

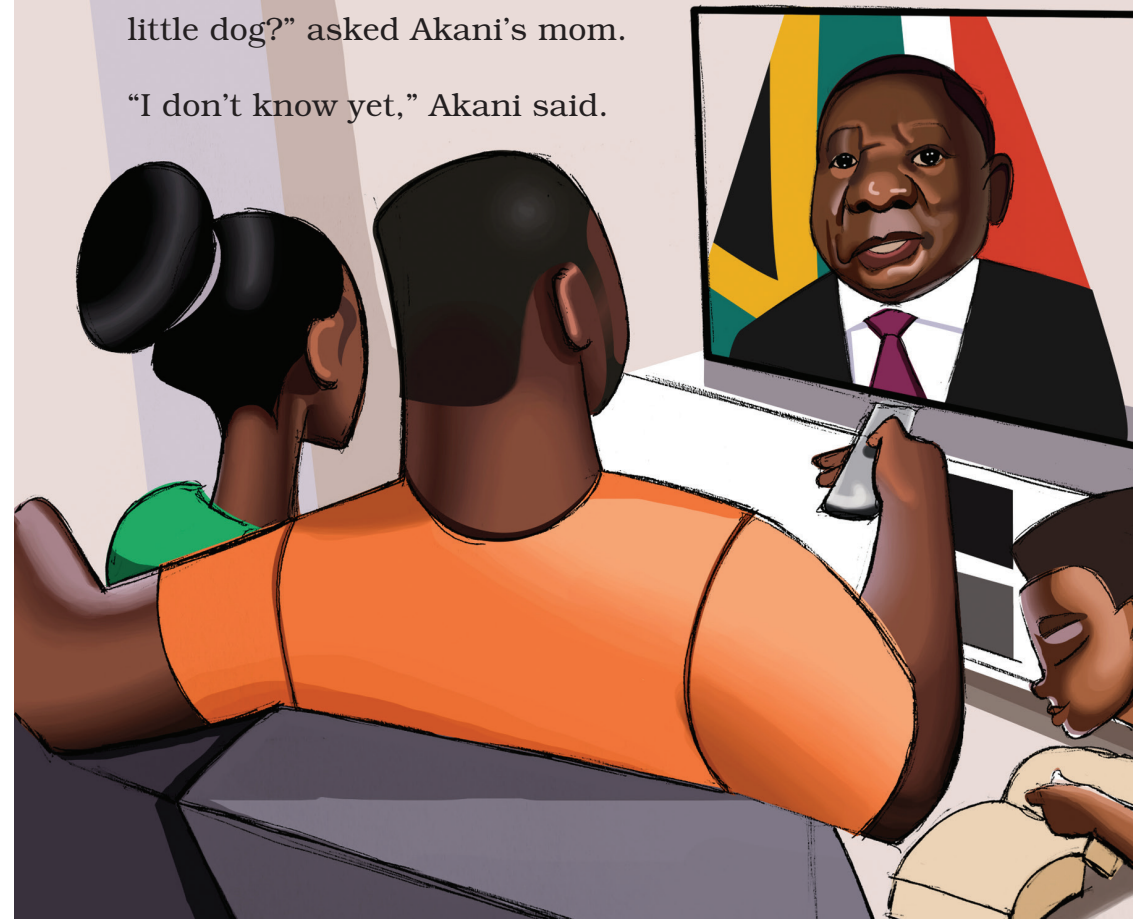
Akani's dog

Written by Baeletsi Tsatsi | Illustrated by Manu Kongolo

When the president of South Africa announced that the country would be going into a lockdown, Akani's parents knew he'd be bored at home. At school, Akani played with his friends; he learned new words and to write and to count from his teacher. Akani's parents thought up a plan to keep him entertained: they got him a dog.

"What are you going to name your little dog?" asked Akani's mom.

"I don't know yet," Akani said.



On the first day of the lockdown, Akani and the dog played first in their garden, running until Akani was out of breath. Then they sat in Akani's bedroom. From the window they could see the old power station cooling towers in the distance. The towers were painted in bright colours.

