

WAKAYIMA FINDS OUT ABOUT MR KAFUDDU

By Ernest Bazanye

The class was noisy this morning. The teacher had not yet arrived and so everyone was talking and laughing, if not shouting and arguing. There was noise everywhere.

Wakayima was not happy about this. He wanted to think and concentrate on a way to deal with the latest question that was troubling him.

He really wanted to see how to help Wangiri. He didn't know why. It wasn't as if they were friends in the forest. In the forest, the hares didn't like the warthogs at all. And it wasn't as if they were friends in school. In school Wakzi didn't like Ngiri. Not since Ngiri bullied his friends.

But something about what he had discovered the night before had touched him. He had found out that Ngiri was actually the warthog Wangiri, sneaking in and out of the school just like him. Maybe he felt sympathy with a fellow animal struggling in the human world. If only he could think of a way for Ngiri to co-exist with the humans without all the silly bullying. But everyone was making so much noise he couldn't concentrate.



“Hey, you bunch of mad kids! Can you just shut up for a minute? Is this a classroom or is this a weaverbird tree?” Wakayima yelled at everybody.

No one paid any attention to him.

He jumped on to his desk and yelled again. “I said, shut up everybody!”

This time a few kids looked at him. Most of them turned right back to what they were doing, but Roger kept looking at Wakayima.

“Why?” asked Roger.

“Cos I said so,” Wakayima frowned. “And I am the king! I jumped over the corridor.”

Roger shook his head. "Wakzi, let go of that king nonsense. It was just playing. You are not really the king of anything. Get down off the desk."

"Well, this crazy mob of kids needs a king. Someone has to be in charge. Who will make them shut up when the rest of us need to think and concentrate?"

"Usually we have a class prefect," said Roger. "Our last prefect was a kid named Josiah, but he was expelled and since then we have not really got around to choosing a new class prefect."

Wakayima began to ask, "What is exp..."

But Roger was way ahead of him. "Expelled means removed from the school. He was caught with cigarettes. Imagine that! In Tropical Hills? No way! So he was kicked out. The teachers mean it when they say they have zero tolerance for drugs."

"So, this prefect is the actual king of the class, eh? He or she tells people to shut up and they have to listen?" Wakayima asked.

"Kind of, sort of, sometimes," Roger explained. "We don't always listen to the prefect, but at least a prefect has a better chance than you standing up there saying you are the king."

"Well, if a prefect can't even get you all to shut up then why would anyone want to be prefect in the first place?"

"There is the fact that the post comes with a special allowance. The prefects get extra credit on their report cards for leadership, they get to be first in line on school trips and they get special snacks from the staff room..."

"Special snacks from the staff room? Like doughnuts and soda?" Wakayima's face brightened.

"Now you are thinking of becoming prefect?" Roger guessed.

"I am thinking of becoming king prefect!" Wakayima grinned.

Wakayima walked down the corridor to the staffroom. It was very clean. He wondered who had been caught eating sweets this time. He knocked on the door and waited.

“Come in. You may encha!” said the unmistakable voice of Mr Kafuddu inside.

Wakayima entered to find that the room was empty except for Mr Kafuddu. None of the other teachers were there.

Mr Kafuddu saw the look of confusion on Wakayima’s face and decided to help explain things. “All ja ojer cheachers are in a chipecial chitaff meeting about paymenchs,” he said. “Jat is why jere is no one in kiyasses and you are all just making noish all over ja school.”

“How come you are not in the meeting?” Wakayima asked.

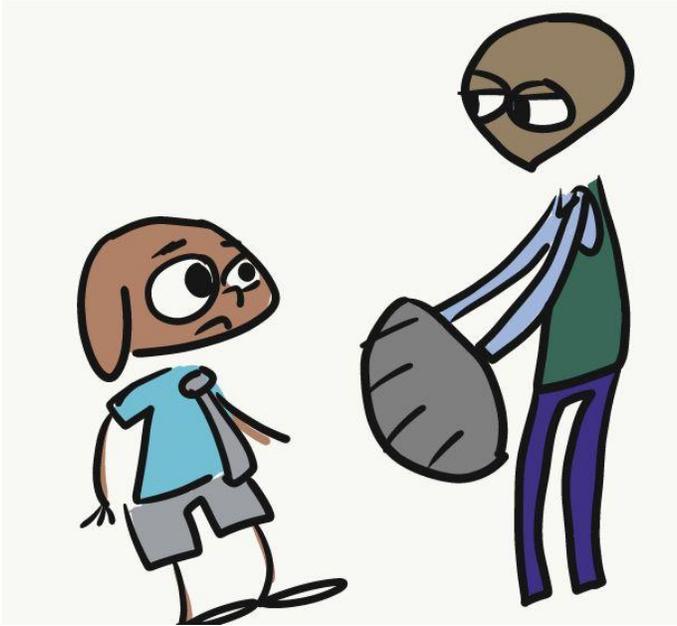
“Becauje, young Wakayima, I jonch get paymentchs. I am a voyuncheer,” replied Mr Kafuddu. “But thach is not whach brought you here. Whach can I help you wij, schudent?”

