



SUSPENDED FOR LAUGHING

BY HUGH MAY KAMEELAF

Royal Apricot Academy was the most elite and exclusive private high school in the region. It offered the most intensive, **comprehensive** and **cutting-edge** courses, its athletics program was the best in the country, and the teachers who taught there were considered leaders and innovators in their fields.

5 One of those teachers was Mr. Kachami, the strictest, meanest and most intelligent economics teacher in the province. His **temper** and **outbursts** had gotten him into trouble in the past; however he managed to **keep both in check** for well over a year. That was after the school principal, Mrs. Reihte, warned him again about his language in and out of class. She had made it clear
10 to Mr. Kachami that there would be consequences the next time he used inappropriate language. If it were any other teacher, the principal would have fired him long ago. The only reason Mrs. Reihte endured Mr. Kachami was because of his intelligence and abilities as a teacher. He was a pioneer in the world of economics and finance. Many students never understood why he
15 taught at Royal Apricot for as long as he did. He always said it was because of his love and appreciation of the teen spirit. Very few students believed that!

It was early January and the students, teachers and administration at Royal Apricot Academy had just returned from winter break.

“Good morning everybody,” began the familiar voice on the intercom. “I hope you all had an enjoyable and restful break. I’d like to take this opportunity to wish you all a very happy New Year and also to inform you that today I’ll be making my monthly rounds. I look forward to seeing you all in your classrooms shortly,” concluded Mrs. Reihite.

“Great, that’s all I need now: another interruption,” mumbled Mr. Kachami under his breath.

“So as I was saying,” he continued, at a normal volume, “the present economic situation in the western hemisphere does not allow for the expansion of NGOs and less profitable entities that—”

Bzzz bzzz!

Mr. Kachami glanced up at the ceiling and asked of no one in particular, “Is that a cellphone vibrating?”

Silence.

“Okay, I get it. No one will admit to it, of course,” he said, looking in Boris’ direction.

“Sir, I really don’t know why you’re looking at me. I am very familiar with our school’s policy on cellphones and the consequences that go with breaking that rule. I can assure you, Mr. Kachami, that

I in no way—” began Boris, before Mr. Kachami interrupted him.

“Calm down, Boris. Okay everybody, I will do something very uncharacteristic. I will take 30 seconds to erase this blackboard, with my back turned to the class. Perhaps the individual with the vibrating cellphone will be smart enough to turn it off in that time. You are, after all, smart enough to be in this school. Put that intelligence to good use,” concluded the teacher, again looking in Boris’ direction.

But it was Raphael who took out his smart phone while the teacher erased the board.

“What do you call an angry economics teacher who hates his job?” read the message on his screen. “Sender: Boris.”

In lightning speed, Raphael typed and sent “What?” to Boris.

Bzzz bzzz!

Mr. Kachami stopped mid-wipe and a few students saw his left eye twitch momentarily. He’d heard it. He simply chose not to acknowledge it. It was becoming apparent that the teacher was trying his best not to lose his cool. He resumed erasing, in a slower, more pronounced way, almost as if he were doing yoga. Whatever he was doing, it was working. He calmed down.

Raphael considered turning off his phone but chose to disable the vibrate mode instead. “What

Glossary

- comprehensive:** complete and thorough
- cutting-edge:** advanced
- temper:** anger
- outbursts:** vocal eruptions or explosions
- keep in check:** control
- mumbled:** said unclearly and angrily
- uncharacteristic:** not typical of
- twitch:** small muscle spasm
- acknowledge:** recognize
- resumed:** continued
- disable:** turn off



95 Mr. Kachami doesn't hear won't hurt him," he thought to himself. Just as he was about to put his phone back into his pocket, the screen lit up with Boris' response.

100 Raphael **was itching** to read it, but he didn't risk it. He put his hand and cellphone in his sweater pocket, waiting for the ideal moment to read

105 the punchline.

