

TABAQUI. How can such sweet children have such nasty parents? *(He laughs.)*

AKELA *(pushing TABAQUI out the door)*. Out!

TABAQUI. I'm going! I'm going! *(He exits.)*

1ST CUB. Why does he always come to us for food?

AKELA. Tabaqui, the dish-licker, begs everyone for food.

MOTHER WOLF. But I'm not sure food was what he wanted tonight.

AKELA. What do you mean?

MOTHER WOLF. Did you see how he kept looking around the cave?

AKELA. For something to eat—that's all.

MOTHER WOLF. I suppose. But when it comes to Tabaqui, I'm always suspicious.

AKELA. This business about Shere Khan has me concerned. If I run into him tonight, he may be in for a fight.

MOTHER WOLF. No, avoid him. As the leader of the wolves, you should lead—not fight.

AKELA. Sometimes to lead is to fight—when all else fails.

MOTHER WOLF. Be careful.

1ST CUB. Bye, Father.

2ND CUB. Goodbye, Papa. Have a good hunt. *(The CUBS embrace AKELA.)*

AKELA. Farewell, my children. I'll return soon if I get a quick kill. *(He exits. The CUBS begin to play a hand game.)*

1ST CUB. You missed. My point.

2ND CUB. My point. You're the one who missed.

MOTHER WOLF. Children, I need you to help me clean the cave. And afterward, straighten up your den.

1ST CUB. Do we have to?

2ND CUB. We want to play.

MOTHER WOLF. What if the whole jungle wanted to play?

1ST CUB. Then we'd go out and play with them. *(They giggle. A noise is heard offstage.)*

2ND CUB. Listen—it sounds like someone is playing out there. *(Unintelligible sounds are heard offstage.)*

1ST CUB. Maybe it's Tabaqui again.

2ND CUB. I'll go see what it is.

1ST CUB. I'll go see what it is. *(They both exit running.)*

MOTHER WOLF. Children!...Anything to get out of work. *(Calling to offstage.)* If it's one of the monkey people tell him to go away...And if it's another cub, tell him you cannot play this evening. *(A pause.)* Well...what's there?... Can you see anything? *(Worried.)* Children...why don't you answer me? What is it?

1ST CUB'S VOICE *(from offstage)*. A cub!

MOTHER WOLF. A cub? Then tell him you can't play!

2ND CUB'S VOICE *(from offstage)*. But Mother...look!

(The CUBS enter holding hands with a smiling CHILD who wears a breech cloth.)

MOTHER WOLF *(alarmed)*. It's a human cub!

CHILD *(YOUNG MOWGLI)*. KOOLta. KOOLta!* [Doggies, doggies!]

1ST CUB. Can we keep him?

MOTHER WOLF. What is he doing here?

2ND CUB. He can stay with me.

1ST CUB. He can stay with me.

MOTHER WOLF. He'll stay with no one. He must go back to his parents. They're probably out looking for him right now.

* Hindi pronunciation—See Production Notes.