



Mabu and the pirates

by Christoph Rühlemann

I owe the inspiration for this book to my children, Lionel and Ricardo. The story came into being one night some years ago when I put them to bed and as usual asked them to give me four key words that I would then turn into their bedtime story. They suggested a lion, a warrior, pirates and an elephant. After having told them the story I immediately knew that among the hundreds of stories I had already told them, this one stood out for its deeply felt personal message.

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* Mabu: boy's name

Ubuganga:	courage
Uncomo:	smile
Ukuphepha:	avoidance
Dideka:	bewilderment
Ixhala:	anxiety

Hello, I'm Mabou. I'm a lion. Right now, I'm lying on my favourite branch in my favourite tree. It's midday in the African savannah. Boy, it's sooo hot. But here, in my tree on my branch it's nice and shady. I'm so sleepy I think I'll take a nap.

Who are you ?

*Lion: Roar. Roaaaar. Roooooaaarrr. Roar.
Roaaaar. Roooooaaarrr.*

*Kids: (their voices sound slightly scared)
Who ... who are you ?*

Lion: Roar. I'm a lion. Roar.

Kids: What's your name ?

Lion: Mabou. Roaaaar. Mabou's my name.

Kids: Where do you live ?

Lion: Roar. In Africa. Roarrrr.

Kids: What are you like ?

*Lion: I'm strong. Roooooaar. But I'm friendly.
Roar. Roaaaar. Roooooaaarrr.
Nice to meet you, children !
Roar. Roaaaar. Roooooaaarrr.*

*Kids: (individual children voices, sounding cheerful)
Nice to meet you, Mabou !
Yeah. Nice to meet you, Mabou !
Nice to meet you, Mabou !*

*Lion & kids: Yeah, we're strong. Roooooaar. But we're
friendly !
Roar. Roaaaar. Roooooaaarrr.*

Roar. Roaaaar. Roooooaaarrr.



But - what is that? A terrible noise wakes me. The noise is coming nearer and nearer and it's getting louder and louder. My branch starts to shake, my tree starts to shake ...



... I can't hold on to the tree any longer. Like a rock I fall and - thud! - hit the ground. Ouch! My head hurts. My back hurts. My leg hurts. Everything hurts ... -What is going on? I've got to find out.

Ouch!

chant

Here's my head.

Ouch! It hurts so much.

Poor head.

Here's my neck.

Uh! It hurts so much.

Poor neck.

Here's my paw.

Oh! It hurts so much.

Poor paw.

Here's my back.

Aye! It hurts so much.

Poor back.

Here's my tail.

Ouch! It hurts so much.

Poor tail.

Everything

Uh! just hurts me.

Poor lion.

Poor what? No way.

I'm fine again.

Thanks doc!



I run up a mountain. Now I can see very far. I see a cloud, a huge cloud. I hear the noise, a noise like thunder. The thunder cloud moves. But what is that? A trunk? Yes, it's an elephant's trunk. It pops out of the dust. And there is another trunk and an ear. And there! There is the head of a giraffe! Now I understand: These are animals. They all are running very fast. Why? What, or who, frightens them so much?



I run down the mountain and into the cloud. Hey, there's Ukuphepha, my elephant friend. "Why are you all running?" I shout. "Run, Mabu, run!" he yells back. I see fear in his eyes. "Why? Why?" I ask. "The pirates!" he yells out of breath, "the pirates are coming! They are chasing us. They want to kill us. Run, Mabu, run!"

ROOOAAR - that's what I say!

Listen, pirates, hear what I say:

ROOOAAR - that's what I say !

ROOOAAR means if you're mean you'd better go away.

ROOOAAR means if you're friendly, please do stay.

I'm not a rug.

I'm not just skin.

I am a lion.

I will win.

Listen, pirates, hear what I say:

ROOOAAR - that's what I say !

ROOOAAR means if you're friendly, please do stay.

ROOOAAR means if you're mean you'd better go away.



Run, Mabu, run? Does Mabu run? Run away from - pirates? No way! I'm a lion after all. I've got to stop those pirates. But how? I am thinking what I can do. I've got an idea: I've got a very good friend. Together we'll find a way to stop those pirates. Together we are strong, really strong.

Friends

*Your pockets full of marbles?
Your pockets full of money?
Everybody wants to be your friend.*

*But only friends in need
are friends indeed.
They care for you
with and without marbles.
They stand by you
with and without money.
For only friends in need
are friends indeed.*

*Your pockets full of sweets?
Your pockets full of treats?
Everybody wants to be your friend.*

*But only friends in need
are friends indeed.
They give you shelter
with and without sweets.
They give you strength
with and without treats.
For only friends in need
are friends indeed.*



Here he is, Ubuganga, my friend. For, you know, not all humans are like pirates. Ubuganga is friends with many animals. He even has a snake for a pet. A long friendly yellow snake. He calls her Nelson. "Ubuganga," I say, "the pirates are ..." - "I know, Mab, I know." - "What can we do, Ubuganga?" We sit down by the fireplace and think. The hot wind blows and Nelson whispers something into Ubuganga's ear. "Yeah! That's it! That's how we'll defeat those pirates!" He tells me his plan. It's a phantastic plan, it's a FUN plan!

