

WAKAYIMA OF TROPICAL ACADEMY Episode 7

WAKAYIMA GIVES P.E. CLASS

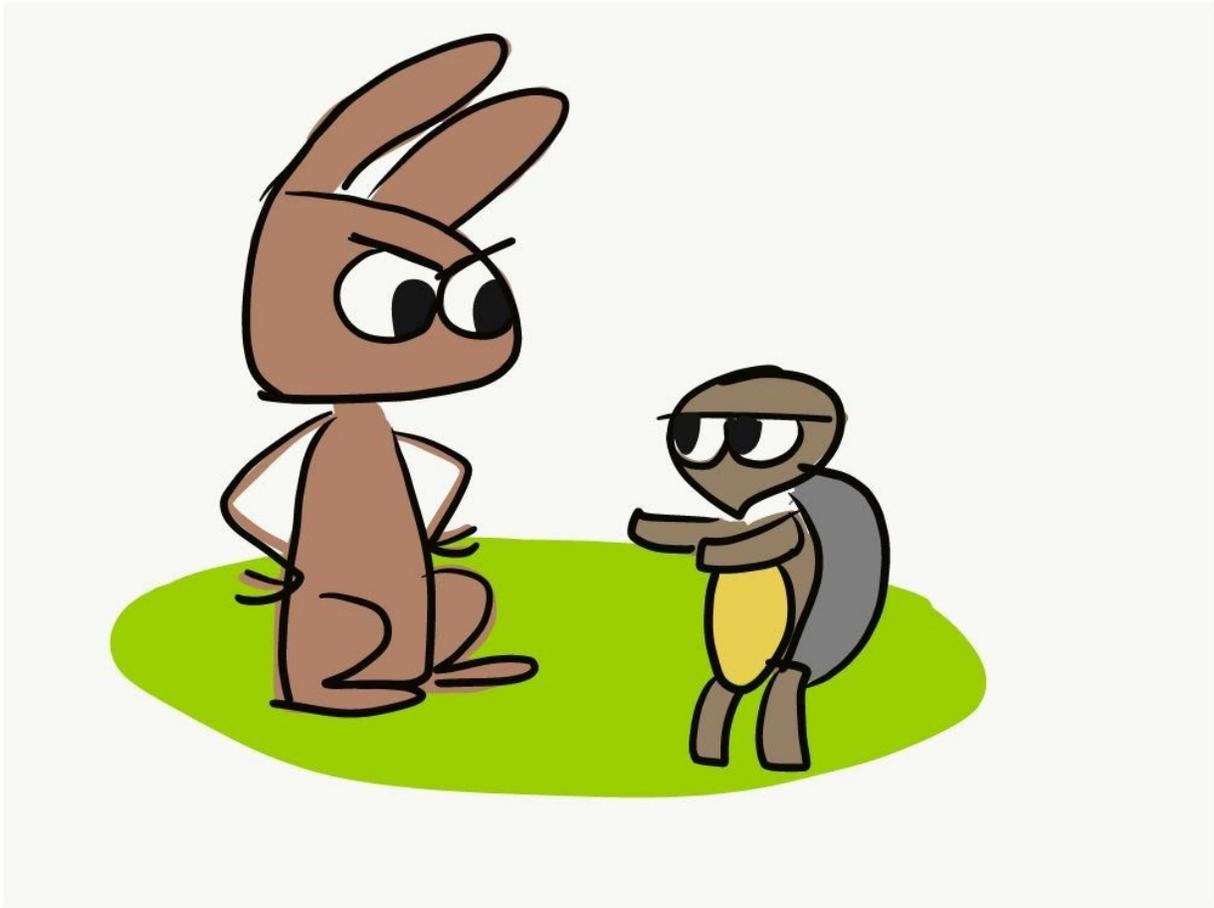
By Ernest Bazanye

Wakayima had never expected that he would become a teacher, but then again, who expected that there would be a hare in a school? That is what makes life adventurous. Unexpected things happen.

He was now a teacher. And his student was Roger.

The subject was one that Wakayima and all his hare family, from Sungura his Kenyan cousin, to his brother Iculi who lived in a bush in Alur, to Wakame from Hoima to their uncle Kalulu from Zambia and indeed all of the hares in Africa: The subject was running.