Mr. Kachami had finished his meditative erasing of the blackboard. He was quite calm as he resumed his **lecture**. The instant the teacher turned his back again, Raphael

110 took out his phone and read the text message. He freaked out! He couldn't believe how vulgar it was! Raphael

115 had never heard Boris use such **profane** language before. The unexpected punchline caused Raphael to react with a laugh that **gave away** his actions.

125 Mr. Kachami had **caught** him **red-handed!**

Before Raphael could delete the message, Mr. Kachami was already beside him, confiscating the phone.

130 As Mr. Kachami looked at the screen, the class went deathly silent. His cheeks reddened and his hands trembled. He looked

straight at Boris, and Boris knew the eruption was coming.

135

"WHAT DO YOU CALL AN ANGRY ECONOMICS TEACHER WHO HATES HIS JOB?" yelled Mr. Kachami

140 at Boris, just as Mrs. Reihte approached the classroom

entrance. She froze in place. Mr. Kachami had no idea she was there when he continued by screaming out the vulgarity Boris had

145 texted. Everyone gasped! Then the strangest thing happened. **Amidst** the shocked silence, Mr. Kachami began to laugh! He laughed so hard, he cried. And

150 although many students wanted to share in Mr. Kachami's laughter,

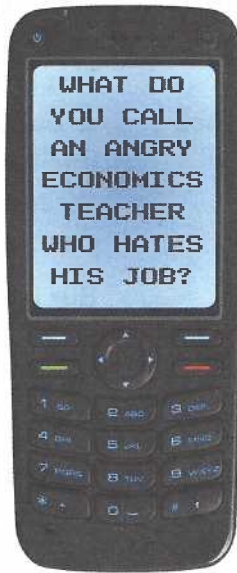
Mrs. Reihte's look of revulsion prevented them from doing so.

160 "Mr. Kachami, may I have a word with you in the hallway please?" she requested loudly. His laughter ceased abruptly.

In the total silence that followed,

165 the students heard Mrs. Reihte say: "To make and laugh at such a comment is completely unacceptable. You leave me no choice but to suspend you

170 without pay for one week, effective immediately. Good day, Mr. Kachami."



Glossary

was itching: really wanted to

lecture: speech

profane: vulgar

gave away: made apparent

caught

red-handed:

caught in the act; caught doing something

amidst: in the middle of



Name: _____

Group: _____

After Reading

ACTIVITY 3

★ Number the following events from the story in chronological order, where 1 is the first event and 8 is the last.

- | | |
|---|--|
| _____ Raphael freaks out at Boris' reply. | _____ Mr. Kachami has a muscle spasm. |
| _____ Mrs. Reihte wishes the students a happy New Year. | _____ Boris sends his last message. |
| _____ Mr. Kachami receives his first warning. | _____ Mr. Kachami gets suspended. |
| _____ Mr. Kachami confiscates Raphael's phone. | _____ Mr. Kachami yells out a profanity. |

ACTIVITY 4

★ Answer the following questions about the text.

1. Describe the teachers at Royal Apricot Academy.

2. Why did Mrs. Reihte never fire Mr. Kachami?

3. Mr. Kachami was looking forward to the principal's visit to his classroom.

TRUE FALSE

4. Who did Mr. Kachami suspect the first time he heard the buzz of a vibrating cellphone?

5. Why did Mr. Kachami turn around and erase the board for 30 seconds?

6. What did Boris text to Raphael?

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|
| a) a math problem | c) the title of a movie |
| b) a joke | d) an idea for a project |





Name:

Group:

7. How did Mr. Kachami react the second time he heard the cellphone buzz?

8. Why do you think Mr. Kachami was erasing the board slowly and in a pronounced way?

9. Why did Raphael decide to leave his cellphone on?

10. Why did Raphael freak out?

11. Why do you think Mr. Kachami's cheeks reddened and his hands trembled?

12. Why did the students remain silent during Mr. Kachami's fit of laughter?

ACTIVITY 5

★ You are a student in Mr. Kachami's class who saw everything that happened. Write a letter to Mrs. Reihte, telling her if you agree or disagree with her decision. Be sure to explain your reasons.
