

THE JUNGLE BOOK

An All-New Adaptation of the Rudyard Kipling Classic
By
Tommy Jamerson

THE JUNGLE BOOK

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THE JUNGLE BOOK

For Barbara. Thank you for guiding me through the jungle.

Also, for the Columbia Theatre. Here's to many more years and many, many more premieres.

Also, for Katy... just because.

THE JUNGLE BOOK

SETTING

The jungles of India, during a time of war and transition. The 1800s.

CHARACTERS

MOWGLI, the man-cub.

THE JUNGLE LEADER, a narrator and guide.

THE JUNGLE SPIRITS, a Greek Chorus. The personification of the Jungle.

BAGHEERA, the panther.

SHERE KHAN, the tiger.

BALOO, the bear.

KAA, the python.

AKELA, the old gray wolf. **DOUBLES** as **RADHYA**, Mowgli's human aunt in Act Two.

TABAQUI, the jackal.

THA, the first elephant.

KABIR, Radhya's husband.

WOLF PACK: WOLF ONE, WOLF TWO, & WOLF THREE

THE YOUNG WOLVES: AADHYA, AADHIRA, & AAKAAR

THE MONKEYS: MONKEY ONE, MONKEY TWO, & MONKEY THREE

VILLAGERS: VILLAGER ONE, VILLAGER TWO, & VILLAGER THREE

THE VARIOUS ANIMALS OF THE JUNGLE

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PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTES

Regarding Jungle Spirits: it is possible for them to double with the majority of the characters in the show (including the Bandar-Log, the Wolf Pack, Kaa, Tabaqui, Tha, Aadhya, Aadhira, Aakaar, etc.), but if a larger cast is desired, they can simply be the personification of the jungle that materializes on and offstage only when needed. It is also possible for them to conjure up bits of scenery and props. Their possibilities are endless; use them as you see fit.

The ideal number of Jungle Spirits for this production is seven (one Leader and six Spirits), but the director may choose to use as many as desired. If that is the case, just divvy up the lines accordingly.

Regarding choreography/movement: certain moments within the show are meant to be immense and highly choreographed. Larger than life, or even LARGER – budget permitting. In my mind, the play itself is a living/breathing animal that should never stop moving from the moment the curtain rises. Allow choreography, large gestures, stylized movement to play a major part in all aspects of **THE JUNGLE BOOK**.

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DIRECTOR'S NOTES

I have written a note or two like this for Tommy Jamerson's plays in the past. They usually address how beautifully the work lends itself to the shoestring budgets I am generally accustomed to working with. For the world premiere of **THE JUNGLE BOOK**, I finally got to produce one of Tommy's plays with a more substantial budget.

While I was thrilled to be able to feature a twenty-five-foot python puppet and a massive set, I would be the first to say that this adaptation of **THE JUNGLE BOOK** would be equally as impressive as a much more stripped-down evening of theatre. Tommy has always written for actors and for the imagination. Productions of his plays are at their best when directors and designers use creativity rather than technology to bring these fantastic characters and amazing worlds to life.

For much of my career as a director and producer, I staged shows in found spaces, tiny cabaret venues, and intimate black boxes. When I crack open a script, my mind instantly runs wild with clever possibilities of how to make stage magic with eight lights and costume pieces borrowed from Aunt Linda's attic. I often found myself imagining what my production of Tommy's show would have been like if I had staged it in this manner.

One of my favorite memories of the entire production process was an early rehearsal where the actors explored how to merge the limitations of their human bodies with the physical characteristics of the animals they were to portray. Moments from that night will stay with me forever and it was just the actors in workout clothes on a bare stage.

Such is the imagination fuel of Tommy's writing. The last thing the author of this play would ever want would be for you to let budget stand in the way of bringing his words to life. So turn the page, step into the jungle, and let your mind run wild...

Jim Winter
Artistic Director
The Columbia Theatre for the Performing Arts

THE JUNGLE BOOK

THE JUNGLE BOOK received its world premiere at the Columbia Theatre for the Performing Arts in Hammond, LA on November 11th, 2022. The performance was directed by Taylor Meng (Education Coordinator) and Jim Winter (Artistic Director), with sets by Ben Norman, costumes by Jade Antoinette, makeup and hair by Jenny Roche, choreography by Kristi-Anne Lyons, lights by Katy T. Baronich, sound by Shelby Lowder, and music by Hayden Kimball. The production stage manager was Katy T. Baronich and the assistant stage manager was Haleigh Pigott. The cast, in order of appearance, was as follows:

JUNGLE LEADER	Brennan Bankston
JUNGLE SPIRIT 1/WOLF 1/MONKEY 3	Sebastian Barr
JUNGLE SPIRIT 2/WOLF 2/MONKEY 2	Harper Jacobs
JUNGLE SPIRIT 3/WOLF 3/MONKEY 1	Ava Greichgauer
JUNGLE SPIRIT 4/AADHYA/MONKEY	Carter Cortez
JUNGLE SPIRIT 5/AADHIRA/MONKEY	Morgan Matheny
JUNGLE SPIRIT 6/AAKAAR/MONKEY	Matthew Pickrell
BAGHEERA	AJ Salazar
AKELA/RADHYA	Ashton Persick
TABAQUI	Lee White
SHERE KHAN	Kevin Thompson
MOWGLI	Gabrielle Atwell
BALOO	DeJuan (DJ) James
KAA/THA/KABIR	Aidhan Solmone
KAA/THA/VILLAGER 3	Ally Holloway
KAA/THA/GAZELLE/VILLAGER	Kat Schepker
KAA/THA/VILLAGE 1	Dennis Watts
KAA/THA/VILLAGER 2/SQUIRREL VOICE	Owen Waguespack

Special thanks to Mark Aquilino, Beanie Stansbury, Angelle Reeves, Avery Brent, Jon Connor, Cameron Andries, Sean Autin, Adrian Coté, Bryant Fontenot, Mya Mire, Keri Clement, Averi Laughli, Leah Peevy, Mariana Hernandez, Winter Jacques, Lauren Price, Pam Bankston, Aaron Kellner, Anna Carissimo, Nicholas J. Clarey, Jeff and Laura Atkinson, and Shadow.

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ACT ONE.
PROLOGUE. A CAMPSITE.

It is night in the jungle. Moon-drenched leaves glitter like emeralds. An overture of screeches and croaks is heard. Shadows dance. Eyes watch. Branches reach toward the heavens then disappear. Lights slowly rise, revealing a lone campsite stocked with essentials; a tent, pots, pans, firewood, and a few careworn trunks stacked on top of one another. From the surrounding darkness, MONKEY ONE appears – drums and bamboo-flutes underscoring its arrival. It hesitantly makes its way toward the campsite, eyeing one of the large, leather-bound trunks. Unlatching the lid, it pulls out something of great interest; an old-fashioned brassiere, perhaps? A wig? Oversized bloomers even? Treasures that are as mysterious as they are alluring. A prisoner to its own curiosity, the Monkey continues to rifle through the strange possession, chattering a bit, reacting to its findings, oblivious to the fact that dozens of its Monkey Brothers and Sisters are entering the stage from every possible direction, ready to investigate as well. Music builds. Carefree and center stage, the Monkey tosses its head back, about to consume an object that it probably shouldn't, when what should happen?