Here's a plan

*Here's a plan, oh what a plan!
It takes a lion, takes a man.
Hey, pirates, say hello, and say good-bye!
It won't be long before we hear you sigh.*

*Here's a plan, it's really smart!
It takes brains, takes art.*

*Hey, pirates, say hello and say good-bye!
It won't be long before we hear you cry.*

*Here's a plan, it's really fun!
It takes friends, takes colours, green, red, blue.
Hey, pirates, say hello, and good-bye too!
It won't be long before we see you run.*



Ubuganga gets a needle, thread, and some animal skins. What he uses skins for? Well, as blankets and as clothes. He can't run about naked, can he? He sews the skins together, one after another. Then he gets colours: green and blue and yellow and red and black ...



We start painting a huge picture. Ubuganga uses his fingers, I use my paws. First we draw and paint an elephant, - a blue elephant! - then a pink elephant, then more elephants, a green rhino, a zebra and, of course, a lion.

My elephant is blue

*Look, my elephant is blue.
This can't be true?
It can. It can.
My elephant is blue.*

*Look, my elephant is green.
That you've never seen
I have. I have.
My elephant is green.*

Look, my elephant's pink.

*I've had whiskey, do you drink?
I haven't. I haven't.
My elephant is pink.*

*Look, my elephant is blue.
This can't be true?
It can. It can.
My elephant is blue.*



What a beautiful picture! We hang it up between two tall trees, hide behind the painting and - wait. The pirates must be coming this way.

We're pirates, we're bad

*Hooray, hooray,
we're pirates and we're bad.
We travel the world, we travel the seas
Whoever we meet we give 'em the
creeps!
There's only one we dare not fight:
It's Bully, the boss. For he will bite!*

*Yes, I am Bully. I am boss.
I'm really mean, I'm really bad, I'm
gross!
My belly is big like a cannon ball,
I am the nightmare of them all!*

*Hooray, hooray,
we're pirates and we're bad.
We travel the world, we travel the seas.
Whoever we meet we give 'em the
creeps!
There's only one we dare not fight:
It's Bully, the boss. For he will bite !*

*Yes, I am Bully. I am boss.
I'm really mean, I'm really bad, I'm
gross!
My one eye is sharp like a dagger,
who contradicts will end up a beggar!*

*Hooray, hooray,
we're pirates and we're bad.
We travel the world, we travel the seas
Whoever we meet we give 'em the
creeps!
And once there'll be one we dare fight:
It's Bully, the boss. For we will bite !*



The pirates are coming. Look at them! There's their boss, Bully. He's a real bully. He can sit on the cannon and the other pirates must push him. Bully's got just one eye. Suddenly he yells, "Animals ahoy!" He stares at our painting. "Huh! We've got them! Look, they're all there! Come on, load your guns and ..." - "But, Bully, ..." one of the other pirates says, - "Shoot, I say, shoot!" Bully orders.

Aha

chant

<i>Hey, zebra, we're after you!</i>	<i>Aha.</i>	<i>Hey, rhino, we're after you!</i>	<i>Aha.</i>	<i>Hey, lion, we're after you!</i>	<i>Aha.</i>
<i>Here's Bully.</i>	<i>Aha.</i>	<i>Here's the flag.</i>	<i>Aha.</i>	<i>Here's the dagger.</i>	<i>Aha.</i>
<i>Here's his men.</i>	<i>Aha.</i>	<i>Here's the skull.</i>	<i>Aha.</i>	<i>Here's the cannon.</i>	<i>Aha.</i>
<i>Here's the pirates.</i>	<i>So what?</i>	<i>Here's the crossbones.</i>	<i>So what?</i>	<i>Here's the gun.</i>	<i>So what?</i>
<i>So what?! You 'd better run!</i>	<i>And if I won't?</i>	<i>So what?! You 'd better run!</i>	<i>And if I won't?</i>	<i>So what?! You 'd better run!</i>	<i>And if I won't?</i>
<i>If you what?!</i>	<i>Bet you, I won't!</i>	<i>If you what?!</i>	<i>Bet you, I won't!</i>	<i>If you what?!</i>	<i>For you're the ones who will!</i>
<i>I really won't!</i>		<i>I really won't!</i>		<i>You really will!</i>	



And they do. Then they stop. "Bully, look, none of the animals fall," a pirate says. "So why don't you shoot!" Bully shouts. "Shoot before they run away!" The pirates shoot again. Then they stop again. "But, Bully, something's wrong. They don't fall down." Now Bully explodes, "Skull and crossbones, will you shoot, you good-for-nothings?! Shoot! Shoot, I say!" Again the pirates fire their guns, but then their guns go click, clickclick and click. Their guns are empty.



