

WAKAYIMA OF TROPICAL HILLS ACADEMY Episode 9

# WAKAYIMA MEETS THE EXTERMINATOR

By Ernest Bazanye

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The next school day was total chaos. The way the gang had run after Rukia screaming “Ayi Bambe” the day before? It was like that, but several times worse, because this time it was parents in the corridor of the staffroom shouting at the tops of their voices.

“How can you have rats in the school?”

“They will eat our children! I know rats these days eat children!”

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“Why did you bring rats to our children’s school?”

“Is this what we pay fees for?”

All of these things were being shouted loudly, angrily, and all at once. It was only when Mr Pampers got into the corridor that things slowed down.

“Everybody please calm down,” he said.

And, yes, everybody calmed down. Remember when I told you that Mr Pampers voice was so soft and smooth and soothing that it often made students go to sleep? Well, it was also so soothing that it could make a mob of panicking parents calm down for a moment and listen.

“First of all, I assure you nobody pays fees for rats,” Mr Pampers began. “What you pay fees for is for us to look after your children as well as educate them. What you pay for is their education, their safety, and their protection.”

Mr Pampers voice was so calming that even when he was telling people whether rats will eat their children, everybody still listened quietly. Oblong’s mom even had to pinch her husband because he was beginning to look a bit drowsy.

“That is why we have brought in a special exterminator. The top exterminator in town. He is going to arrive any minute now, and I can assure you that he will thoroughly deal with the problem,” Mr Pampers finished speaking.

If it was Mr Kafuddu or any of the other teachers, this would not have ended as calmly, but with Mr Pampers, all the parents were quiet and calm, like babies who had just been fed and cleaned.

Wakayima and Roger had been standing at the other end of the corridor, near enough to hear the whole thing.

“Parents are crazy,” said Wakayima.

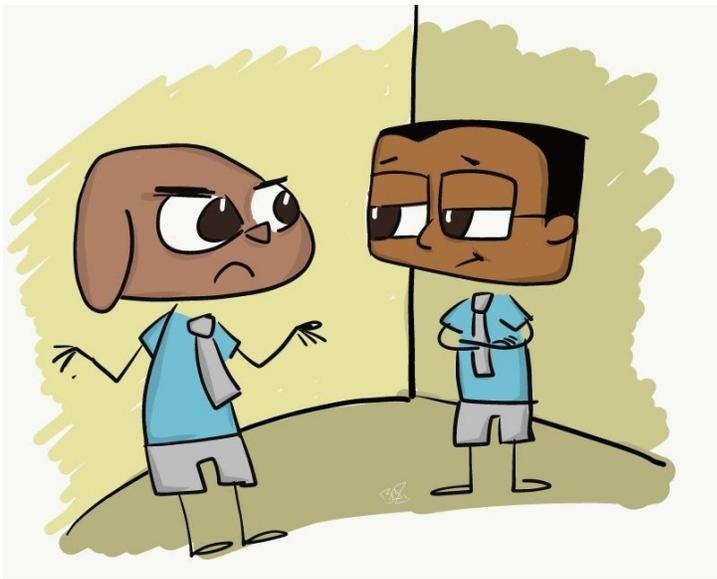
Roger had nothing to do but agree with him.

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“Natalia’s mum especially,” said Roger. “I can’t see properly, but I think that is a stick in her handbag. I think she wanted to kill the rat herself.”

“By the way, it isn’t a rat, it’s a mouse,” said Wakayima.

Roger looked at him. “How do you know?” he asked.



Oops. Wakayima knew he had to learn to be more careful otherwise he would blow his cover one of these days. But he thought quickly. He knew what to do whenever Roger asked him a question that almost made him reveal his identity. He would get defensive.

“Uh... because I pay attention in biology class? Hello! Maybe you should try it sometime? Like, learn something? I don’t know, a

little bit of paying attention in class? Then you won’t have to ask me all these questions as if you are a little exam paper standing here asking me all these questions?”

“My guy, gwe! You!” Roger suddenly hissed, and pulled Wakayima aside. “Look at that!”

They both turned to look up the corridor.

The exterminator could not have looked more like the word “exterminator” if he tried. And it looked as if he had tried very hard.