MONKEY TWO. OOH! OOH! AH! AH!! *(The other monkeys attack, snatching trinkets and blankets from it, and making off with them! Chaos ensues! Monkeys dart and twirl. They scoop armfuls of dishes and silverware, perfume bottles, a parasol, even. The stage is alive with activity, every aspect of it utilized. Lights flash and pulsate! Screeches echo down one aisle of the theater and up another! Suddenly, just as the music and action has reached its dizzying peak, just as it seems as though our senses can't absorb any more, our main monkey, or primary primate if you will, begins hurling objects at all who approach it. Enraged, it grabs a large basket, holds it over his head, and a second before it hurls it through*

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the air at the stampede of approaching simians... the cry of a baby erupts. A human baby. A cry that the human parents in the audience know all too well. The cry pierces through the theater, silencing the creatures, and stopping them in their tracks. A beat. Confused and slightly horrified, the monkey drops the basket and rejoins the rest of the troop. The beasts look at one another confused. A brave soul begins to approach the basket when the baby inside it cries again. The Monkeys jump back and, chattering among themselves, scatter... taking a shoe and gown with them as party-favors, as they disappear into the bushy sea of green. Thunder rumbles in the distance. Chanting is heard in time with a lone drumbeat. Soft at first, but eventually growing louder and louder. Soon figures, representing the Jungle itself, draped in robes and plumage, ceremoniously make their way to center stage. The Jungle has truly come to life. A spell is about to be cast.)

JUNGLE LEADER. NOW CHIL THE KITE BRINGS HOME THE NIGHT

JUNGLE SPIRITS – ALL. THAT MANG THE BAT SETS FREE

JUNGLE LEADER. THE HERDS ARE SHUT IN BYRE AND HUT

JUNGLE SPIRITS – ALL. FOR LOOSED TILL DAWN ARE WE

JUNGLE LEADER. THIS IS THE HOUR OF PRIDE AND POWER

JUNGLE SPIRITS – ALL. TALON AND TUSH AND CLAW

JUNGLE LEADER. OH, HEAR THE CALL

JUNGLE SPIRITS – ALL. GOOD HUNTING, ALL! THAT KEEP THE JUNGLE LAW! *(Beat. Silence. The Jungle observes, then...)*

JUNGLE LEADER. Chapter One.

JUNGLE SPIRITS – ALL. The Discovery.

JUNGLE LEADER. It was almost midnight on a very warm evening in the Seonee hills, when a sound—

JUNGLE SPIRIT ONE. A sound unlike any we'd ever heard—

JUNGLE LEADER. Cut through the jungle... and awoke it. Awoke us.

JUNGLE SPIRIT TWO. The sound was first heard by what we,

JUNGLE SPIRITS – ALL. The Jungle Spirits,

JUNGLE SPIRIT THREE. Call the Bandar-Log.

JUNGLE SPIRIT FOUR. But are otherwise known as—

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JUNGLE SPIRITS – ALL. Monkeys. (*Should the Jungle Spirits feel up to it, they may strike a monkey-like pose. Or not.*)

JUNGLE LEADER. It was only after they left, that a great black shadow dropped down from the treetops.

JUNGLE SPIRIT FIVE. It was a panther.

JUNGLE SPIRIT SIX. The wisest panther there ever was.

JUNGLE SPIRITS – ALL. Bagheera. (*Lights rise on BAGHEERA. The child begins to cry once again.*)

JUNGLE SPIRIT ONE. Bagheera slowly approached the mysterious object,

JUNGLE SPIRIT TWO. Cautiously placing one paw in front of the other.

JUNGLE SPIRIT THREE. And then, peering his great head down,

JUNGLE SPIRIT FOUR. He looked in the basket, only to discover...

BAGHEERA. A child? (*Realizing.*) ...A man's cub! But what are you doing here in the middle of—? And where are your parents? They couldn't have gone far, that's for— (*Bagheera pulls back the flap of the tent, only to reveal large, red claw marks splashed against the fabric. The fate of the child's parents is painfully obvious.*) Shere Khan!

JUNGLE SPIRITS—ALL. Shere Khan.

JUNGLE LEADER. Shere Khan was the tiger.

JUNGLE SPIRIT SIX. The Striped One.

JUNGLE SPIRIT ONE. He lived and hunted near the Aravalli Hills.

JUNGLE SPIRIT TWO. And he hated man.

BAGHEERA. I've got to get you out of here. If that tiger finds you, you'll suffer the same fate as your parents. And I alone am not strong enough to protect you. (*The baby cries again.*) Shh. Shh. I know. I know. It's alright. It's... (*Lifting the child from its basket, wrapped in an intricately woven cloth. The cry begins to cease.*) Look at you. So tiny. So innocent. So... (*The cloth falls to the ground, revealing the naked baby's bottom.*) naked. (*Perhaps like a tamed housecat, the panther gently butts its head against the child's. A beat.*) ...What to do with you, little brother?

JUNGLE LEADER. And then, another sound was heard.

JUNGLE SPIRIT THREE. One those in the jungle know all too well... (*Wolf howls are heard off in the distance.*)

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BAGHEERA. Of course!

JUNGLE SPIRITS – ALL. The Wolves!

BAGHEERA. Come, Little Brother! If anyone knows what to do with you, it'll be Akela. (*Gently, Bagheera wraps the baby back up in its blanket, places it in the basket, and then clutching the basket between his claws, exits.*)

JUNGLE LEADER. The great panther scooped up the child and made his way through the underbrush. (*And we shift to...*)

SCENE ONE. COUNCIL ROCK.

A large rock covered in moss and dirt. AKELA, the Pack Leader, approaches center stage. A large, round, full moon glowing warmly in the distance.

JUNGLE LEADER. Chapter Two.

JUNGLE SPIRITS – ALL. Council Rock.

AKELA. Look well, look well, O Wolves! You know the law! Now recite it with me! (*She howls again. As Akela begins to recite, the other WOLVES approach, reciting alongside her.*) NOW THIS IS THE LAW OF THE JUNGLE

AKELA/WOLVES. AS OLD AND AS TRUE AS THE SKY

AKELA. AND THE WOLF THAT SHALL KEEP IT MAY PROSPER

AKELA/WOLVES. BUT THE WOLF THAT SHALL BREAK IT
MUST DIE

AKELA. AS THE CREEPER THAT GIRDLES THE TREE-TRUNK

AKELA/WOLVES. THE LAW RUNNETH FORWARD AND BACK

AKELA. FOR THE STRENGTH OF THE PACK IS THE WOLF

AKELA/WOLVES. AND THE STRENGTH OF THE WOLF IS THE
PACK

AKELA. FOR THE STRENGTH OF THE PACK IS THE WOLF

AKELA/WOLVES. AND THE STRENGTH OF THE WOLF IS THE
PACK (*They howl in unison.*)

JUNGLE LEADER. An emergency meeting had been called at the great Council Rock—

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JUNGLE SPIRIT FOUR. A sacred hilltop covered with stones and boulders

JUNGLE SPIRIT FIVE. And a sanctuary for wolves but forbidden to any creature great or small who wasn't a member of the Pack.

JUNGLE SPIRIT SIX. It was ruled over by the Wolves' Alpha,

JUNGLE SPIRITS – ALL. Akela.

AKELA. Sisters and Brothers, quickly, quickly. We haven't much time. I have called you here because of a most pressing matter. *(After a pause.)*

Shere Khan has returned! *(A few gasps escape the Wolves.)* He was spotted only a few hours ago, down by the Wainganga.

WOLF ONE. ...But this is not his hunting ground!

WOLF TWO. Why has he shifted it?

WOLF ONE. What gives him the right?!

AKELA. I don't know. But if it's territory the tiger is after, then we must protect our own. Bala, gather the cubs! Raksha, go to the gorge and—

WOLF THREE. *(Howling. Entering, in a panic.)* Akela! Akela!

AKELA. What is it, Rama?

WOLF THREE. *(Out of breath.)* I just saw it, on my way here. A jungle cat! It was dark, but I know it's a jungle cat. Coming up the hill!

AKELA. That's impossible. Who would dare—

WOLF ONE. No, Akela he's right! Look!

WOLF TWO. Is it the tiger?