The dog began to whine and Akani petted it gently. Then it began to wag its tail with great excitement. Akani asked, "What is it, dog?"



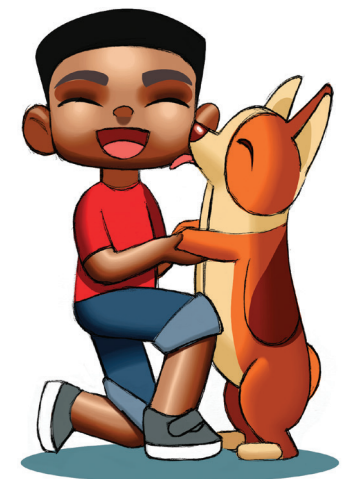
Will you believe it? The dog replied in a deep voice! "Once upon a time..."

Akani thought he was going crazy. He leaned in closer to the dog. "What did you say?"

The dog cleared his throat. "Once upon a time," the dog repeated, looking straight in the direction of the towers. Akani listened carefully as the dog began its story.

"In the south of Johannesburg there were two tall towers. They were cool. I mean, really cool. They were the cooling towers for the Orlando Power Station until the year 1998. Then they transformed into story towers that belong to all of Soweto: the Soweto Towers. Stories were painted in pictures all around them. The pictures changed from time to time. Sometimes the stories told were of Nelson Mandela, the great hero of the nation. Sometimes they told of music and people dancing wildly. Sometimes they told stories about Johannesburg, the City of Gold," the dog said.

Akani was filled with so much excitement, he asked the dog straight-up: "Are you a magic dog?" The dog leaned closer to Akani, licked his chubby cheeks and laughed a dog laugh.



“I am a storytelling dog,” the dog said.

Akani was so delighted he jumped off the bed and did a victory dance. The dog watched, wagging his tail this way and that, this way and that. Akani sat down again.

“Oh, doggie, will you please tell me another story?” he asked.

“You have to do something for me first,” the dog said.

“Anything,” Akani promised. “Just tell me what.”

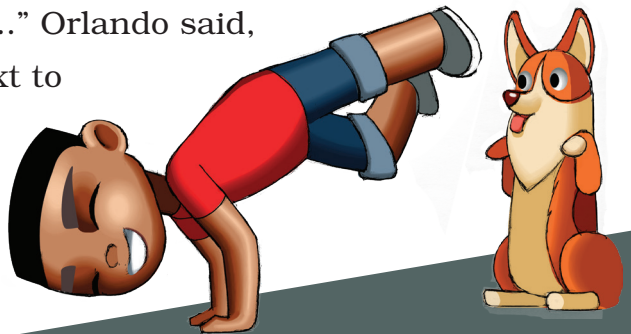
“You have to give me a name,” the dog said.

Akani looked outside the window in silence for a while. Then, seeing the towers in the distance, he had an idea.

“Orlando,” Akani said, looking to see if the dog loved his new name. The dog said nothing for a while. Then he jumped from the bed, howled happily in a sing-song melody, and did what seemed like a victory dance. He loved his name.

“Orlando,” Akani said. “Please tell me a story.”

“Once upon a time...” Orlando said, taking his place next to Akani on the bed.



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Ideas to talk about

Do dogs have a language? If not, how do dogs communicate?

What do you remember about when we first had lockdown? What kind of things did you do during the lockdown?



Visual

Draw a picture of Akani and Orlando playing together in the garden.



Reading

Be a story detective! Find words in the story that tell you that:

- ★ Akani's bedroom has a window in it
- ★ Akani was kind to his dog
- ★ Akani was interested in the story that his dog told
- ★ Akani named his dog after the Soweto Towers.



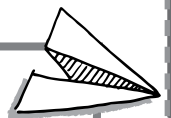
Writing

Help Akani not become bored during lockdown. Write a Boredom Busters' list of suggestions of how to keep busy at home.



Craft

Create your own story tower. Find a tall cardboard box and enough paper to cover it on all four sides. Draw or paint a story picture on the paper. Glue your story picture onto the sides of the cardboard box.



Performance

Finish the story that Orlando starts to tell at the end of *Akani's dog*.