Wakayima gave himself a seat and said, “Mr Kafuddu, I just found out that my class has no prefect. So I am here to be made prefect of the class.”

Mr Kafuddu did two very strange things right then. First of all he laughed and laughed and laughed and laughed.

Then he went to the window and looked outside. As Wakayima stared at his back, he spoke. “Wakayima, to become prefect, a student has to have a high grade score and you don’t have a grade score at all. Ask me why.”

Instead of asking him why he didn’t have a grade score, Wakayima asked, “What has happened to your accent?”



Mr Kafuddu continued. “You have no grade score because we don’t mark your papers. I am in charge of your class and I know that marking your work is a waste of time. Wakayima, you are not here to learn, or pass exams. In fact I am surprised you even do homework at all. It's probably because of your friend Roger, but I am sure you either copy it or trick him into doing it for you, so I don’t bother marking it.”

Wakayima asked again, even more confused, “But what has happened to your accent?”

“You see, Wakayima,” Mr Kafuddu continued, “I figured out your secret. When I saw you and the mouse in the staffroom cupboard I finally understood what was going on.”

“Mr Kafuddu, I am getting very confused. Please tell me, please tell me what has happened to your accent before I go crazy,” Wakayima’s voice was almost trembling with shock.

That is when Mr Kafuddu shook his head a few times, twisted his hands and put his bag on the table. His hands were now a pair of paws. He tapped the bag and it became a shell. His face was instantly familiar. It was the tortoise!

“You are not the only animal who leaves the forest to come to this school, hare,” said Mr Kafuddu, speaking clearly now as the tortoise, Wanfuddu.

Wakayima was shocked in so many ways. His brain spun around.

Wanfuddu said, "As for the accent, it is because tortoises have beaks, not mouths like you hares and mice. When we transform into human form, it isn't easy to get the mouth right, and that means I can't say some words the same way,"

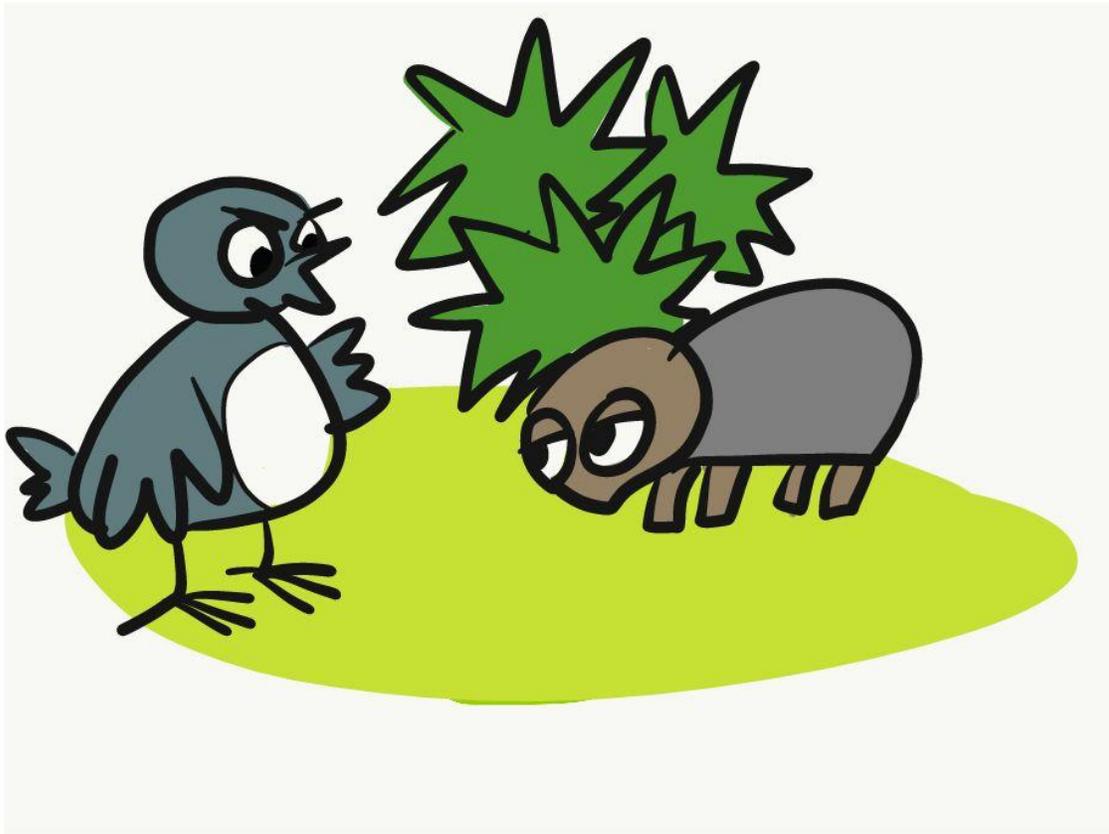
Wakayima gasped. "Mr Kafuddu, you were an animal all along!"

The tortoise smiled. Or if his face was still a human face, would have smiled. Instead he just did a tortoise expression of amusement, and he said, "And so were you."

