

distance. KAA enters quietly, hissing menacingly as he moves to the side of the stage. A moment later, the MONKEYS enter single-file, chattering loudly. MOWGLI is tied to a vine and is being dragged along by the last two MONKEYS. KAA steps forward and begins to sway in front of the lead MONKEY who hypnotically joins the sway, then collapses. In turn, the other MONKEYS are hypnotized, and they collapse one-by-one. Even MOWGLI falls under the spell and drops to the ground. Everything is suddenly quiet.)

KAA (*examining the scene*). Kaa, you are so sensational. Sss.
 BAGHEERA'S VOICE (*offstage*). They went this way!
 BALOO'S VOICE (*offstage*). Here they are!

(BALOO and BAGHEERA enter and survey the scene.)

BAGHEERA. Good work, Kaa!

BALOO. Thank you, old friend.

KAA. The boy is safe for now. But I overheard Shere Khan and his slippery servant discussing the overthrow of Akela. The man-cub will be in danger if that comes to pass. Sss.
(He exits.)

BALOO. The overthrow of Akela?

BAGHEERA. Mowgli would be turned over to Shere Khan for sure. *(Going to MOWGLI.)* Mowgli, wake up.

BALOO. Get up, little cub.

MOWGLI (*coming around*). Baloo...Bagheera. I just had the strangest dream. I dreamed the monkey people attacked me—and Kaa the snake—*(The MONKEYS begin to stir.)*

BAGHEERA. Sssh! Over here. *(He, MOWGLI and BALOO hide as the MONKEYS stand unsteadily one-by-one and chatter angrily at each other.)*

MONKEYS. What, bzzz, happened?...Where is the, sss, man-cub...? He has escaped...*(Whistle)...*It's your fault, sss... His fault, bzzz, *(Whistle. Etc. They begin to fight among themselves and exit yelling at each other.)*

MOWGLI (*coming out of hiding, followed by BALOO and BAGHEERA*). It was no dream after all.

BAGHEERA. Thanks to Kaa, you are safe.

BALOO. Your lack of vigilance almost cost you your freedom.

BAGHEERA. If not your life.

BALOO (*looking at the list*). Rule number ten—
 "He who is not alert
 Often gets hurt."

MOWGLI. I promise never to disregard your teachings again. And I apologize for complaining about the Laws of the Jungle.

BAGHEERA. Well-spoken, good cub. Rule number eleven—
 "He who admits his mistake,
 A very wise man will make."

BALOO. Excellent rule. *(Looking at the list.)* Wait a minute, there is no rule eleven.

BAGHEERA. There is now. I just made it up.

MOWGLI. From here on I will admit my mistakes and keep my eyes open.

BAGHEERA. And well you must. We have learned that Shere Khan is planning a rebellion of the wolves against Akela. He will also try to turn them against you.

MOWGLI. Why does he hate me so?

BALOO. All creatures hate the things they fear. And Khan fears only man.

MOWGLI. What can we do to stop him?

BAGHEERA. The time has come for you to act alone, little friend. We have taught you the Laws of the Jungle and the means of protection.

BALOO. It is now up to you to fight your battle with Shere Khan. It is time to think for yourself.

MOWGLI. But thinking is hard work.

BAGHEERA. That's why many creatures choose not to think.

MOWGLI. Wait! Shere Khan fears one thing besides man. It's what all animals fear—the red flower.

BALOO. That is true.

MOWGLI. I shall seek the red flower and set it full on Khan's tail—Tabaqui's, too, for that matter.

BAGHEERA. But to get the red flower, you must return to the village.

MOWGLI. I am not afraid. I will enter quietly, take a pot of the red flower and escape unnoticed. *(He starts to leave.)*

BALOO. Mowgli...wait. What if you decide to remain in the village—and never return to us?

MOWGLI. Don't be silly. I'm a wolf boy—remember? Besides, I do not even speak the language of the villagers.

BAGHEERA. You once did.

MOWGLI. A few words, perhaps, but I've long since forgotten those. Fear not, faithful friends. I shall return—if for no other reason than to fight Shere Khan, my mortal enemy since the day I first set foot in the jungle.

BALOO *(hugging MOWGLI)*. Farewell, little friend.

BAGHEERA. Be careful, my cub. *(They embrace.)*

MOWGLI. Goodbye for now. Wish me well. *(He exits.)*

BALOO. Do you think he will come back to us?

BAGHEERA. Yes. But the bigger question is—will he remain with us when he has seen the village and the people he was once a part of?

BALOO. I'm afraid we cannot worry about that right now. We have a bigger problem here.

BAGHEERA. Yes. The problem of Shere Khan and a group of young wolves who are ripe for a tragic rebellion. Let's go. *(He and BALOO exit.)*

CURTAIN
END OF ACT ONE

(Note: The play may be performed in one longer act without an intermission, if desired.)