking at her and seeing her all the time?”

“I have found a better branch. You losers can stay fighting over that weak, fake
dirty branch. Losers!”

“Kariuki, where are you hiding my wife?”

“Guys we need to make a rule about poopooling in the tree. Someone’s things
just hit me.”

“Man, this branch sucks. You take it.”

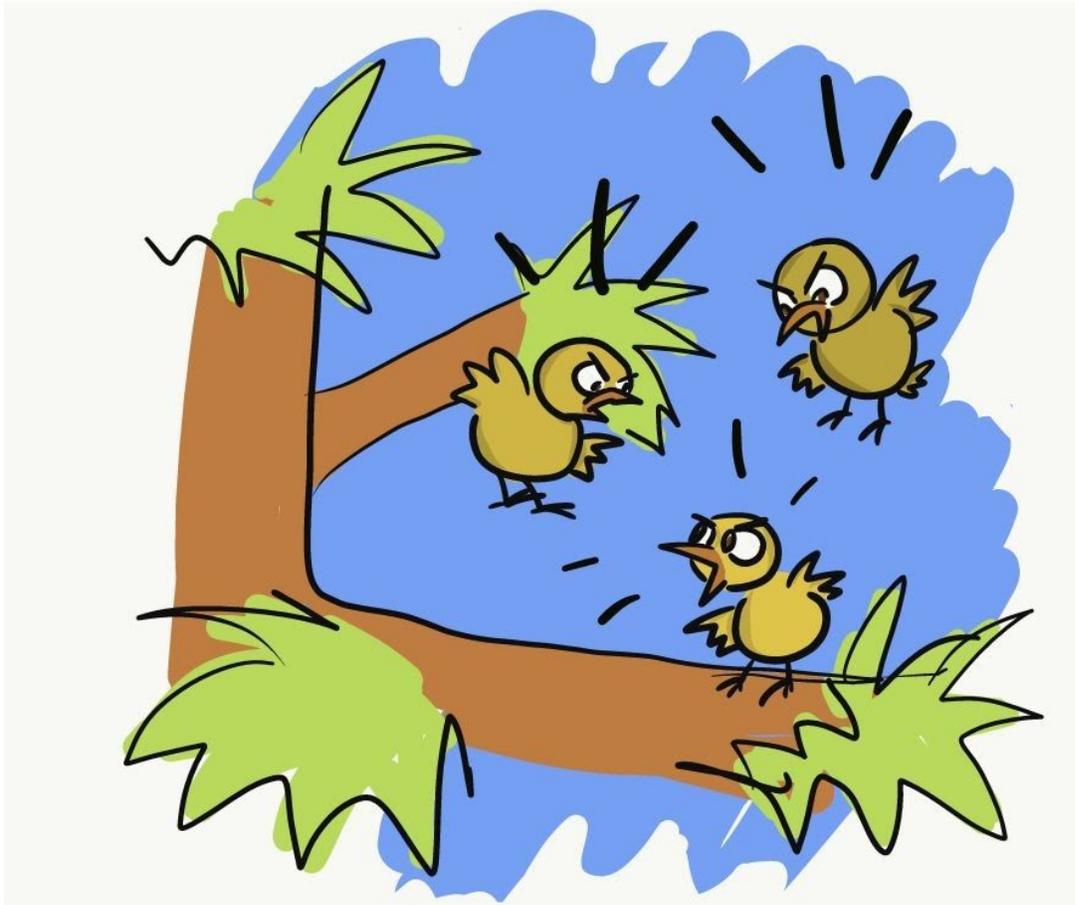
“Why do you want me to take the lousy branch? You keep it. I’m building on that
one.”

“Why are you asking Kariuki about me? Am I his shadow?”

“Get off my branch, you weaverbirds!”

“Guys, there is a squirrel in this branch.”

“So what? It’s our branch now.”



The noise was deafening and annoying and irritating Wakayima. He had been having a lovely dream in which animals kept humans as pets and his two pets were Ariana Grande and Bobi Wine, then suddenly he was shocked to wakefulness by the noise.

He stuck his head out of the burrow and shouted at the birds. “Can you idiots keep it down! Some of us are trying to sleep!”