Hares were so good at running that they never lost a race. Well, there is one race they say a hare lost but if you ask any hare, they will tell you that is not true. The tortoise cheated.



Have you heard that story? Well, here it goes. It wasn't Wakayima. It was Sungura, his cousin, from Kenya. One day Sungura was running around the forest bragging about how fast he was, when he met Kobe the tortoise.

Kobe told Sungura to shut up and quit bragging, saying, "The only thing about you that runs fast is your mouth. You think you are so fast? Please. I have farted farts that moved faster than you, Sungura."

"Oh, really?" Said Sungura.

"Look," said Kobe. Then he paused for a while. Then he said, "Did you see that? Of course you didn't. I just farted. And the fart went from my bum and ran away before you could even smell it."

Honestly, a cunning animal like Sungura should have seen what was going on. This is exactly what hares do. They start by mocking you, then teasing you, then

making you angry, and when you are all worked up and not thinking clearly, that is when they bring in the trick.

“Look. My fart was so fast, you didn’t even smell it. You want another one? There it goes. Two farts. Both of them faster than your nose. Sungura, you need training to even catch up with my farts, you slow, slow, slowness of slow.”

By this time Sungura was really mad. How dare a tortoise, of all animals, call him slow? Everyone knows that tortoises were the slowest animals in the whole forest. So when the tortoise challenged him to a race, Sungura immediately accepted.

Are you sure you have never heard this story? It is such a common story. Anyway, let me continue telling it.

What Kobe did was, he called all his family, that is his wife, his brother, his cousin, and his dad and told them about his plan.

“Look guys, I just challenged Sungura to a race,” he said.

“I am not going to ask ‘Are you crazy?’ because obviously you are. Sungura is one of the fastest animals in the forest, and you, my husband, you are the slowest slow thing that ever slowed down a slope. The only race you can win is a race to see who loses the most.”

“Wife, honey, darling, shut up and let me finish,” said Kobe to his beloved wife. “I was still explaining.”

“Hi dad,” greeted Kobe Jr who was also there, because he was too slow to go out and hang out with his friends. Every time he set out to go play with them, he was so slow, that by the time he got outside, the game was finished, so he just hung around the house instead.

“Listen guys, I have a plan. Remember, I may not be fast, but I am wise.”

This was his plan. He would be at the bush where the race was to start. The porcupine, who was usually the referee when there were forest sports, would

start the race and Sungura would dash off immediately. That is when Kobe would just creep into this shell and take a nap.

Round the first corner, Mrs Kobe would be waiting, She would be wearing a hat just like Kobe's and would have painted lines over her eyes so that she looked just like her husband. When Sungura saw her he would think it was Kobe himself ahead of him.



“Can I taunt and tease him a bit?” Mrs Kobe eagerly asked.

“Oh please do.”

“Great. I will say, ‘Dude! What is taking you so long? Are you trying to race me or bore me?’”

“Yeah. You do exactly that. Then when he overtakes you, just take a nap. When he reaches the next corner he will find Junior. Junior, you will also be wearing my hat and you will have my eye lines so you look just like me,” said Kobe.

“And I will say something like, ‘I can’t believe how slow you are. I actually stopped here and took a nap while waiting for you to reach this corner. In fact, let me take another one. I’m sure I will still get to the finish line before you.’”

“Perfect!” said Kobe. He leaned over to give his son a high five. This took about a minute, because, well, they are tortoises. During that minute, Kobe’s father figured out the rest of the plan.

“So I will be waiting at the finish line and when Sungura gets there, I will pretend to be you, I will mock him for being so slow and tell him I’m tired of wasting my time with such slow hares.”

The plan went off without a hitch. And it was weeks and weeks and weeks before Sungura found out how he had been tricked.

One day he was rooting through the bush near the place the race had started and he found the hats the tortoise family had used to disguise themselves.

He tried to tell the other animals that he had proof that the tortoise had cheated but they wouldn’t listen. As far as they know, big-headed Sungura and all his bragging had lost a race to a tortoise, and that was what they were sticking with.