He was quite tall and he had broad shoulders and big muscles, which you could see all over him. Even in his face. If you have never seen a muscular face, I don’t know how to describe it for you. Just imagine it. Close your eyes for a moment

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and imagine a face. Now imagine it flexing muscles. Okay. Open your eyes. Whatever you imagined, I bet it's right. I really don't think you can imagine this sort of thing wrong.



He wore a pair of sunglasses even indoors, inside the school, and a leather jacket which had zippers not only in the middle where zippers should be, but also on the sleeves, over the pockets, and at at least four places where you really don't need any zips on your jacket.

He also had a pair of big thick black gumboots.

“Did they accidentally order the Terminator instead of the exterminator?” Roger asked.

The exterminator dropped the bag and looked around, then declared, “I am the Exterminator. Where is it?”

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Mr Pampers led the way to the cupboard and the exterminator followed. He, in turn, was followed by the parents. They were followed by Roger and Wakayima who could not miss this show. And behind them, a line of other students.

The exterminator reached the door of the store. He stopped. He took off his sunglasses so that he could see it clearly. Then he put them back on so that he could look cool again when he turned to face the mob behind him.

“I am going to need everybody to step back,” he said in a very serious voice. “This is an intense operation.”

“It’s just a rat,” lolled one parent. “You are talking as if you are going to hunt an elephant.”

Wakayima looked at the parent and wondered why he was laughing. Elephants are easy to hunt, compared to rats, he thought sadly, remembering all his elephant friends who had been hunted by poachers just for their tusks. Elephants were such kind and gentle creatures that there was no reason for anyone to hurt an elephant. Even the predators, like the lions and leopards, never bothered the elephants. Not only were they so big that, really, what was a lion going to do with all that meat? But also because even lions and leopards liked elephants. But then up came the human hunters. Wakayima shook his head sadly.

Rats and mice, however, were hard to hunt, because they were small and fast and that meant they could run and hide very quickly. Wakayima looked at the tall, towering Terminator-looking exterminator and knew he was in for a tough job.

Everybody moved back as the exterminator dropped his bag. He took out a motorcycle helmet and pulled on a pair of gloves. Then he got a thick garment out of the bag and put it on his chest.

“What is that for?” asked Wakayima.

“I’ve seen them on TV shows,” said Roger. “Oh, and also the time there was a strike at Saint Stalin SSS, the high school over the hill. The police came out wearing the same things. It’s a bulletproof vest.”

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“I know what it is,” said Wakayima. “I mean, what is it for? Does he think the mouse has a gun?”

Roger sighed. “But Wakzi, you are always asking questions about humans. How am I supposed to know what you know and what you don’t know?”

The exterminator put on a helmet and closed the visor over his sunglasses and did something that made a click sound with his gun-like exterminating stick. Then he proceeded to make a series of kung fu like stances for a few seconds, after which he shouted, “Aaaa! Hasta La Vista, RAT!” and he kicked the store door open and dived in.

The parents oohed and aahed and gasped. Mr Pampers looked upset because he was holding the keys to the cupboard. “Why didn’t he just unlock the door?,” he moaned softly. “Now we have to get a carpenter to fix the door.”

The parent who had asked whether they pay fees for rats raised his hand, but Mr Pampers, just waved him down. “Yes, sir. We have a maintenance budget. So, to answer your question, yes, you pay fees for fixing doors, too.”

Before the parent could begin to quarrel, though, everyone's attention was grabbed by the sound of bashing and crashing and yelling coming from the inside of the cupboard! There was a lot of yelling as well and something that kept going “pwiip! Pwiipp!” then something went “Shwwwaaah! Shwaaaah!” Then the exterminator yelled again, “Mese ggwe tojakumpona! Leero lwe lunaku lwo!” Then another crash, another “Shwaaaaa!” and a few more “Pwiiips!” Some of the students were getting scared. Rukia had already separated from the group of students and was hugging her mother in the group of parents.

Finally, the exterminator came out of the cupboard. He was covered head to toe in bread crumbs, coffee, sugar, tea leaves and what smelled like margarine. Behind him the store was wrecked. The shelves were all broken and the the cupboards had fallen apart. There were holes and gashes in everything. The exterminator was holding a bat with a skull painted on its side. He paused to turn

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around, raise his rat gun and fire one more time into the store. It went “Pwiiip!” as a little round pellet shot out of its barrel. And then he turned back to the mob.