At that point all the weaverbirds, and there must have been almost a hundred of them in the tree, turned in one motion to face the hare down at the bottom of the tree. And they all, in once voice, at the same time, shouted, with their shrill, high-pitched voices, all at the same time, “MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS!”

The sound of a hundred weaverbirds shrieking in unison is exactly what the PE teacher's whistle reminded Wakayima of.

Apart from the whistle, which really really got on his nerves, Wakayima did not mind PE. It was an easy class to take. All they had to do was line up on one end of the field and then run to the other end, then line up again and run to the other end. This was not a problem, Wakayima thought, sprinting happily up and down the field. And it would help him work up an appetite for all the snacks he would be enjoying at lunch. He hoped that Kwezi had some fresh cassava with chilli sauce like last time. That was nyummy.



He looked around at his victims. Kwezi was jogging steadily up the field. Natalia was not very fast but she was a bit faster than Kwezi. Ngiri was fast but kept coming in last because it seemed he could not run in a straight line. He would always end up running to the side of the track. Oblong was very slow, but Rukia was very fast. She was always the first to reach the finish. Then Wakayima noticed Roger.

Roger was swinging his arms very hard, side to side and up and down. He was throwing his legs up and down with a lot of energy. He was breathing heavily and

obviously trying his best, but everyone was overtaking him. He was running so badly that at some points he even stopped moving. If it wasn't for the fact that Ngiri had somehow turned around and began running back to the starting line, Roger would be the last in the race.

Wakayima looked at the teacher and thought, "Humans are crazy. They spend all this time trying to teach themselves Maths and History and Physics and Science, but they can't learn how to run."

He was just about to laugh to himself at the silliness of humans when the teacher blew the whistle.

"Whkkweeeeeeeeeecchhhh!" it went.

Wakayima felt as if a hundred weaverbirds had flown into his ears and through his brain in one second.

"That's it," he thought. "I am not coming for this class again."

At lunch time Wakayima had forgotten the trauma of the whistle and was in a good mood. He had just convinced Kwezi that chillied cassava made your legs heavy and that if he wanted to do better at PE he would have to stop eating it. Kwezi had thanked him for the advice and handed over the cassava when Wakayima had said, "Let me take it to the dustbin for you. Drink water instead. Water makes your legs lighter. You know Hussain Ball? The fastest human runner? He drinks a lot of water. Never touches nyummy cassava."

"Actually, his name is Usain Bolt," corrected Kwezi.

“Usain Bolt also does it. Both him *and* Hussain Ball. You try to give them cassava and they will say, ‘No thanks. We prefer to drink some water,’ and then they will run away so fast you won’t be able to catch them with your cassava-heavy legs.”

Kwezi went off to fetch some water, and Wakayima carried his delicious cassava over to his friend Roger.

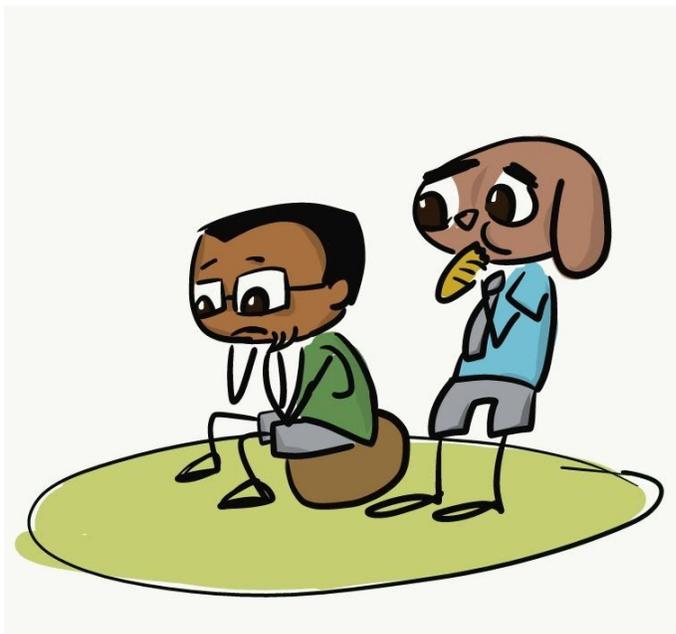
“Want some cassava, my guy?” asked Wakayima, sitting down next to Roger.

