

MOWGLI (*somewhat exhausted*). It has taken me almost two days to reach the village. I haven't been here for years, but it seems strangely familiar. (*There is a loud offstage noise behind him.*) What was that?

(*He drops to the ground, trying to hide. A trumpet sound is heard. HATHI enters.*)

MOWGLI. Hathi! What are you doing here?

HATHI. I followed you. Baloo and Bagheera told me of your mission. I thought you might want a ride back home—especially if you are carrying a heavy pot filled with the red flower.

MOWGLI. Thank you, Hathi. I may take you up on that offer.

(*Two WOMEN—one young and one old—enter from the gates of the village. The OLD WOMAN carries a pot which emits smoke.* The YOUNG WOMAN holds a large net. They go to a tree and examine it. MOWGLI and HATHI are unseen and unheard by the WOMEN.*)

MOWGLI. Who are they?

HATHI. Two humans it seems to me.

MOWGLI. What are they doing?

HATHI. It appears they have come to pick areca nuts from the palm trees. They will gather them in that large net.

MOWGLI. Look. The older woman carries a pot of the red flower!

HATHI. To keep the animals away.

MOWGLI. Perhaps she will give it to me.

* See Production Notes.

HATHI. I'll wait for you in that grove of trees.

MOWGLI. Thank you, Hathi. (*HATHI exits. The WOMEN spread the large net on the ground.*)

OLD WOMAN (MESSUA). Is sahl bahHOOT bahDAM hue hai, DAHree. [The nuts are plentiful this year, Dari.]

YOUNG WOMAN (DARI). WHOMay khuSHE hai kai hoom baDAI JAHlee LAYah hai, maySUEah. [I am glad we brought the large net, Messua.] (*MOWGLI creeps up to them. The YOUNG WOMAN is alarmed.*) Woh come hai? [Who is that?]

OLD WOMAN. DAHro maht. Yeh CHOTah LAHDkah hai. [Do not be afraid. It is only a boy.] (*To MOWGLI.*) Tomb cone? [Who are you?]

MOWGLI. I—I need the pot of red flower.

OLD WOMAN. KeyAH? [What?]

MOWGLI. I forgot. They do not understand my language. And I do not remember theirs. (*Pointing to the pot, then to himself.*) I need—that. Please. It is very important.

OLD WOMAN (*going to him*). WhoMAY lagHTAH hai hum TOOmAY ja-huTA hai. [I think I know you.]

MOWGLI. What?

OLD WOMAN (*gently taking MOWGLI'S hand*). YAHNha AHwoe, DAHree. [Come here, Dari.]

MOWGLI. Dari? (*The YOUNG WOMAN slowly goes to MOWGLI.*)

OLD WOMAN (*smiling*). DAHree. [Dari.]

MOWGLI. I remember that name. (*Gently touching DARI'S hair.*) You are the little girl who lived across the path from us. You were skinny and ugly then... You're beautiful now. What happened? (*The YOUNG WOMAN smiles shyly.*)

OLD WOMAN. KahYAH yeh hoe sockTAH hai? Key yeh NAHthoo, MERah LADkah hai? [Is it possible? Can this be Nathoo—my son?]

YOUNG WOMAN. KayYAH tum NAHthoo hoe? NAHthoo?
[Are you Nathoo?...Nathoo?]

MOWGLI. Nathoo? Me? No, I am Mowgli. Little frog. See?
(*He squats and hops around. The WOMEN laugh.*) But perhaps I am Nathoo as well. And perhaps—you are my mother. (*He embraces the OLD WOMAN.*)

YOUNG WOMAN (*smiling*). NAHthoo. [Nathoo.] (*The OLD WOMAN tries to lead him toward the gates.*)

OLD WOMAN. AHwoo ham-ahRA saht. [Come with us.]

MOWGLI. You want me to stay here?...Maybe I should. Learn your language—learn your ways—(*Looking at the YOUNG WOMAN.*) Learn what I have missed all these years. (*An offstage trumpeting sound is heard.*) But not yet. I have unfinished business in the jungle. (*Quickly.*) Please. Let me have the pot of red flower. (*He picks it up.*) I will bring it back, I promise. (*The OLD WOMAN nods affirmatively.*) Thank you. (*The YOUNG WOMAN gathers up the large net and offers it to him.*) No, I don't need the net. (*He looks at it.*) Wait. I just had a thought. Maybe I can use that net for something. (*He takes the net.*) Thank you—both of you. Now hurry back inside. You are no longer protected since I have the red flower. I will return these, I promise.

OLD WOMAN (*embracing him*). BaiDAI, NAHthoo. [Goodbye, Nathoo.]] (*The YOUNG WOMAN starts to embrace him, then shies away and offers her hand.*)

MOWGLI. What is that?...Probably a human custom. (*He shakes her hand awkwardly. They laugh.*)

YOUNG WOMAN. BaiDAI, NAHthoo. [Goodbye, Nathoo.]

MOWGLI. I will be back. I don't know when, but I will return.

(*The WOMEN wave to him and exit. MOWGLI stands watching them. HATHI enters.*)

HATHI. Come on! Let's go!

MOWGLI. What?...Yes, I'm coming, Hathi.

HATHI (*pointing to offstage*). You can climb up on that stump over there and get on my neck.

MOWGLI. I want you to get me back to the jungle as fast as—as a herd of elephants.

HATHI. One elephant does not a herd make, but I'll do the best I can. (*As they leave.*) Why did you take the net?

MOWGLI. With your help, it may come in handy. Who knows? Let's go. (*They exit.*)

(*The scene shifts to an office at the United Services Boarding School which is set up at the side of the stage. CROFTS is at a desk looking at a stack of manuscripts. WILLIES enters.*)

WILLIES. Master Crofts. You're up late.

CROFTS. I extended the short-story contest deadline till midnight.

WILLIES. The entries are not all in?

CROFTS. I was hoping for one or two more.

WILLIES. I'm interested in reading Kipling's story. I want to know how he handled that wolf business—with the howling and all.

CROFTS. I'm afraid we'll never know.

WILLIES. What?

CROFTS. He didn't turn his story in.

WILLIES. Too bad. He seems such a talented lad.

CROFTS. He said he was having some trouble with the middle section of the story. He must have given up.