WOLF ONE. No, it's... Bagheera? *(“Bagheera” is mumbled by a few of the confused Wolves.)* And he's carrying—

WOLF TWO. It can't be! Is that a—

WOLF THREE. It's a man's cub! *(The Wolves begin talking among themselves, amazed at what they're witnessing.)*

AKELA. Silence, all of you! Bagheera, what is the meaning of this? Barging in on a council meeting? And with a *(Barely able to say the words.)* a man's cub? The Law of Jungle states—

BAGHEERA. Yes, I know the Law, Akela and it has been broken.

AKELA. And do you know how many Wolf Laws you have broken by bringing that child here? What are we to do with him? *(A few “yeahs” escape the surrounding Wolves. Perhaps even “Take it away!”/“A man's cub is not our business!”)*

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TABAQUI. *(Entering, her presence silencing the Wolves.)* Oh um, Great Akela! Perhaps I can be of some assistance?

JUNGLE LEADER. And then, slinking her way through the sea of wolves, came one of the most reviled creatures in the jungle.

AKELA. *(Squinting to see.)* Who goes there?

TABAQUI. *(Through a few giggles.)* Why, it is, it is I—

JUNGLE SPIRITS – ALL. Tabaqui.

TABAQUI. The—

JUNGLE SPIRITS – ALL. Jackal.

TABAQUI. And—

JUNGLE SPIRITS – ALL. Dish licker.

TABAQUI. *(To the Spirits.)* Thank you. *(To the Wolves.)* I believe I know what can be done with the... *(Another giggle escapes her.)* Man-Cub. He should be handed over to my master, as is my master's right.

AKELA. Master? What master? Why does this matter concern you, *scavenger*? And who do you know that has any use for a human child?

SHERE KHAN – VOICE. I believe she was referring to me. *(A roar echoes throughout the theater, and then, from the darkness, SHERE KHAN enters. Though he's foreboding, the tiger limps onstage. A few of the Wolves mutter to one another.)*

WOLVES – ALL. Shere Khan!/Shere Khan!/Shere Khan!

AKELA. Shere Khan, your visit does us great honor.

SHERE KHAN. I know. But I see I'm not your only visitor this evening. *(Shere Khan eyes the child and the panther.)*

BAGHEERA. Tell me, Shere Khan, what happened to your paw? It looks as though it was... burned. You didn't happen to scorch it while attacking a campsite, did you?

TABAQUI. Oh, did he ever!

SHERE KHAN. *(Calmly.)* Tabaqui.

TABAQUI. *(Laughing a bit too loudly. Continuing.)* You should've seen 'im! After attacking that family, he started to go after the little one there, only to have his paw burned by the red flower.

SHERE KHAN. Tabaqui!

TABAQUI. *(Highly animated.)* And then he was all like, "help me! Help me! Ahhh my tail! My paw! My bu—"

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SHERE KHAN. Tabaqui!!

TABAQUI. Shutting up! (*Tabaqui zips it. Shere Khan continues.*)

SHERE KHAN. What Tabaqui says is true. Man made his way into the jungle, and I saw it only fitting to make sure his stay was a short one. Now, that child is my quarry. Give him to me, and I'll be on my way. (*The Wolves look at one another, unsure of what to do.*)

JUNGLE LEADER. Now you must understand the Jungle has many laws, but the gravest and most important forbids every beast to eat man—because man-killing means the arrival of death. Death in the form of more men.

JUNGLE SPIRIT THREE. Men with weapons,

JUNGLE SPIRIT FIVE. And torches,

JUNGLE SPIRIT SIX. Torches that set the grass alight,

JUNGLE SPIRIT ONE. And drive us from our homes.

JUNGLE LEADER. What Shere Khan was asking for was to break the most sacred of laws. Akela knew this, but she also knew that not handing the baby over to the tiger would have great consequences.

SHERE KHAN. (*To Akela.*) Come now, Akela, what do you... (*To the other Wolves.*) you, and the great Seeonee Wolves, care about the fate of a man's cub? I'm doing you a service. You can't return him to the man-village— not without his parents. If you were to, they'd come for us. All of us.

AKELA. (*Beat. Hesitantly. All eyes fall on her.*) As much as it pains me to say it, I agree with you. And that is why it is in our best interest...

SHERE KHAN. Yes?

AKELA. That is why it is in our best interest... to keep him here, with us. (*Gasps escape a few of the Wolves.*) I'm sorry, Shere Khan, but we cannot hand him over to you.

SHERE KHAN. (*Amused at first, though the amusement rapidly turns to rage.*) You cannot? You cannot? What do you mean, you cannot?!

TABAQUI. I think she means they're not giving you the baby—

SHERE KHAN. I know that! (*To Akela.*) But why?!

AKELA. Because even though he is lost, and defenseless, and I could strike him down with the touch of my paw, he looks up at me without an ounce of fear. The same way my own cubs did when they were small. The

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Man-Cub shall live with the pack and run with the pack. He shall be raised among us.

BAGHEERA. Akela, let me suggest we teach him the ways of the jungle, so when he is old enough, he will return to the man village, with all the knowledge we've given him, and create peace between the two worlds.

AKELA. Then, it is decided.

SHERE KHAN. And what say the rest of you, wolves? Are you going to allow this— this abomination to live and grow among you? You and your young ones? If I had it my—

AKELA. Enough. As long as this is my pack, the Man-Cub will be protected by it.

SHERE KHAN. Is that so? *(To the entire pack.)* Look well, O Wolves, look at your newest brother. Look and know, when the day comes that Akela is old, and weak, and misses her kill— and her authority put into question— I'll be there. Make no mistake, I shall have my revenge. *(Shere Khan exits into the shadows. Then, realizing Tabaqui hasn't left yet:)* Tabaqui!

TABAQUI. Oh! Right! ...Bye. *(Tabaqui exits. All is well once again.)*

AKELA. Ignore the tiger and look well, O Wolves. Look and meet your newest brother.

WOLF THREE. Welcome to the pack, little one. ...But what do we call him?

WOLF TWO. I don't know. He's so naked and small, lying in a nest like a little bird. Lie still, little bird. And what is this? *(Examining the blanket.)* Bright as feathers.

WOLF THREE. What is the word the Jungle Spirits use for a bird?

BAGHEERA. I believe it's... Mowgli.

AKELA. Then that's what we shall call you. Mowgli.

JUNGLE SPIRITS – ALL. Mowgli.

JUNGLE LEADER. And so they did. *(Lights fall on the basket, the blanket, and the baby, Mowgli. We shift...)*

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SCENE TWO. VARIOUS SPOTS IN THE JUNGLE.

A sea of green. Leaves and vines as far as the eye can see.

JUNGLE LEADER. Chapter Three.

JUNGLE SPIRITS – ALL. Mowgli's Lessons.

JUNGLE LEADER. Now, you must be content to skip ten or eleven years and only guess at the wonderful life that Mowgli led among the wolves, because if it were written out it would fill volumes,

JUNGLE SPIRIT FOUR. And volumes,

JUNGLE SPIRIT FIVE. And volumes,

JUNGLE SPIRITS – ALL. Of books.

JUNGLE LEADER. Mowgli grew up with the Seeonee cubs, but because humans age much slower than wolves do, he was always much younger than those around him. So, try as he might to bond with his wolf brothers and sisters,

JUNGLE SPIRIT ONE. Who were young adults at this point, or in wolf years,

JUNGLE SPIRIT TWO. *(Aside.)* Teenagers... *(A shudder escapes the Jungle Spirits at the utterance of the word "teenagers.")*

JUNGLE SPIRIT THREE. They, unfortunately, had very different ideas. *(We hear a few howls offstage. Two young wolves, AADHYA and AADHIRA, scamper on, stage right.)*

AADHYA. Come on!