“No thanks. I am not hungry. In fact you can have mine,” Roger said, with a sad voice. Wakayima looked at Roger’s lunch box. It was full of chillied cassava and peanut butter and lettuce! This was even better than Kwezi’s lunch! Why had he gone and wasted all that time on Kwezi when he could have just come here instead?

As Wakayima shoved Roger’s lunch into his mouth, he also noticed something else.

“You sound kind of sad and miserable. What is wrong?” Wakayima asked.

“Nothing is wrong,” answered Roger, which, as everyone knows, means, “something is very wrong”.



A lot of the time when something is bothering people, we say nothing is wrong because we just want to be asked again. So we can say nothing is wrong a second time. So that we can be asked again. So we can say nothing is wrong a third time. So that we can be asked again. So that we can say what it is that is bothering us only after we have been asked four times.

But Wakayima was too busy enjoying the crunchy cassava and peanut butter and the lettuce to ask four times. When Roger saw that he wasn't going to be asked again, he surrendered.

"It's P.E., dude. I suck at P.E.!"

"Oh, yeah. I noticed," said Wakayima, chomping on the lettuce. "A lot of you suck at P.E. How can you be so good at something as difficult as Maths, and so bad at something as easy as running? Humans are crazy."

"Why do you always say 'Humans are crazy' as if you are not a human yourself? Are you an alien?" Roger asked.

"Hahahahah! An alien? Don't be silly! There are no aliens," was Wakayima's reply. He continued to eat. He had to change the topic again. "Are you sure you don't want to try this cassava and lettuce? It's delicious. Especially if you roll the lettuce around the cassava stick like this so it is like a rolex, then it is super-crunchy and ooh! It goes down so well. My guy, you are missing out."

But Roger had moved on from the topic already. "I wish I could run fast," he sighed sadly.

"Why do you need to run fast anyway?" Wakayima asked. "You have cars for when you need to go anywhere. You don't need to run. Just tell your Zeeyis to drive you where you need to go."

Roger sighed. "The truth is, it's Rukia. She said I can't run. She said I run like a mad warthog. She said the way I run is so lousy I should give up running. And then she called me a loser and went on to win the race."

"She's crazy," said Wakayima. "You don't run like a warthog. Warthogs are really fast. Their only problem is that they don't run straight, they tend to run zig zag and in circles, but they run fast."

“That's not the point. I just hate it when she makes fun of me,” said Roger.

“Why should you care? So what if she gets there first? We all get there in the end.”

“It hurts my feelings when she teases me about it,” said Roger morosely. “I wish I could beat her just once.”

Wakayima could not understand why Roger was upset.

“Roger, you beat her in everything else. That's probably why she keeps teasing you. She's just jealous because she is so clever but she hasn't been number one in class all term long. Because of us she keeps being number three.”

“Actually she is number two,” murmured Roger. Wakayima was a bit taken aback.

“Not number three? Ever since I started tricking you into doing my homework I thought you and I would be number one and two,” he said.

Roger just shrugged. “What can I say? I don't know how, but I am number one, she is number two.”

“And what number am I?” Wakayima asked. Then he remembered that he didn't really care. He never came to school to do homework and learn anyway. He was only here for snacks and to hang out with his friend Roger. And right now, Roger was more important because, Wakayima could see, Roger needed his help.

“My guy, I am going to teach you how to run. I am going to make you faster than Rukia. And not only that, I am going to teach you what to say to her after you beat her in the race, because, honestly, if the best she can come up with is ‘You run like a mad warthog,’ it will be very easy to beat her in the trash talk as well. Meet

me at the school field on Saturday. Bring plenty of flavoured crisps, and some banana cake.”

Okay, that’s the end of this edition. See you next time for what happens next.
Bye.

Who knew running could be a challenge? Wakayima is not backing down from it, though.

The adventures of the cheeky, cunning hare that sneaks into the human school continue with a fresh story each week. Join the mailing list by at >>>>>or visit bazanye.com/wakayima for the latest. Stay tuned!