

# WAKAYIMA THE KING OF NOTHING

By Ernest Bazanye

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In spite of Wakayima’s wonderful feat, jumping across the corridor, and in spite of him declaring himself King of the Corridor, Natalia was still not going to allow anyone to walk along the freshly mopped floor until it dried, even though Wakayima tried to insist that since he was king he should be able to order his people, that is, the other kids, to follow him to the staffroom and ask the teachers to let them eat during Biology class.

“But I am the king. What kind of king is this who nobody obeys?” Wakayima argued.

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“If anyone steps on this corridor, they are going to mop it afresh,” said Natalia, “I am not joking.

“But I am the king! The king has made an order!” Wakayima tried to insist.

“Yeah, a king can make as many orders as he wishes, your highness,” said Natalia. “Perhaps you might try ordering your subjects to jump like you so none of them leaves any footprints on my floor. Can you do that?”

“OKay. Subjects, I King Wakayima, hereby order you to jump over the floor and we go to the staffroom!” he said.

The gang looked at each other. They all wore puzzled looks.

“How did he jump like that?” Kwezi asked. “That was like-- I want to say seven feet, but I am not sure how long a foot is. Either way, it was a long distance. I am not sure I can jump that far.”

“Well, if he can do it, so can I,” said Rukia, never one to back down from a challenge.

“Rukzi, wait. Before you do this, you should know something about Wakzi. He is crazy.”

“Oh, we all know that,” said Oblong, Akello, and Kwezi at the same time.

“What do you mean, I am crazy?” sneered Wakayima. “It’s you humans who are crazy.”

“See?” said Roger. “He is always saying that. And I don’t understand why.”

“Well, he may be crazy in the brain, but he jumped with his legs. Are his legs crazy as well?” Rukia asked.

Roger thought about it. He looked at Wakayima’s legs. Then he said, “Probably.”

“Everybody stand back!” Rukia shouted. “I’m going for it.”

“If she is going to do it, I’m also going to try it!” said Oblong.

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“We goooo, we gooo!” chanted Kwezi.

And before Natalia could stamp her mop and say “stay off my floor,” the three kids had leapt into the air.

Of course they only managed to cover a short distance before they all landed in a heap in the middle of the corridor, which, to their dismay, they found was still slippery and wet. They all fell down upon each other and screamed.

Natalia shook her head and rolled her eyes as they picked themselves up and tried to wipe off the parts where the damp floor had made their uniforms wet.

“You know what this means,” she said, handing the mop to Rukia. “And all the footprints have to be gone before Mr Kafuddu comes to check.”

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Wakayima was not part of the mopping, of course. He hadn’t made the floor dirty, because his feet had not touched it. And besides, he was still the king.

He had to agree, though, as he watched Kwezi, Oblong and Rukia mop, that this was very king-like behaviour. It was exactly the same in the forest, where the king of the jungle was the lion.

No one could tell you how the lion became the king of the jungle. Mostly because no one cared. It wasn’t as if he could tell anyone what to do or give orders. If he could he would not need to hunt. He would just say, “Antelope, come here. I want you for dinner tonight.” And the antelope would spend the day saying goodbye to his friends in the herd saying things like, “Sorry guys, I won’t be able to graze with you tomorrow. I’m being eaten tonight. The king ordered it.”

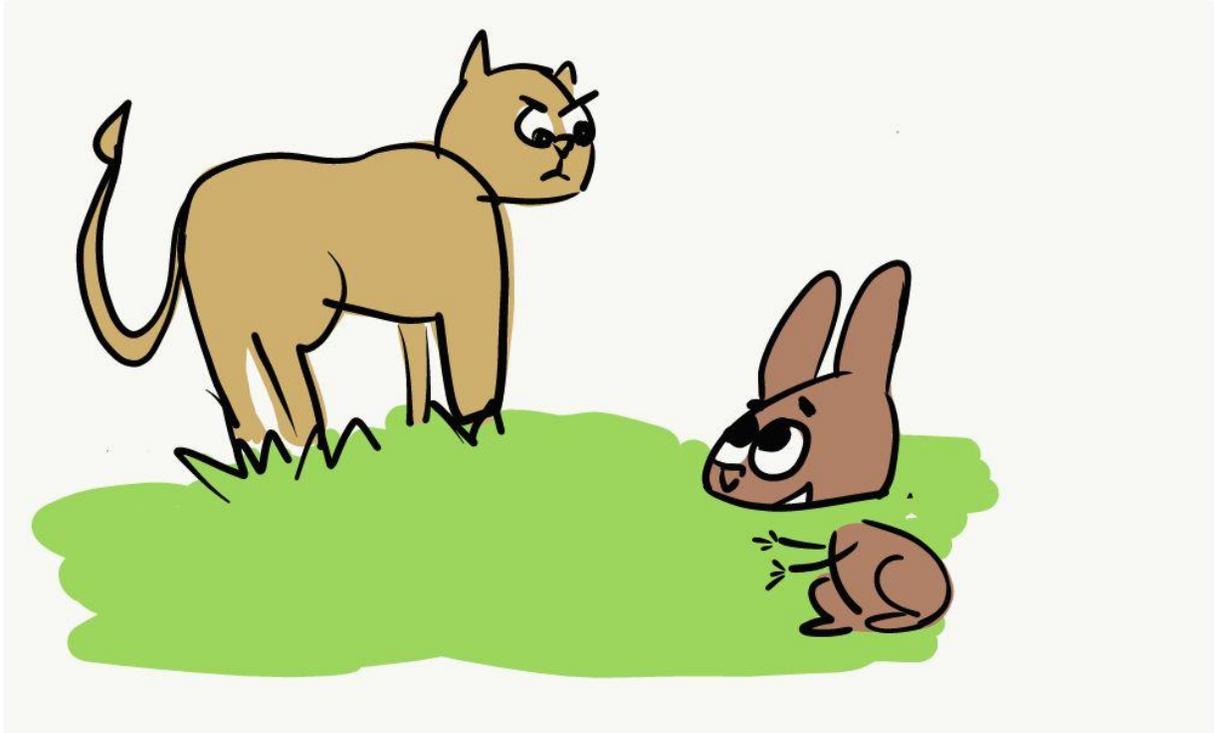
But as it was, this so-called King of The Jungle, when he was hungry, had to stalk his prey, then, when they smelled him, he had to chase them, all the while roaring, “Come back here! Stop running! I have to eat you! Stop being so stubborn!”