AADHIRA. This way!! *(AAKAAR, another young wolf, enters, yelping in pain every time he steps on his right paw.)*

AAKAAR. Yeah but– Ouch!– how much– Ouch!– farther?!

AADHYA. We're almost there! Hurry up!

AAKAAR. I wish I could, but– Ouch!– I got this thorn in my paw when we ran through that patch of prickly pears.

AADHIRA. Aakaar, you know how he hates it when we're late.

AADHYA. Almost as much as he hates–

MOWGLI–VOICE. Hey, wait up! *(MOWGLI enters, eleven or so, sporting the colorful blanket he was discovered in, wrapped around him like a tunic.)*

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AADHYA/AADHIRA/AAKAAR – ALL. Mowgli! *(Perhaps the three wolves chatter over one another saying things like “Ugh.” or “Nooo!”)*

MOWGLI. Hey, you almost lost me back there!

AADHYA. We’ll have to try harder next time.

AADHIRA. Go away, Man-Cub. Nobody wants you here.

AADHYA. Yeah.

MOWGLI. But why?

AAKAAR. I dunno. Maybe ‘cause we’re faster than you, we’re stronger than you, and we’re tougher! *(He stamps his paw down for dramatic effect.)* Ow! My tootsie!

AADHIRA. *(Rolling eyes at Aakaar.)* Shouldn’t you be in class or something?

MOWGLI. Shouldn’t you be coming with me? You haven’t been in forever– you or the other wolves.

AADHIRA. Why would we need to go? You’re there so you can pretend to be a wolf.

AADHYA. We already are one. *(The Wolves howl in unison.)*

MOWGLI. But I’ve been learning a lot– and Akela says one day I’ll be a great wolf– maybe even greater than you! *(The Wolves laugh at this.)*

AADHIRA. Don’t make us laugh.

AAKAAR. But we just did.

AADHIRA. *(Moving on.)* Look, you can go to as many classes as you want, but you’ll never be a wolf, not a real one anyway.

MOWGLI. Yes, I will.

AADHYA. Real wolves can take care of themselves in the jungle. You wouldn’t last one day without Bagheera protecting you. Or the pack keeping other animals away.

AADHIRA. Or Akela chewing up meat for you so it’s all nice and tender. *(Aadhya and Aadhira laugh at this.)*

AAKAAR. ...Actually, my mom still does that for me.

AADHYA. *(To Mowgli.)* Face it, Mowgli, you’ll never be one of us. Not with those weird long spider fingers.

AADHIRA. Or having to wear all that extra skin for fur.

MOWGLI. Yeah, but if you’d just...

AADHYA. *(Exiting.)* Just nothing! Come on, Paw Patrol! Let’s head out!

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MOWGLI. But, where are you going?

AADHYA. None of your business! (*Aadhya howls, running offstage.*)

AADHIRA. Yeah, what he said! (*Aadhira howls and exits.*)

AAKAAR. Yeah, what they said. (*A pitiful howl, but it will do. Aakaar attempts to run after his pack mates, but the thorn in his paw is causing too much pain.*) Here I come! Ow! Ow! OW!

MOWGLI. Aakaar, wait. Let me see that. (*Mowgli approaches Aakaar, gets down on his knees, and with his fingers, begins to pull the thorn from Aakaar's paw.*)

AAKAAR. Hey! What are you doing? Get those weird spider fingers away from me you— ow— ow— ow— ohhh! (*Wiggles his claws a bit.*) So much better. Thanks.

MOWGLI. You're welcome. So...do you—

AAKAAR. (*Calling out.*) Hey guys, wait for me!

MOWGLI. ...right. (*Calling out.*) Someday, when I'm a great wolf, you'll be sorry you didn't spend more time with me.

AAKAAR – VOICE. No, we won't!

MOWGLI. ...No, you won't. (*A beat. Mowgli, alone, lowers his head and angrily kicks a few pebbles. Akela enters.*)

AKELA. Mowgli, what are you doing? You're going to be late for class.

MOWGLI. Do I have to go?

AKELA. Of course you do, but not looking like that. (*Perhaps she grooms him a bit, picking at his hair and making him look as presentable as possible.*)

MOWGLI. What are you doing?

AKELA. Making sure you're presentable of course.

MOWGLI. Yeah well, if you want me to look presentable you won't make me wear this itchy thing. It's always slowing me down, and the other wolves make fun of me for it.

AKELA. It's against the law of the jungle to roam around without anything on. Maybe if you paid more attention to your lessons, you'd know that. Birds have their feathers, tigers have their stripes, and you have... (*Tugging at his garment.*) The fur you were found in.

MOWGLI. What's the point of learning this stuff anyway? It's not like I'm ever going to be a real wolf. Or even be able to survive on my own.

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AKELA. And who says that?

MOWGLI. Everyone.

AKELA. Everyone says that? Every creature in the jungle? Every bat in the sky?

MOWGLI. Yes.

AKELA. Then, everyone is wrong, and soon you'll show them all. I know it. *(Gently touching Mowgli's chin.)* Now, you've got class to attend. Go.

(Mowgli starts to leave. He stops for a moment, turns back, and hugs Akela. Softly. A beat.) I love you.

MOWGLI. I love you too. *(They embrace, warmly. The pair exit.)*

JUNGLE LEADER. Now it should be noted when it came to something as important as learning the Laws of the Jungle, there was only one teacher whom Akela trusted more than anyone else.

JUNGLE SPIRIT THREE. He was a paragon of intelligence and moral aptitude,

JUNGLE SPIRIT FOUR. The one and only...

JUNGLE SPIRIT FIVE. The great brown bear...

JUNGLE SPIRITS – ALL. Baloo. *(Lights rise on Baloo... who is sleeping. And snoring. And drooling. And it's not a pretty sight.)*

BALOO. *ZzzZzzzzZZZzZzzzzZZzzz.* *(The Spirits look at one another, slightly embarrassed. Mowgli enters.)*

MOWGLI. Uh, Baloo? *(Shaking him.)* Baloo!! It's time to get up! It's time to—

BALOO. *(Waking with a start.)* Huh? HUH?! Of course I do that in the woods! *(He stretches and yawns.)* Oh, Mowgli, it's you. Alright, kiddo— *(Smacking his big paws together.)* Let's get to it!

JUNGLE SPIRIT ONE. Baloo taught Mowgli all there was to know, such as nature's golden rule:

MOWGLI. Never hunt for sport, just food.

BALOO. And...

MOWGLI. Never eat more than your share.

BALOO. Unless...

MOWGLI. Unless you're eating honey, *(Perhaps Baloo mouths this along with him.)* then all bets are off.

BALOO. Right!

THE JUNGLE BOOK

JUNGLE SPIRIT TWO. Baloo also taught him how to greet the various animals, like the birds.

MOWGLI. Oh, um... *(Mowgli makes a funny bird sound.)*

JUNGLE SPIRIT THREE. How to greet the bees. *(Mowgli makes a funny bee sound.)*

JUNGLE SPIRIT FOUR. And even how to greet the Poison People.

MOWGLI. ...The who?

BALOO. The Poison People. *(Mowgli looks confused.)* Snakes!

MOWGLI. Oh. Do I have to?

BALOO. C'mon. And a one, and a two, and a three, and... *(Mowgli wiggles and hisses as best he can. It certainly is a sight. Maybe Baloo comments on his technique. Music underscores.)* Very good, yes! Little less wiggle, little more hiss, *(Suddenly, a shiny ruby falls out of Mowgli's robes and onto the ground.)* But otherwise, I think you've got it— *(Baloo notices the ruby.)* what's this?

MOWGLI. *(Panicked.)* Oh, that? I must've dropped it when I was— it's nothing.