“Mission accomplished,” he said to Mr Pampers. “Send my money to my account.”

“But you have jestroyed everyfing in the whole store!” said Mr Kafuddu, who was among the teachers watching the spectacle.

“Exactly. If there was any rat in there, it would be destroyed as well. Don’t forget the account number. I will Whatsapp it to you just in case.”

Then he walked away, down the corridor, the crowd separating to let him pass. He only stopped at the door at the other end to say, “And if you ever have any other animal problem...” he adjusted his sunglasses, “I’ll be back.”

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So, you are wondering what happened to the mouse and his wife and whatever other friends and family members he had living with him in the store (because, let me tell you a secret: I don’t mean to scare you, but there is no such thing as just one mouse in a place. There is such a thing as only seeing one mouse at a time. But if you see one mouse, that means there are at least half a dozen hiding out of sight.)

So, you are wondering if the exterminator destroyed them all? Well, Mr Kafuddu was wondering the same thing, because after the exterminator had left, and the parents had all moved on to the school hall to complain about other things because, as they figured, since they were at the school anyway, they might as well harass — I mean, talk to the teachers about stuff like why their kid keeps coming home with dirty socks, or who is in charge of getting internet into the school because in the 21st century schools should have internet, and if the school is going to teach Kiswahili or Chinese. You think teachers have a lot of questions to ask students? You should see how many questions parents have to ask teachers.

But Mr Kafuddu was a science teacher. That means he was interested in evidence. Unlike the other teachers, and the parents, who just saw a destroyed room and

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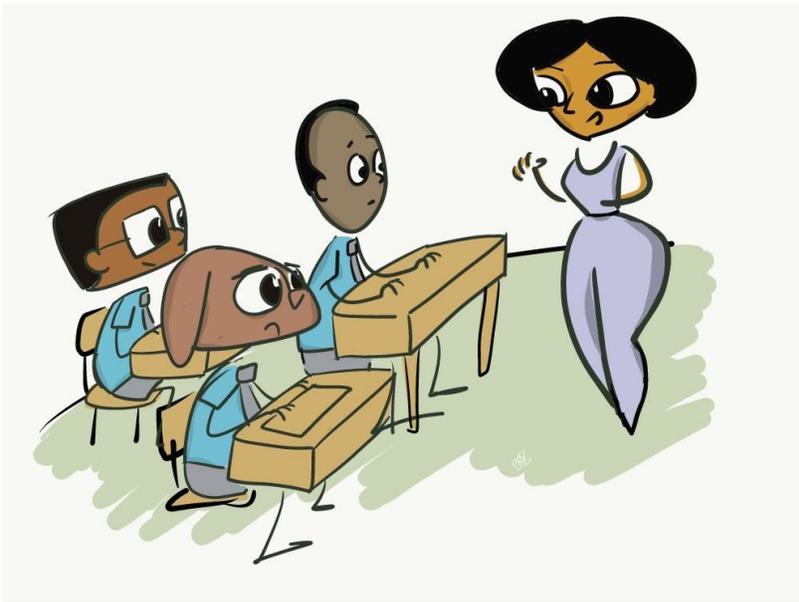
assumed there were dead rats somewhere inside it, Mr Kafuddu wanted to see proof. That is to say, he wanted to see the dead rats.

He spent an hour and a half going through the store, checking through the wrecked cupboards and the upturned boxes, and the spilled sugar and the shattered shelves looking, and then he stood up and said, “Hmmmmm. Jich is inchweshting. Hmmm.”

Because after all that searching he did not find a single whisker, tail, or tooth, let alone a full body of a single dead rat.

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Much later in the day, school was out and the students had gone home. No one had learned anything. You can't pay attention in class the day a guy who looks like the Terminator has just wrecked a room in your corridor. And as for the teachers, they couldn't teach either because of the same reason. They couldn't pay attention to teaching the day a guy who looks like the Terminator has just wrecked a room next to your staff room.



In fact Teacher Murungi did not even bother trying to have her lesson. She said to the class, “Okay, kids, we were supposed to do composition today, and I was supposed to ask you to write a story about safety at home, but let's be honest. You people,

did you see that guy?” She clapped her hands and put them on her hips, “I mean, did you see that man?”