That is why the lioness did most of the hunting. Lionesses didn’t have big ideas about being kings or queens. They crept quietly up to the prey, as stealthily as

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possible, always making sure the wind was blowing their scent behind them so that when they pounced it was too late for the antelopes, gazelles, or whatever other animal it was.



One day Wakayima asked a lioness, “So, tell me, if your husband is the king, why do you have to sneak around hunting for food like everyone else? I mean, even the frog does that. He creeps around hunting insects. And he is barely royal. Imagine a frog trying to be a king.”

The lioness gave the hare a look similar to the ones Mr Kafuddu had been giving Wakayima that day in school. Then she said, “Hare, I don’t have the time to answer your silly questions. If you want to know, go ask Wampologoma himself. He is at home asleep as usual, waiting for me to do all the work and bring food home.”

Wakayima thought about it and came to his own conclusion. Kings could say they were kings, and they could give orders, but this doesn’t mean anyone had to obey them.

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The next day, just before Biology class, Wakayima walked up to the front of the classroom and climbed on top of the teacher's table.

"Attention everybody, attention!" he demanded loudly.

"What are you doing up there, my guy? If Teacher Kafuddu catches you on his table..." Roger warned.

"I am still king and I have to make a king's announcement. If you all shut up and listen, I will be done before the teacher arrives. Now everybody shut up and listen!"

As always happened, especially in the forest with the lion, when a king says, "Shut up and listen," everyone begins talking. The whole class was saying things like:

"You say he jumped the whole corridor?"

"Who made him king?"

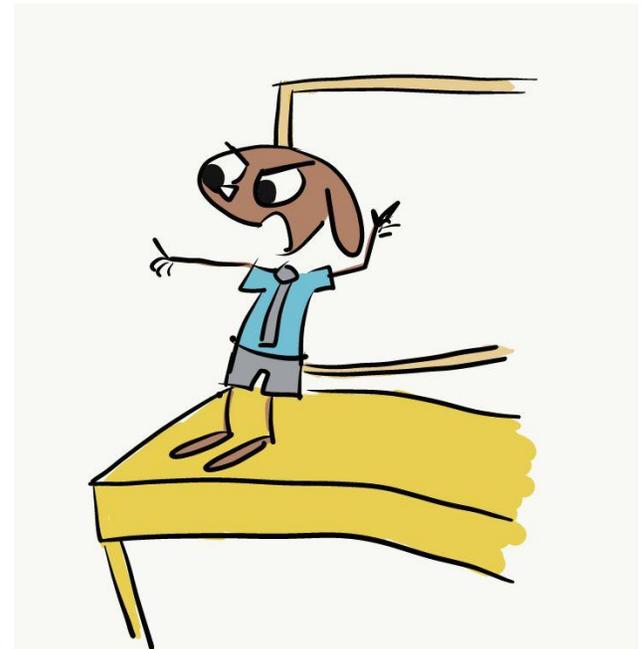
"These guys had a race yesterday and the winner was king, I hear."

"Mbu king. I wasn't in that race, so he's not my king."

"I want Teacher Kafuddu to find him. I will laugh so hard!"

Wakayima decided to just talk over everyone. "Listen. I am going to tell Mr Kafuddu that we, as the students, want permission to eat during Biology class!"

Now, this got everyone's attention. The only mumbling was everyone asking, "What?" and then silence as they waited for the answer.