BALOO. Naw, I've seen plenty of nothing in my time, and this ain't one of 'em. This is something. *(Attempts to take a bite out of it.)* Ouch!! Where did you get this?

MOWGLI. Does it matter? Now give it here! *(Baloo isn't budging.)*

Fine. From the monkeys.

BALOO. The Bandar-Log?! Mowgli! How many times have I told you—

BALOO/MOWGLI. Not to talk to the Bandar-Log.

MOWGLI. I know. But... they were kind to me.

BALOO. But they're not being kind. Those flea pickers aren't giving you presents because they want to be your friend. It's because they want something from you.

JUNGLE LEADER. What Baloo said about the Bandar-Log was perfectly true. Not only were they notoriously cruel, but they were collectors.

JUNGLE SPIRIT FIVE. Anything that fascinated them, they would take,

JUNGLE SPIRIT SIX. And once they'd stolen something, it was never seen or heard from again!

THE JUNGLE BOOK

BALOO. How many times have you spoken with them, Mowgli? (*Mowgli doesn't want to answer.*) C'mon, how many times? More than three? (*Mowgli doesn't respond.*) Four? (*He still doesn't answer.*) Five? (*Mowgli gives a guilty look. Clearly, it's five.*) Five? FIVE?! FIVE?! You mean you've— you and they have— you went against me and— FIVE?!?! (*His temper flaring.*) That does it! I— I— oh, I'm so angry! I'm so angry, I could, I could just— (*Yawns.*) I could lie down right here and... (*Yawns.*) shut my eyes, and think about your punishment, and then before you know it, I'll— (*And he's out. Snoring just as loudly as before.*)

ZzZZzzZZZZzZzZzzzzzzzzzzzz...

MOWGLI. Baloo? Baloo? (*Looks about.*) Well then, (*Snatching up the ruby.*) I'd say the coast is— (*Mowgli, making sure Baloo is out cold, gets up and begins to sneak off when—*)

BAGHEERA. (*Entering.*) And where do you think you're going, little brother? The day's not even half over.

MOWGLI. But I... got out early.

BAGHEERA. Really? And what does Baloo have to say about all this? (*Mowgli motions over to Baloo, snoring loudly, happily turning from side to side.*)

BALOO. *ZzzzzZZZZzzzzZZzzZzZzZzZzzzzzz.*

MOWGLI. ...He's alright with it. (*Turning to leave.*) Bye, Bagheera!

BAGHEERA. Get back here, Man-Cub.

MOWGLI. Why? What does it matter? I'm never going to fit in. The other wolves are right.

BAGHEERA. Mowgli, just because a dog barks loudly, it doesn't mean it's saying anything important. It's all just noise.

MOWGLI. But what they're saying is true. I am different.

BAGHEERA. Perhaps. ...But that's not a bad thing.

MOWGLI. No, but men are. Or at least, that's what everyone says. I don't want to be a part of that, of them, and you always say, once I'm older you're going to send me off to their village.

BAGHEERA. So they can protect you, and you can protect the jungle. Shere Khan has sworn to kill you and given the chance he will. That's why you must eventually leave the jungle. The Pack and I will only be able to defend you for so long.

THE JUNGLE BOOK

MOWGLI. Yeah right. Most of ‘em wouldn’t even defend me against a bullfrog, let alone a tiger. ...Not that they’re ever around.

BAGHEERA. (*Looking about.*) Where are the other wolves? Why aren’t they here?

MOWGLI. Who knows. They’re always running off somewhere without me. Going to some secret hideout that’s only for *real* wolves.

BAGHEERA. I’d heard whispers through the trees that something has been luring them away. I thought they were rumors but... Man-Cub, you stay here. I’m going to track them down and see what they’re up to.

MOWGLI. You can’t do that! If you go after them, they’ll know I told!

BAGHEERA. If they’ve gotten themselves into trouble, then they’ll be happy you did.

MOWGLI. Bagheera, please! You’ll only make things worse!

BAGHEERA. I’m trying to help them, to help you— and in time, things will get better. You’ll see.

MOWGLI. No, they won’t! You just don’t understand! ...And you never will. (*Mowgli storms off, exiting.*)

BAGHEERA. Little Brother! Little Brother, wait—!!

BALOO. (*Startled awake.*) Huh?! HUH?! Who goes there?

BAGHEERA. Go back to sleep, Baloo.

BALOO. What? How dare you imply I was— Okay. (*And sleep he does. We shift as Bagheera exits. We shift...*)

SCENE THREE. A QUIET SPOT IN THE JUNGLE.

Mowgli makes his way through the underbrush, swatting away at the tall grass.

JUNGLE SPIRIT LEADER. His interest piqued, Bagheera decided to investigate the whereabouts of the young wolves and give Mowgli the time necessary to calm down.

JUNGLE SPIRIT TWO. He’d been feeling especially downtrodden lately,

JUNGLE SPIRIT THREE. That is until...

THE JUNGLE BOOK

MOWGLI. What's that? *(Something shiny on the ground twinkles invitingly in Mowgli's direction. Perhaps it's a large emerald. Curiously, he approaches it. As he bends down to snatch it up, magically, the item moves out of reach. Mowgli approaches it, it moves again.)* What gives? *(He approaches it again, again it slides away, eluding him. He goes after it a third time, snatches it up, and realizes it's on a thin vine.)* Why is it on a— *(MONKEY THREE bounds onto the stage, and locks eyes with Mowgli.)*

MONKEY THREE. Hello. *(Monkey Three then makes a few nonsensical chattering noises, chattering to itself.)*

MOWGLI. Hi? ...What do you want? *(Monkey Three chatters to itself a bit, in monkey-speak. It's kind of adorable. Mowgli cocks his head, unsure of how to react.)* Okay. And what does that mean? *(Monkey Three laughs a bit, and then, through a toothy smile...)*

MONKEY THREE. GET HIM! *(Music blares! Monkeys, screeching and hollering, appearing from every place imaginable! They seize the boy and begin to make off with him.)*

MOWGLI. Whoa— what? What's going on!?? Let me go! Let me go!!

JUNGLE LEADER. And then, hands— strong, greedy little hands— grabbed him all over, and before Mowgli knew it—

JUNGLE SPIRITS – ALL. SMACK!

JUNGLE SPIRIT FOUR. A wave of branches struck him in his face,

JUNGLE SPIRIT FIVE. And he was staring down,

JUNGLE SPIRIT SIX. Through the treetops,

JUNGLE SPIRIT ONE. With the monkeys bouncing and whooping and yelling,

JUNGLE SPIRIT TWO. As they carried him away to their home.

JUNGLE SPIRIT THREE. A crumbling ancient city known as...

JUNGLE SPIRITS – ALL. The Cold Lairs! *(A dance reminiscent of the one at the top of the show, filled with light and color, and highly exaggerated movement, plays out, as the Monkeys carry Mowgli through the jungle and over the treetops. Drums pound out a loud, tribal rhythm. The Monkeys holler and screech as they toss their newest prize around. Perhaps in this part of the show Mowgli is played by an oversized, obvious ragdoll and tossed from one set of Monkeys to another. Eventually the dance ends and we shift...)*

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SCENE FOUR. THE COLD LAIRS.

The stage is bathed in darkness. We are in a great vault, covered in riches. A few streaks of light cut through the blackness, illuminating the diamonds and rubies.

JUNGLE LEADER. Chapter Four.

JUNGLE SPIRITS – ALL. The Ancient City.

JUNGLE LEADER. When at last the Bandar-Log reached their destination— a kingdom, lost and buried in the jungle, they wasted no time taking their newest prize to a large, iron vault—

JUNGLE SPIRIT THREE. A vault sporting all their treasures!