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“Teacher Murungi, let me tell you!” said Kwezi, “I thought he was going to come out boxing the rats!”

“I know, right?” said Teacher Murungi. “He looked like Golola Moses. I thought we would see rats flying out of the doors!”

“Like in Tom and Jerry!” said Natalia.

“What is Tom and Jerry?” Oblong asked.

“You don’t know Tom and Jerry? My guy! You need to come to my house on the weekend and we watch Tom and Jerry on our TV!”

“Can I come, too?” asked another student. And another. And another. Next thing you know, all the students who either didn’t have TVs at home or didn’t have TVs which showed the cartoon called Tom and Jerry, were asking to come to Natalia’s house.

Teacher Murungi smiled. “I don’t think Natalia’s parents would be ready to have half the class in their house watching their TV, guys. But I’ll tell you what. I’ll ask the headmaster if we can have the school TV in here and I will show you a Tom and Jerry cartoon, right here... *if...*”

And the class listened very closely.

“... If seventy percent of you pass my next assignment, which is composition. I want a descriptive composition about,” then she turned and wrote it on the board, “The Day The Exterminator Came To School”.

While she wrote that on the board, Wakayima hissed at Roger. Roger looked at his friend, “You are not going to try and trick me into doing your composition for you, Wakzi. You know that trick doesn’t work anymore.”

Actually, Wakzi was going to ask Roger what a TV was. Then he thought about it and realised that if he did that, Roger would give him that look he gets when he begins to suspect that Wakayima is an alien because he doesn’t know so many human things.

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So instead Wakayima said, "Is it okay if we write that it was a mouse and not a rat? Because it was a mouse, not a rat."

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That evening, after school was out and everyone had gone home, Wakayima, squished his nose back into shape, pulled his ears back up, fluffed his fur back out, took off his uniform and, with his disguise removed, hopped round to the little thicket of trees and bush behind the school.

Once he got there, he made his trademark hare "Humphth" sound.

"Squeak" came the response from underneath a bush. A head peeped out from under a leaf.

"Told you I'd take care of it," Wakayima said.

"You look different," said the mouse.

"Not really. I look the same. I looked different yesterday," Wakayima explained.

"That is how disguises work. This is my normal look."

The mouse walked around him and looked up, "I'm very impressed. I wish I could do that."

"Sorry. It's one of those things only wild animals can do," Wakayima grinned to himself, feeling smug and satisfied. "You wouldn't understand."

The mouse didn't even argue. It was a fair shot. After all, the hare had just saved his life, and that of his family. "Missez Kamese! Come out and meet the hare who warned me about the exterminator. Bring the kids. Kids say thank you Uncle Hare. One, to three, go!"

And they all squeaked, "Thank you, Uncle Hare," at the same time, which was rather shrill and hurt his ears a bit because there were very many kids. Mice don't have twins or triplets. Typically a Mrs Mouse will have twentlets. That is not a word in human languages, but it is a common word in mouse language. The

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twenty little mice squeaked their appreciation to Wakayima. He pretended to act humble, but yeah, right. We know he was enjoying it.

After the kids had gone back, the mouse, Mr Kamese himself, turned back to Wakayima, “So, did you bring the stuff?”

Here Wakayima got his bag and took out some of the stuff in it. First of all, his uniform, which he had stashed in there once he took it off, then he pulled out a few packages. “The exterminator made quite a mess but I managed to get this stuff out of the store. So here you go. Some sugar. A couple of buns. I don’t know if you guys eat coffee, but I got some coffee as well, and I don’t know what this is, but here you go.”



“Oh that? That’s toilet paper,” said Mr Kamese. “It tastes terrible. I don’t know why the humans always have it in their store.”

“Well, there you go. Enjoy your stuff. Now I’m off. Got to get back to my home in the forest,” said Wakayima, preparing to hop off. “But don’t forget our part of the deal.”

“You didn’t say what our part of the deal was, though. You just said I will owe you a favour,” said the mouse.

“And you will. Very soon.” And off hopped Wakayima.

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*Now Wakayima has made a new animal friend in the school. What are they going to get up to next? Look out for the next story and find out! The adventures of the*

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*cheeky, cunning hare that sneaks into the human school continue with a fresh story each week.  
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