

Zebra Crossing - Memo

One day long ago, a very big, fierce baboon came down from the trees to live on the banks of the great Umfolozi River. Here he made his home and declared to all the other animals that the land all around belonged to him, and they were not to use the water in the river. He alone was allowed to drink.

There was one among the animals who decided to stand up to the fearful baboon. This was a proud zebra stallion, Dube. In those days, zebras were pure white, like the fabled unicorn. Now Dube was brave, and he challenged Baboon to a fight. Baboon, a fierce veteran of many battles agreed. He knew all about fighting.

“The loser of the fight,” he said, “will be banished forever to the barren koppie across the river.” And he told Dube to come to his kraal the next morning.

The fight was long and terrible. Both animals fought with all their strength, using the weapons the Creator had given them. Dube used his sharp hooves and teeth. Baboon used his long fangs and his agility.



Eventually, Baboon gained the upper hand and poor Dube was thrown backwards into the blazing logs of the kraal fire. The cruel flames licked all over his body, searing his fine white coat. The dreadful pain gave Dube a surge of new strength, and with a mighty kick he sent Baboon flying. Over the river sailed Baboon, right onto the rocks of the koppie on the other side. Baboon landed with such force that a bald patch remains on his behind to this very day.

But Dube was marked for life. The burns from the blazing logs in Baboon's fire left black stripes all over his snow-white coat. But at last he had won, and from that day on the water was free to all the animals.

Since then, zebras wear their stripes with pride, and while baboons are banished to stony koppies, the zebras dwell on the open plains, coming to the river just as they please.

Adapted from: When Hippo was Hairy and other tales from Africa by Nick Greaves