JUNGLE SPIRIT FOUR. Some of them obscure... (*Jungle Spirit Four picks up something, well, obscure. You decide what that is.*)

JUNGLE LEADER. ...but others, vast fortunes that would make even the richest of rajahs envious. The floor was buried some five or six feet deep in coined gold and silver.

JUNGLE SPIRIT FIVE. There were diamonds!

JUNGLE SPIRIT SIX. Daggers!

JUNGLE SPIRIT ONE. And diadems!

JUNGLE SPIRIT TWO. And now, to add to the pile, a man-cub! (*The Monkeys and Mowgli enter. Mowgli is tossed into the cell, and the door is immediately slammed shut.*)

MOWGLI. What are you doing?! (*Banging against the barred door.*)
Hey! Let me out of here!

MONKEY ONE. Calm down, Manling.

MONKEY TWO. You're going to be there for a while.

MONKEY THREE. Yeah! Like forever! (*The Monkeys laugh a very monkey-ish laugh.*)

MONKEY ONE. Might as well get used to it! (*The Monkeys begin to exit.*) Great job, son! Your first kidnapping.

MONKEY TWO. We're so proud!

MONKEY ONE. You're a regular chimp off the old block.

MONKEY TWO. Ape-solutely! (*They giggle to one another and exit. Mowgli continues to bang against the bars.*)

THE JUNGLE BOOK

MOWGLI. Hey! Hey! C'mon! Let me out! Let me... *(It's no use.)* out. I guess Baloo was right about the Bandar-Log. He was right about everything. Now what do I do?

JUNGLE LEADER. And then he heard it. *(A rustling noise is heard, coming from the surrounding darkness.)*

MOWGLI. *(Startled.)* Huh?

JUNGLE SPIRIT FOUR. Soft at first... *(More rustling.)*

JUNGLE SPIRIT FIVE. And low. *(Even more.)*

JUNGLE SPIRIT LEADER. A sound, as if something was moving beneath the mountains of coins and jewels, and then, out of the darkness, appeared two large red eyes,

JUNGLE SPIRIT SIX. Glistening like rubies,

JUNGLE SPIRIT ONE. And a voice, as soft as it was threatening,

JUNGLE SPIRITS – ALL. Slithered through the air...

KAA – VOICE. Who goes there?!

MOWGLI. *(Petrified.)* Uh... uh...

KAA – VOICE. I said, WHO GOES THERE?!

MOWGLI. I uh...

KAA – VOICE. Very well. If you won't reveal your face, then I will reveal mine...

(KAA, the great python, slithers into the light. She is massive. She eyes Mowgli.)

JUNGLE LEADER. And then from the shadows, she emerged.

JUNGLE SPIRITS – ALL. Kaa.

KAA. What have we here? It's a man-cub. I haven't seen your kind in ages. My, my, you look good enough to eat. In fact, I think I will. *(Kaa makes her way toward Mowgli.)*

MOWGLI. What?! But you can't eat me!

KAA. And why not?

MOWGLI. Because uh, because of the Law of the Jungle. It forbids it!

KAA. Perhaps the law forbids it, but my stomach demands it. Haven't eaten in days, you know.

MOWGLI. But I'm just skin and bones. And besides, you still shouldn't eat me because uh... *(An idea occurs to him!)* Oh! Because I can do this!

THE JUNGLE BOOK

(Mowgli does the greeting of the Poison People. Kaa watches, completely transfixed.)

KAA. What the— *(Finally, a bit winded, Mowgli finishes.)*

MOWGLI. Ta-Da! Well?

KAA. ...What was that?

MOWGLI. The greeting... of the Poison People.

KAA. *(Laughing.)* Foolish, boy. I am a python. We are not poisonous.

MOWGLI. You're not?

KAA. No! Poisonous snakes are cowards, relying on venom. My strength lies in my hug... and jaws. Here, let me show you...

MOWGLI. No! No! Wait, stop! *(Mowgli backs away toward the door of the cell, trying his best to steer clear of Kaa. She slithers closer to him, unhooks her jaw, ready to strike, when suddenly – the clinging, clanging of a chain rattling is heard. Kaa is stopped almost immediately, Mowgli, leaning against the cage door, is just out of reach. Kaa snaps a few times, but it's no use.)*

KAA. Blast! Blast, this chain. This rotten chain!!

MOWGLI. Chain?

JUNGLE LEADER. And then Mowgli saw it— a great golden shackle was clamped down, around the serpent's tail—

JUNGLE SPIRIT FIVE. Preventing her from going any further.

MOWGLI. Who did this to you?

KAA. *(Still attempting to break free, perhaps occasionally snapping at Mowgli.)* The Bandar-Log, of course. If I wasn't attached to this, I could perform my dance and rid myself of this place.

MOWGLI. I didn't know pythons danced.

KAA. Oh we do, and let's just say it's rather... hypnotizing. At least I think it was. I've been locked away for so long I can't even remember. Oh, I used to spend my days stretched out over Kanha Rock, sunning my coat, showing it off. What I wouldn't give to go back there.

JUNGLE LEADER. The boy listened to the python intently, and even though Kaa had just tried to ingest him, Mowgli couldn't help but feel sorry for her.

JUNGLE SPIRIT SIX. It was then that something caught his eye.

MOWGLI. Hey! What's that? *(Mowgli snatches the object up quickly.)*

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JUNGLE SPIRIT ONE. It was an ankus,

JUNGLE SPIRIT TWO. A small hook,

JUNGLE SPIRIT THREE. Studded with rough turquoises,

JUNGLE SPIRIT FOUR. And sharp as an elephant's tusk.

JUNGLE SPIRIT FIVE. Looking at the weapon, the wheels in his head begin to spin. And a plan started to form.

MOWGLI. ...You know, we're not so different, you and me. We both were taken by the Bandar-Log. We both want to get out of here, and if you promise not to eat me... I think... *(Looking over the ankus.)* I might be able to make that happen. What do you say?

KAA. ...Fine. *(Kaa extends the end of her tail to shake Mowgli's hand.)*

But if this doesn't work... I will devour you nice and slowly.

MOWGLI. ...Good to know. Alright, here's what we do. *(Mowgli begins to whisper his plan to Kaa. The python reacts gleefully, clearly delighted by what she's hearing. We shift to...)*

SCENE FIVE. A HILLTOP NEXT TO SHERE KHAN'S LAIR.

Lights rise on Aadhira, Aadhya, and Aakaar, in a secluded part of the jungle, nestled among the hills. Quietly, cautiously, Bagheera enters. They do not see him.

JUNGLE LEADER. While Mowgli and Kaa formed their plan, Bagheera followed the scent of the young wolves, which led to a rocky alcove hidden behind a waterfall.

JUNGLE SPIRIT SIX. The wise panther's knowledge of the jungle was so great that he could hear every rustle in the grass,

JUNGLE SPIRIT ONE. Every breath of warm morning air,

JUNGLE SPIRIT TWO. Every splash of every little fish jumping in a pool,

JUNGLE SPIRIT THREE. Making it practically impossible to sneak-up on him or surprise–

BALOO. *(Loudly!)* Bagheera!

THE JUNGLE BOOK

BAGHEERA. *(Surprised. Perhaps the Jungle Spirits are surprised as well.) Ah!! (Turns to Baloo and whispers loudly.)* Baloo! Keep your voice down.

BALOO. *(Mimicking Bagheera's whisper.)* Okay. *(Sees the Wolves.)* What are those wolflings doing here instead of coming to class?

BAGHEERA. That's what I'm trying to find out. Something isn't right. I can feel it in my bones. We just need to make sure we're as discreet as possible and not to make a— *(As Bagheera prattles on, Baloo slowly begins to nod off.)*

BALOO. Zzzzzz...

BAGHEERA. Baloo? ...Baloo?? *(Bagheera turns to see the old brown bear fast asleep.)*

BALOO. ZzzzzzZZzzzzZZzzZZzzZZzzZZzz.

