

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.

WILLIES (*looking at his pocket watch*). There are still a couple of hours left. Why don't you go check on him?

CROFTS. I extended the deadline to the very end of the day. It wouldn't be fair for me as the teacher to do more.

WILLIES. Well, I'm *not* the teacher, so I *will* go see what's wrong. (*He exits.*)

CROFTS (*smiling as he holds up the manuscripts*). It's going to be a long night. (*Picking up several envelopes and a newspaper.*) And I haven't even looked at today's newspaper or read the morning mail. Hmm. A memo from Headmaster Price. (*Reading the memo.*) "To the English Faculty—I have decided to honor the winner of the fiction contest by naming him the editor of the school literary magazine next year." That's quite an honor. I just hope one of these writers is deserving of it. (*Flipping through the manuscripts.*) Jacobson writes pretty well...So does Tumbley. Fielding does okay. And Hanley isn't bad—though his work often reads a lot like Fielding's. I'm just not sure there's a literary editor represented here...Why didn't Kipling turn *his* story in?

(*WILLIES enters.*)

WILLIES. He didn't give up.

CROFTS. What?

WILLIES. Rudyard. He didn't give up at all. He went to sleep writing at his desk. He said he hadn't been to bed for three days.

CROFTS. Why not?

WILLIES. I don't know. When I woke him up, he was mumbling something about tigers and villages and the red flower—whatever that means. But right now he's writing

furiously. He's desperate to finish by midnight. (*He starts to leave.*)

CROFTS. Where are you going?

WILLIES. To make a strong pot of tea to keep him awake.

CROFTS (*smiling*). Always the protector.

WILLIES. Just as you are always the teacher.

CROFTS. Wait, I'll go with you. I need some strong tea myself. I have to read all these stories tonight! (*He and WILLIES laugh and exit.*)

(*The scene changes to the jungle. SHERE KHAN and TABAQUI enter, followed by the WOLVES.*)

SHERE KHAN. Run with me, young wolves! Run with your new leader. (*ALL howl with delight.*) This night we shall attack the cattle in the village.

1ST WOLF. But, Chief Khan, we are not allowed to go near the village.

SHERE KHAN. *I* allow you. *I command* you!

(*ALL howl enthusiastically. AKELA enters.*)

AKELA. Stop! What goes on here?

SHERE KHAN. Ah, it is Akela. Your time is up, old wolf. The pack has elected me as its new leader. Your reign is no more. (*The WOLVES cheer.*)

AKELA. I see you have beguiled my children with your silver tongue—and your serpentine assistant.

TABAQUI. Guilty as charged, your majesty. Your *ex-majesty*. (*He and the WOLVES laugh.*)

SHERE KHAN. We have also cast your precious Mowgli from our pack. When he returns from wherever he is, he