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“In Biology we are taught about nutrition. We are taught that we should eat proteins and carbohydrates and vitamins and minerals. But when one of us tries to eat anything in class, we are punished. So I, as king...”

“My guy, you are king of like five kids. You are not king of the rest of us,” said Benedicto.

“Whatever. I’m still king of something. And as king of that, I am going to represent the students’ body and ask that we not only have permission to eat in class, but that the school gives us some of those doughnuts they keep in the staffroom cupboard,” Wakayima finished.

“How do you know what is in the staff cupboard?” asked Roger.

“Kamese told me,” Wakayima replied. Indeed, Kamese and Wakayima often feasted on the teachers’ doughnuts after school closed, before Wakayima returned to the forest.

“DJ Kamese, the choirmaster?” asked Sheba.

“Umm... Yeah! That’s right! The choirmaster,” said Wakayima, suddenly realising that he had almost made a mistake of revealing his secret.

“Okay king, your majesty, you had better use your royal jumping powers to hop off the teacher’s desk, because I hear Mr Kafuddu arriving,” said Natalia.

The door of the class creaked a bit and Wakayima took off. By the time it was open and Mr Kafuddu walked in, Wakayima had already jumped all the way to his desk and was settling down with his biology book and pen.

“Good afchanoon, kiyass,” greeted Mr Kafuddu. “Today’s yesson is going to be about...”

Before he could finish Wakayima’s hand shot into the air. “Mr Kafuddu sir, may I, on behalf of the student body, speaking as a student with leadership qualities, may I suggest something?”

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Mr Kafuddu looked squarely at Wakayima. “Are you going to suggest a reason as to why your footprints are on my desk, Wakayima?”

“Nooooo,” said Wakayima. “Who said those are my footprints? I don’t remember saying those are my footprints.”

“Nevertheless, jey are,” said Mr Kafuddu. “Wakayima, you are usually a kiyever schudent. How come in this case you have failed to see the obvious evidence? You have the biggest feet of anyone in this class, and jey are alcho the dirtiest. Jey are always muddy, as if you came to school from the bush or the forest.” Mr Kafuddu paused. “Come and clean my desk first, then you may make your suggestion as a natural leader. Let us first see you as a natural cleaner.”

Wakayima looked at his feet. Yes, they were quite large. When he disguised himself, he always forgot to shrink his feet. Nobody noticed how big they looked on a boy, so he never bothered to. Besides, they helped him run and jump, so he usually just left them as they would be in his hare form. Big strong hare feet.

“Mr Wakayima, we are watching. If you would stop admiring your feet and come clean my desk, we can then move on to your suggestion and then, perhaps, start our lesson,” said Mr Kafuddu.

Wakayima stood up on his big feet and gracefully walked over to the desk. Because he did not believe in wasting time, and because even though his feet were big, his head was bigger and so was his mouth, he continued to talk as he wiped the desk.

“Mr Kafuddu, we as the students appreciate the quality education you and your fellow teachers give to us. We are grateful to learn about topics such as, for example, nutrition and digestive system and how different food groups contribute to the development of our bodies. We would like to also extend a helping hand to the teachers by suggesting something ourselves. We have a way in which the lessons can really come alive and become more real to us.” Wakayima paused to scratch a particularly tough bit of dirt off the edge of the table.

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“Not jis again,” sighed Mr Kafuddu. “You want to ask for permission to eat food in Biology kiyass?”

Wakayima stopped suddenly. He looked up at Mr Kafuddu. For a moment he thought he recognised something in his eyes. But the teacher looked away quickly and turned to the whole class.

“Students, I do not disagree with the idea. Even though I know that your friend here is only saying it because he likes eating, not because he likes education, I agree that it would help. But school rules are school rules. No eating during kiyass is one of those rules. Now, Wakayima, thank you. You may take your seat. Today we are going to learn about photosynthesis. Who knows what that means?”

Roger put up his hand.

“Roger you are such a nerd. Why don’t you let someone else answer for once?” teased Natalia.

Wakayima chuckled, “Because no one else knows the answer.”

“That is not exactly true,” said Mr Kafuddu. “There is one other student who knows the answer.” And Mr Kafuddu pointed at Wakayima who by now had settled back at his seat.

Wakayima complained. “But teacher, I have cleaned the desk, why are you still punishing me?”

Mr Kafuddu smiled a smile mixed with mischief and in a strange way, kindness. “Asking a student to answer a question in kiyass is not a punishment, young man. I mean, young man. So, can you tell the class what photosynthesis is?”

Wakayima shrugged. “It is how plants eat,” he said. “Honestly that is all I know about it. Plants have a way of eating the light of the sun.”

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*What was Mr Kafuddu playing at? How did he know that Wakayima knew and what do they mean plants eat? The next story will have all the answers.*

*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](http://bazanye.com/wakayima) for the latest. Stay tuned!*