BAGHEERA. *(Loudly.)* BALOO! *(Perhaps Bagheera's second "Baloo" echoes, aided, of course, by the Jungle Spirits. The Young Wolves. Aakaar, Aadhira, and Aadhya sniff about, but at the utterance of Baloo's name, their ears perk up. Bagheera slaps a paw over Baloo's mouth. The panther and the bear duck behind a few boulders and continue to observe.)*

AAKAAR. D— d— do you hear something?

AADHIRA. I did. I think it was coming from over— *(Tabaqui slinks onstage.)*

TABAQUI. There you are! Welcome! Welcome! We've been waiting for you... *(She giggles.)* You know how the master hates it when you're late.

AADHYA. It wasn't our fault this time!

AADHIRA. We got sidetracked.

AADHYA. Yeah, by that runt, *Mowgli*.

AADHIRA. Sometimes he really raises my hackles!

AADHYA. He's the worst.

SHERE KHAN – VOICE. Personally, I couldn't agree more. *(Lights shift as Shere Khan appears.)* But first things first, the rest of the young ones from your pack are waiting for you inside... along with a freshly killed water buffalo. Compliments of... me.

AADHYA. Water buffalo!

AADHIRA. *(Licking his chops.)* Alright, now we're talkin'! Get in my belly!

THE JUNGLE BOOK

AAKAAR. Yeah... but didn't Akela say we have a truce with water buffalo? Aren't we forbidden from eating them? *(Aadhya and Aadhira know Aakaar is correct. They immediately become uneasy.)*

SHERE KHAN. I won't say a word if you don't.

AAKAAR. But we're not supposed to—

SHERE KHAN. Young one, relax. Akela does a lot of things you aren't supposed to do— like raise a man-cub for instance.

AAKAAR. Yeah... I mean he's annoying but, he's not that bad.

AADHYA/AADHIRA. Aakaar!/Shhh!

SHERE KHAN. Not that bad? Is that so? *(In a quick motion, Khan grabs Aakar's paw and places it under his neck.)* Here. Feel that? It's the mark of a collar. I was born among men. Man-cubs. They took my mother from me... and led her to slaughter. *(The Wolves gasp.)*

AADHIRA. B-but I don't think Mowgli would ever—

SHERE KHAN. He's not one of us! As long as Akela allows Mowgli to live in this jungle, we will forever be in danger. But hope is not lost.

TABAQUI. Nope. No, it isn't.

SHERE KHAN. If Akela were to miss her next kill, her reign would end, and a new pack leader would be elected, one who would rid the jungle of the Man-Cub once and for all. ...And if that happens, I can promise you that you'll have all the water buffalo you like.

AAKAAR. Rid the jungle of the Man-Cub? What are you going to do to Mowgli?

TABAQUI. *(Giggling ferociously.)* Well, actually we're going to— *(Shere Khan places his massive paw over Tabaqui's mouth, silencing her. But not before she continues to jabber on, her voice muffled, of course.)*

SHERE KHAN. Does it matter? Have I not been feeding you? Given you more than that pack leader of yours ever did?

TABAQUI. He has! He has!

SHERE KHAN. *(Staring up in the sky.)* Look! The sun is about to set... and soon Akela will begin her hunting ritual. Gather your brothers and sisters, make her miss her kill, and your pack will be restored. *(The Wolves look at one another hesitantly.)* Well?

AADHYA. *(A beat then...)* Fine... we'll do it. *(Aadhya howls loudly, and, his siblings following him, charges offstage.)*

THE JUNGLE BOOK

SHERE KHAN. Go! Go and stop her!! (*Lights fall on Shere Khan, as our focus shifts to Baloo and Bagheera, concealed behind the boulders.*)

BALOO. ...Bagheera, wh– what are we going to do?

BAGHEERA. If Akela misses her kill, we're all in danger. We've got to warn her! Now! (*They exit. We shift...*)

SCENE SIX. AN OPEN FIELD.

The stage is bathed in red. An open field rests before us.

JUNGLE LEADER. Bagheera and Baloo ran as fast as their paws would take them–

JUNGLE SPIRIT THREE. But as they raced through the tall grasses of Akela's hunting ground,

JUNGLE SPIRIT FOUR. They would soon discover...they were too late. (*And then a dance begins. An ANTELOPE, graceful and proud, leaps on the stage in time with an accompanying drumbeat. She looks around for a moment, then gallops through the jungle. Suddenly, Akela appears. Underscored, almost ballet-like, Akela chases it for a second, and then, just as she is about to pounce on it, two Wolves ram their bodies into her, causing her to fall. The Antelope darts off, free. Drums sound solemnly. Akela has missed her kill. We shift...*)

SCENE SEVEN. THE COLD LAIRS.

Back at the Cold Lairs, later that evening...

JUNGLE LEADER. Chapter Five.

JUNGLE SPIRITS – ALL. Kaa's Hunting. (*Monkey One approaches the cage door.*)

JUNGLE LEADER. Back at the Cold Lairs, the Bandar-Log decided it was time to feed their newest prize.

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MONKEY ONE. *(Entering. Singing to itself.)* FIVE LITTLE MONKEYS JUMPIN' ON THE BED, ONE FELL OFF AND BROKE HIS— *(He notices something.)* Hey! HEY! What are you doing there?!? *(Mowgli's back is turned to the audience, concealing the giant clamp around Kaa's tail, and the chain. The snake is motionless, appearing dead.)*

MOWGLI. Me? I'm not doing anything. *(He raises the ankus high in the air, and brings it down swiftly, once, twice, as if he's stabbing something ferociously.)*

MONKEY ONE. Yes, you are! You've got that pointy thing and— and our snake! Not our beautiful snake!! *(Furiously, Monkey One rips open the door to the vault, and hollers out:)* Bandar-Log! Bandar-Log, come quickly! *(It screeches, loudly.)* The Man-Cub is attacking our snake! *(Monkeys scurry in from offstage, frantic, all chattering among themselves.)*

MONKEYS – ALL. *(Screeching! Hollering!)* Not our snake!/ No!/No!!! *(They race toward Kaa's body and begin examining her.)*

MONKEY TWO. Wait a minute! ...There aren't any stab marks.

MONKEYS – ALL. There aren't?/There aren't?/No?/Huh?

MONKEY TWO. *(Holding up the ankus.)* But, if you weren't stabbing her with this...

MONKEY ONE. Then you were...

KAA. Freeing her. *(Lifting her head, and with a flick of her tail, tossing the chains and golden cuff away.)* Thank you, Man-Cub, but it seems all this hard work has made me very, VERY hungry.

MONKEY TWO. Oh, well in that case—

MONKEYS – ALL. *(Running, chattering over one another.)* Run!/Run!!

KAA. Now, Manling, watch and see how sensational a dancer I really am. *(The python begins wiggling her body in time with music.)*

JUNGLE LEADER. And then began the dance. The python began to circle and weave. She made loops and figure eights with her body; her coils, never resting, never hurrying, and never stopping her low, humming song... *(Music plays as the lights move and twinkle. A spell is being cast and the monkeys are powerless against it.)*

JUNGLE SPIRIT FIVE. ...and as she danced, the strangest thing occurred

THE JUNGLE BOOK

JUNGLE SPIRIT SIX. The Bandar-Log's eyes glazed over, as they became hypnotized,

JUNGLE SPIRITS – ALL. Unable to move.

KAA. Tell me monkeys, do you hear me?

MONKEYS – ALL. (*Speaking like mindless zombies.*) Yes, Kaa. We hear only you.

KAA. That's better. My first order of business, release the Man-Cub.