There was one other race between a hare and a tortoise. This time it was Kalulu the hare and Kamba the tortoise in Zambia.

Again, the tortoise decided to trick the hare into a race.

The tortoise challenged Kalulu to see who can get home the fastest.

The tortoise had a plan. He knew what he was going to do. He was going to start the race a long distance from Kalulu’s home, then, when the race began, and Kalulu had to run several hundred metres to his burrow, Kamba would not have to run a single step. He would just retract his legs and neck into his shell and say that he had already reached home.

And therefore he was the winner.

What he didn’t know was that Kalulu was also planning to trick him.

So the porcupine, who was the referee, said, "Ready, set, GO!"

The tortoise began to pull his legs into his shell. He pulled in one leg. Then pulled in another leg. He was beginning to pull in the third when he heard a voice above him say, "I win!"

He craned his neck upwards and saw what it was. Kalulu was sitting on the top of tortoise's shell, smiling broadly, very proud of himself.

"I reached home first!" Kalulu grinned.

"What? Your home is that way!" Kamba the tortoise complained.

"You said the winner is the one who reaches home first. You didn't say which home! So I raced to your home and I got here first! I win! I want to thank my mother, I want to thank the fans, I want to thank all the hares in Africa, your support means everything to me!"

Now Wakayima stood at the starting line of the running track at the school sports ground with Roger.

"Okay. Roger. The first thing you are going to do is run to the end," said Wakayima.

"But Wakzi, you know I don't know how to run. That is the whole reason I am here," said Roger.



“First of all, since I am your teacher now, you will not call me Wakzi, you will call me Coach Sah! Say it!”

“I can’t run, Coach Sah!” said Roger dutifully.

“Then make yourself go the way you usually do— just throwing your legs and arms in all directions without any plan. I want you to do that all the way to the other end.”

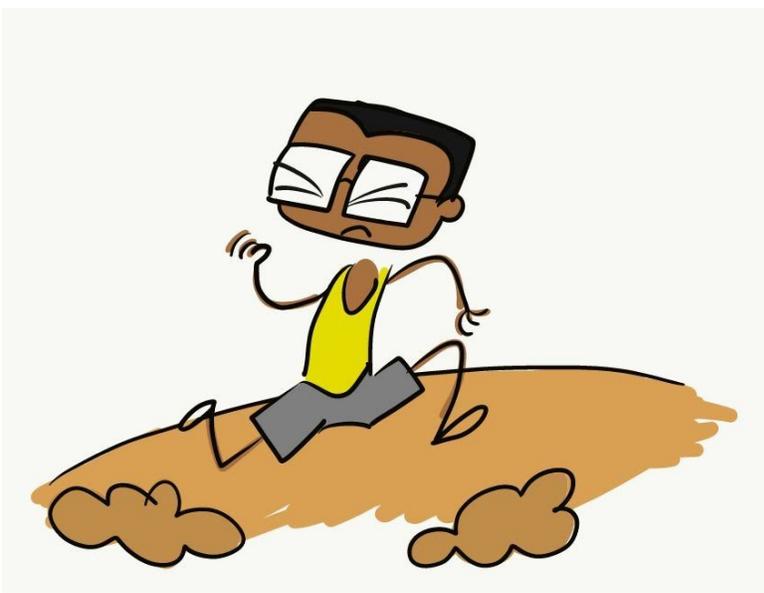
“But why, Wakzi... I mean, why, Coach Sah?” Roger began to ask but Wakayima shushed him.

“I am not that kind of teacher, Roger. You don’t ask me questions, okay? I am the one who asks the questions!”

“You mean you are a bad teacher?” Roger said.

“Is that a question? Roger. I said no questions! Now go! Swing your little legs in crazy patterns until you reach the other side of the track! Go!”

Roger sighed. He quickly understood that he had better just do as Wakayima said if he wanted to learn. He really wanted to be better at P.E.



So he began to do what he thought was running. It was really funny to watch. He slapped the ground very hard with his feet and swung his hands up and down, and threw his legs back and forth and he sweated and he panted and he kicked up a lot of dust but, for all the energy he was using, he moved very very slowly.