The pirates stare at the "animals". They don't speak. They don't move. They are frozen with fear. "Are they - ghosts?" asks one of them. "Rubbish!" Bully yells. "Go and get them. Take your daggers!" But the pirates won't move. "Then I'll get them!" Bully screams.



Bully comes closer and closer to the painting and to me and Ubuganga behind the painting. I can see that he is very angry. His face is red. There is sweat on his face. The bullets have shot a hole into the painted lion's eye. With his one eye Bully stares into the hole. I'm standing right behind it. I'm waiting for Bully. Now he is quite close. I can see that he's trembling.



I slash the painting open with my claws. I greet Bully with a mighty ROOARRRRR. - "HEEEELLP!" Bully yells, turns round and runs as fast as he can. Ubuganga is behind me, his spear in his hand. Bully and his men are fleeing. Now we are chasing the pirates!

Be smart

*Bullies are big.
Bullies are bad.
Bullies are here.
Bullies are there.
Bullies want to be everywhere.*
(sounds of children faking anxiety)

*Bullies are mean.
Bullies are strong.
Bullies are left.
Bullies are right.
Bullies hope we will not fight.*
(sounds of children faking anxiety)

*Bullies are loud.
Bullies are wild.
Bullies are up.
Bullies are in.
Bullies think they'll always win.*
(sounds of children faking anxiety)

*But you and I, we don't lose heart.
For there's one thing that bullies
aren't: smart.
So, dream your dreams and use your
wits.
That's how their power'll fall to bits.*
(sounds of children cheering)

*But you and I, we don't lose heart.
For there's one thing that bullies
aren't: smart.
So, play your tricks and use your wits.
That's how their power'll fall to bits.*
(sounds of children cheering)

*But you and I, we don't lose heart.
For there's one thing that bullies
aren't: smart.
So, fool the fools and use your wits.
That's how their power'll fall to bits.*
(sounds of children cheering)



Ubuganga and I keep the pirates running until they reach the shore. Night has fallen. There is their ship. They climb aboard, and sail away. Slowly their ship disappears in the dark. I shake my paw with Ubuganga's hand! We jump with joy. The fight is over. The fear is over. The pirates are over. Happy, but tired, we turn to go home.

Where and what

chant

Where's the lion?

On his branch.

What's he doing?

Dozing and resting.

Where's the warrior?

In his hut.

What's he doing?

Dozing and resting.

Where's the rhino?

In his river.

What's he doing?

Dozing and resting.

Where are all the animals?

In the savannah.

What're they doing?

Happily dozing and resting.

Where are the pirates?

On their ship.

What are they doing?

Sweating like mad and never coming back!



Can I never sleep? I'm lying on my branch, really tired. I'd so much like to sleep. But something pulls at my leg. I open one eye - it's my friend Uncomo, the monkey, and Dideka, the giraffe ...

Hey Mabou, come on, wake up

chant

Hey Mabou, come on, wake up

The night is over

Shake off the night, shake off the night

Hey lion, come on, get up

The fear is over

Shake off the fear, shake off the fear

Hey smarty, come on, get on

The fight is over

Shake off the fight, shake off the fight

Hey braveheart, come on, stand up

The pirates are over

Shake off the pirates, shake off the pirates

Hey Mabou, the day is bright

The night is over

The day is ours, the day is ours



...and all of the animals are here! Ixhala, the rhino, and Ukuphepha, the elephant and all the other elephants. "Thank you, Mabu! Thank you!" they shout. I tell them all about the pirates and how Ubuganga and I fooled them with the painting and how stupidly they had looked. We laugh and laugh. Then the animals leave. I lie down again on my favourite branch in my favourite tree. It's midday in the African savannah. Boy, it's sooo hot. But here, in my tree on my branch it's nice and shady. I'm so sleepy I think I'll take a nap. I have a dream. I dream of blue elephants and, indeed, blue pirates too. We're playing. We're laughing.

I have a dream

I dream of elephants
Many elephants, all
elephants
Grey and brown and also
blue
We're playing, we're
laughing, we're friends
This dream, I bet, is true

I dream of rhinos too
Many rhinos, all rhinos
Grey and brown and also
blue
We're playing, we're
laughing, we're friends
This dream, I'm sure, is true

I dream of monkeys too
Many monkeys, all monkeys
Grey and brown and also
blue
We're playing, we're
laughing, we're friends
This dream, I know, is true

I dream of pirates too
Many pirates, all pirates
Grey and blond and also
blue
We're playing, we're
laughing, we're friends
This dream, I'm hoping,
never ends