MONKEYS – ALL. As you wish! (*In unison, the Monkeys step aside, allowing Mowgli to exit.*)

KAA. Excellent. Now go, Man-Cub, what happens next is not for your eyes to see, and take the ankus with you as a reminder of your courage. You have a brave heart and a strong mind, they will serve you well.

MOWGLI. (*Snatching up the ankus.*) Thank you, Kaa. And uh... good hunting. (*Mowgli begins to exit.*)

KAA. Oh, it will be good indeed! (*Mowgli exits. Kaa begins twirling her body in one direction, then darting in another. Trancelike, the Monkeys all move as one, all under the spell of the python's dance. Kaa opens her jaws and one by one, the Bandar-Log make their way into them. We shift...*)

SCENE EIGHT. COUNCIL ROCK/A SPOT JUST BEYOND IT.

Mowgli enters Downstage, out of breath. Upstage, lights rise on Council Rock, which is surrounded by Akela and the Wolf Pack.

JUNGLE LEADER. Chapter Six.

JUNGLE SPIRITS – ALL. The Uprising.

JUNGLE LEADER. Finally free, Mowgli ran as quickly as he could through the forest. As the moon rose high into the night sky, he heard the call of the wolves at council rock... (*A chorus of Wolves howling is heard. Council Rock is seen in the distance.*) only it was a somber howl, the kind of which he'd never heard before

MOWGLI. (*To self.*) The Wolves? But why are they— (*Bagheera bounds onto the scene.*)

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BAGHEERA. Man-Cub, there you are! We've been looking everywhere for you!

MOWGLI. Bagheera! What's going on?

BAGHEERA. No time to explain, we must— *(Bagheera grabs the Man-Cub by the arm and attempts to run off with him, but Mowgli, seeing the council has gathered and that Akela is alone and downtrodden, realizes something is wrong. The following action, regarding the council, takes place upstage, giving the illusion of distance, so that Mowgli and Bagheera may comment on the action, but do not take part in it.)*

MOWGLI. *(Yanking his arm away.)* What's happening? Is that Akela?! What's wrong with Akela? *(The panther does not answer.)* Bagheera, what are they— *(His words are cut short as Shere Khan enters upstage, Tabaqui at his side. Shere Khan surveys the scene, triumphant.)*

JUNGLE SPIRIT ONE. And then he saw him, for the first time since he was a baby.

JUNGLE SPIRIT TWO. Draped in stripes and shadow.

JUNGLE SPIRIT THREE. Shere Khan made his way to the top of the rock, staring down at the wolves.

MOWGLI. Wha— what's he doing there?

(Lights shift back Upstage. Shere Khan, emboldened, stands over a broken Akela.)

SHERE KHAN. Look well, O Wolves! Look well at your fallen leader! Yes, fallen, as Akela has missed her kill. *(The Wolves howl in unison. A few perhaps even taunt or antagonize Akela, who is turning her head away from the scene. The lights shift, Downstage.)*

MOWGLI. But Akela is the strongest hunter in the pack!

BAGHEERA. We've got to go, Mowgli. We need to leave now! *(Shifting Upstage.)*

SHERE KHAN. Who, O Wolves, who now do you choose as your leader? Who do you feel will lead you to victory?

WOLVES – ALL. Shere Khan!

TABAQUI. Who??

WOLVES. Shere Khan!

TABAQUI. Who???

WOLVES. Shere Khan! Shere Khan! Shere Khan! Shere Khan! Shere—

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SHERE KHAN. Then it is decided! I will be your leader!

TABAQUI. *(Bouncing up and down with joy.)* Yay!

SHERE KHAN. And my first official act is to demand you seek out the man-cub! Scour the jungle! Find him and bring him to me! *(The Wolves howl loudly and run off. Back to Downstage.)*

BAGHEERA. You heard him, Mowgli. You must go! Now!

MOWGLI. But where?

BAGHEERA. To the Man-Village.

MOWGLI. But this is my home.

BAGHEERA. It's no longer safe!

MOWGLI. But I just came from the Bandar-Log! I faced a giant snake! I survived! I can defeat Shere Khan!

BAGHEERA. Shere Khan is one tiger— now you must face an entire pack! You must leave! *(The Wolves howl in the distance.)* And quickly!

MOWGLI. But Bagheera, nothing's going to happen. Akela won't allow it. She'll stop all this. Any moment now she'll— *(Mowgli's words are cut short. He sees something. We all do. Lights rise on the tiger as he approaches a defeated Akela, his one paw raised high in the air.)* Wait! What's he doing? Akela! Akela, look out behind you! *(Calling out.)* Akela, no! *(Bagheera places his paw over Mowgli's mouth, silencing him. Shere Khan swipes at Akela, causing the light on the Council Rock scene to immediately turn red, and then fade to black. Mowgli pulls Bagheera's paw off his mouth.)* Noooo! Akela, Akela she's— no, no, no.

JUNGLE LEADER. Then something began to hurt Mowgli inside him, as he had never been hurt in his life before. And as he caught his breath, tears began to run down his face.

MOWGLI. *(Wiping the tears. Inspecting them.)* What is this? What's happening to me?

BAGHEERA. Those are only tears. They only appear when a change is coming, or a heart is broken. This time, both things are true. You must leave, Mowgli. You must leave now.

JUNGLE LEADER. And in his heart, Mowgli knew the panther was right.

MOWGLI. ...But Akela, she's—

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BAGHEERA. I know. I also know that she'd do anything in her power to keep you safe— which is why you must go.

MOWGLI. (*Wiping away more tears.*) Will— will I ever be able to come back?

BAGHEERA. Maybe. Someday. If the Jungle needs you, it will call upon you...but it will be up to you to decide if you want to answer that call.

MOWGLI. I don't under—

BAGHEERA. You will.

MOWGLI. ...Don't forget me, Bagheera. Please.

BAGHEERA. Never. Now run! (*Gently.*) Run. (*Mowgli pauses for a moment, staring at the panther with wide eyes, gripping the ankus tightly. As he did at the top of the Act, Bagheera, like a tamed housecat, gently butts its head against the Man-Cub's. A beat.*)

JUNGLE LEADER. And so, as darkness spread through the jungle, the leaves and vines parted way, guiding Mowgli, leading him to safety, and chanting as they did so... (*Drums begin to beat.*) ON THE TRAIL THAT THOU MUST TREAD

TO THE THRESHOLD OF OUR DREAD

JUNGLE SPIRITS – ALL. WHERE THE FLOWER BLOSSOMS RED

JUNGLE LEADER. THROUGH THE NIGHTS WHEN THOU SHALT LIE

JUNGLE SPIRITS – ALL. PRISONED FROM OUR MOTHER-SKY

JUNGLE LEADER. HEARING US, THY LOVES, GO BY

JUNGLE SPIRITS – ALL. IN THE DAWNS WHEN THOU SHALT WAKE

JUNGLE LEADER. TO THE TOIL THOU CANST NOT BREAK

JUNGLE SPIRITS – ALL. HEARTSICK FOR THE JUNGLE'S SAKE

JUNGLE LEADER. WOOD AND WATER, WIND AND TREE WISDOM, STRENGTH, AND COURTESY

JUNGLE SPIRITS – ALL. JUNGLE-FAVOR GO WITH THEE!

BAGHEERA. Good luck, little brother. JUNGLE-FAVOR GO WITH THEE.

BAGHEERA/JUNGLE SPIRITS – ALL. JUNGLE-FAVOR GO WITH THEE!

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JUNGLE LEADER. And just as the dawn was beginning to break, Mowgli went down the hillside alone to meet those mysterious things called men. (*Music builds as Mowgli slowly exits the stage; Bagheera watches him intently. Lights rise on a victorious Shere Khan, upstage, Akela's body resting beside him. The Jungle is shifting... changing. BLACKOUT.*)

END OF ACT ONE

***THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS—
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