"But why?" Wakayima was still confused even after the accent question had been settled, "Why do you leave the forest to come here? Is it for the staff snacks? The doughnuts are okay, I admit, but the rest of it is not that great."

The tortoise tried to explain. Tortoises are very wise. They know a lot of stuff about a lot of things. But other animals are not as wise. Sometimes less wise animals would come to the tortoise to ask for advice and he would always give it willingly. But the problem with good advice is that it is rarely followed.

There was a time, for example, when Wanfuddu was crawling along a forest path and he came upon a pigeon sadly plucking twigs out of a bush. Noticing her heavy mood, Wafuddu asked, "Why the sad face, Wanjiibwa?"



“Wanfuddu, I am fed up with the behaviour of some animals in this forest. Someone keeps stealing my eggs from my nest. I don’t know why, but last time I got back from my search for food, I found an egg missing. Some of these animals have no manners. You can’t leave your nest unattended without some thief showing up to take your eggs.”

Wanfuddu chewed slowly at a leaf from a nearby bush, then asked, “But you are here on the ground right now, not at your nest. What if the thief strikes again?”

“Oh, I have taken precautions,” said Wanjiibwa the pigeon. “A tree snake was nearby when I discovered the theft of my egg, and when she heard me complain she kindly offered to help me guard the nest while I was gone. At least some animals have manners.”

Wanfuddu continued to munch at his leaf. Then he asked again, "Are you sure that is a good idea?"

"Of course it is a good idea. Having someone keep an eye on the nest while I am gone is a great idea. Wanfuddu, you are supposed to be very wise. I am surprised you are not wise enough to recognise a great idea when you hear one."

"It's not that having someone keep an eye on the nest is a bad idea," said Wanfuddu. "The problem is that it is a tree snake. I don't think you should have a tree snake guarding your eggs."

The pigeon just huffed out her chest. Pigeons are very proud and arrogant and when they feel most arrogant they puff out their chests. Like now, Wanjiibwa puffed out her chest with very much arrogance, and sneered, "You are just jealous because I had a wise idea and it makes you envious when someone else is wise. Stop being a hater, Wanfuddu." Then she pecked a worm out of the ground and

flew off back to her tree.



The next day Wanfuddu met her on the same path again. It was a very good path for both worms and low-lying leaves, so both animals tended to go there for breakfast. This time Wanjiibwa looked angry.

“I take it the wise idea did not work,” said Wanfuddu. “I take it you found another egg missing.”

“Oh, it’s you, the jealous tortoise,” sneered Wanjiibwa. “Well, yeah. I got there and found another egg was missing. How did you know?”

“I told you, you shouldn’t let tree snakes guard your eggs,” said Wanfuddu.

“It was just a simple mistake in the otherwise great idea, okay?” puffed the pigeon. “When I asked the snake why the egg was missing when I told her to guard my nest, she said, ‘You told me to guard the nest. I guarded the nest very

well. Has anyone stolen the nest? No. The nest is still here. I don't know what happened to the eggs. I was watching the nest, not the eggs.' "

Wanfuddu just chewed his leaf.

"So this time I told her to guard the eggs as well," said Wanjiibwa. "This time she is guarding the eggs. Everything is fine. My idea was great."

Wanfuddu sighed. "Wanjiibwa, take my advice. Get someone else to guard your eggs. You should not have a tree snake guarding your eggs."

The pigeon just huffed her chest, grabbed a worm and flew off.

The next day they met again. And again, Wanfuddu asked, knowing the answer very well, if any more eggs were missing.

"Another egg was missing," complained Wanjiibwa. "I asked the snake, 'Didn't we agree that you were going to guard my eggs?' And the snake answered, 'I guarded the ones which are not missing. I guarded them very well. The one which was stolen is probably not among the ones you told me to guard. You didn't tell me to guard all of them. As you can see, I did a great job with the ones that are still here.' So don't look at me with that look. It was a wise idea. I just wasn't clear. This time I told her to guard all the eggs. There should be no problem. So stop being jealous, Wanfuddu."

Of course you know what had been going on. The tree snake who had been told to guard the eggs was the one stealing them. Tree snakes like eating birds' eggs very much, and Wanfuddu knew this. But the pigeon would not listen to the advice of the tortoise, even after they met again the next day and the tortoise correctly guessed that another egg had gone missing. But the proud pigeon just repeated the excuse the snake had given her.

The snake had said she was guarding them one at a time, and while she was guarding one, a thief must have come and taken the other one. The snake then suggested that Wanjiibwa let her bring her friends to help, so now there were three snakes in the tree guarding her remaining three eggs.

The next day when they met, Wanfuddu asked,“How many eggs do you have left, Wanjiibwa?”

And the pigeon sadly admitted that they were all gone.

Wanfuddu, or Mr Kafuddu the teacher said to Wakayima, “That is why I came here. At least in a good school people actually listen and pay attention to what you tell them. In the forest no one takes wise advice.”

How many animals are there coming from the forest to this school? What is going to happen next? You want to know? Come back here next time!

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!