By the time he reached the end of the track, Wakayima was already waiting for him, sitting at the finish line with a box of mango juice in his hand, sipping it through a straw.

“I am going to say ‘not bad’ because it was not bad. It was worse than bad. It was terrible,”

“You are a terrible teacher,” panted Roger. “And that was not a question.”

“You think I’m a terrible teacher? I haven’t even begun teaching you yet. I just told you to do that because I want you to remember the last time in your life, Roger, the last time in your life, that you will ever do a 100 metres race in such a lousy fashion. From now on, you are going to be as fast, as sleek, as sure as the fastest animal in the world...”

“A cheetah?” Roger smiled expectantly. “You mean a cheetah?”

Wakayima sneered. "Cheetah? Cheetah, my foot. Cheetahs think they are so cool, but have you ever seen a Cheetah catch a hare? I didn't think so."

Roger had never actually ever seen a cheetah. Every time his family would go to the national park they would see elephants and giraffes, and once they saw a lion, but never a cheetah.

Wakayima did his nose and tooth snort thing. "Humph! Cheetahs aren't even fast enough to make it to the national park in time," he said. "No, Roger. I am going to teach you how to run like... a hare!"

The next couple of hours were spent with Wakayima shouting orders at Roger, while Roger strained and struggled to keep up. "Kick the ground away! Don't slap it down, kick it away! As if you don't like it. As if you hate it! Kick it backwards like, 'Go away, ground!'" shouted Wakayima while Roger puffed and panted up and down the track.

"Don't fall forward, throw yourself. Throw yourself. We are not here to learn to run like a sack of potatoes, we are here to learn to run like a hare. Throw yourself forward! Like that! Good! Throoooooww yourself! Nice,"

Wakayima was pleased to see the progress they were making. Roger was not as pleased, because he was out of breath and tired and his feet hurt, but Wakayima would not let him stop.

Until finally he said, "Okay, I want you to rest."

Roger was so relieved that he just dropped onto the grass like a stone.

Then, a second later Wakayima said, "Okay. That's enough rest. Get up! To the starting line, now! I want you in the starting position. Oh, I can see that your mouth is trying to take a funny shape as if you want to say something. It had better be 'Yes Coach Sah!' otherwise don't say it."

Roger was going to say something else, of course, but he looked at Wakayima's face and decided against it. Instead he just said, "Yes Coach Sah!" and dragged himself to the starting line.

“Are you ready?” Wakayima asked.

“Um, Wakzi, I mean Coach Sah, why is there a small yellow bird next to you?”

“First of all, what did I say about who asks the questions around here? Secondly, it’s my friend, the weaverbird. I don’t have a whistle so he is going to tell you to start. Okay?”

Roger of course wanted to ask how a weaverbird becomes your “friend” but the rules about who asks questions had already been laid down. And besides, he did not have enough breath to spare. So he just squatted in the race-starting position and listened.

Wakayima said, “Ready... steady....”

And then the weaverbird went, “Kwwwwweeeeeee!”

That must have meant Go, so Roger took off.



He was surprised by how fast he was going. He was running! His legs did exactly what Wakayima had taught him, they were kicking the ground away behind him. He was almost flying forward. He had never felt this fast before. It was a wonderful feeling! He ran and ran and ran! He could not believe how much speed he had. It felt like just an instant when he found himself at the finish line!

Roger was so excited. He had never been this tired, but he had also never been this excited. He could not believe how fast he had moved. He looked back to the starting line to see if Wakayima was there. No, he wasn't.

A sound shocked him and he turned round. Wakayima was already at the finish line. How had he got there before Roger?

"That was good, right?" Wakayima said.

Before Roger could answer, the little weaverbird said, “Not bad.” Then it looked at Roger and said, “Oops. I mean, kweeeh!” And it flew away.

“Did that bird just speak?” Roger began to ask.

“What? Naaah. You have just been running too much. You are imagining things. But congratulations. You ran 100 metres in the fastest time I have ever seen you run. You know, next time we have PE, you might even beat Rukia.”

The adventures of the cheeky, cunning hare that sneaks into the human school continue with a fresh story each week. Thanks to the Kuonyesha Art Fund for supporting this!