

THE JUNGLE BOOK

*Adapted from
Rudyard Kipling's stories*

by Craig Sodaro

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STORY OF THE PLAY

The peaceful life of Machua and Nila is shattered the day the new British local government official arrives in their Indian village and demands their land for his new villa. In a scuffle, the adjutant's assistant, Mugger, steals Nila and Machua's baby boy and races into the jungle. Look as hard as they might, the grieving parents find no trace of their son.

Mugger leaves the baby boy near a wolf cave where Mother and Father wolf decide to adopt the man-cub. At a great council meeting, other animals voice their disapproval, knowing that having anything to do with man means trouble. But Akela, the leader, places Baloo, the bear, and Bagheera, the panther, in charge of the boy now called Mowgli. Shere Khan, the tiger, wants nothing more than to eat the man-cub, but is kept away by Mowgli's protectors.

Eleven years pass, and Mowgli is still a novice at hunting, greatly dependent upon Bagheera and Baloo. The two decide to leave Mowgli in the jungle alone so that he'll grow up. But the boy suddenly finds he's got more trouble than he knows how to handle. The monkeys kidnap him and haul him off to the Forbidden City. Then two hyenas, who love trouble and are always on the lookout for a carcass to munch on, trick Mowgli into encountering the vicious White Cobra.

Mugger shows up again, leading an expedition to the Forbidden City searching for gold and jewels. This terrifies the animals who realize they'll be pushed out of their homes if the treasure of the White Cobra is found. Mowgli suddenly stands between the humans and the animals and must find a way to help those who have raised him and those who long ago lost him.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(7 male, 9 female, 25 either, much doubling possible)

NILA: Mowgli's mother.

2 WOMEN

MACHUA: Mowgli's father.

GAVIAL: Assistant to the adjutant.

ADJUTANT: The local British governmental head.

MUGGER: Another assistant.

SHERE KHAN: A villainous tiger.

TABAQUI: A hyena.

TABAKOO: Another hyena.

MOTHER: A wolf.

FATHER: A wolf.

SIKA: The oldest wolf cub.

MIKA: Next oldest wolf cub.

PIKA: The youngest wolf cub.

CILA: A beautiful bird.

KAA: A snake.

BAGHEERA: A panther.

BALOO: A bear.

NAKOOMA: An antelope.

AKELA: The old leader of the wolf pack.

MOWGLI: The jungle boy.

3 DEER

PORKY: A porcupine.

MONKEY KING

6 MONKEYS

MONKEY QUEEN

LADY-IN-WAITING: Another monkey.

WHITE COBRA: Who guards the treasure.

MADAME BIJOU: Seeking the treasure.

GRINELLA: Her daughter.

SWOOZIE: Her other daughter.

LITA: A young girl from the village.

2 HENCHMEN

SETTING

A representational jungle set. At center, a large platform about four feet high designed to look like a huge rock or group of rocks. Platform on top is top of Council Rock. Below is the entrance to the cave. Platform can be turned around to show interior of the cave. Stairs to top of platform back, left and right. Palm trees and foliage dot the stage giving characters places to hide. The use of more platforms to give different levels of action would be useful. For the village scene, two huts are placed onstage. During the final scene at the village, the post to which Lita is tied is brought in. A campfire is also a nice addition in the village scene. Two small trucks covered with silver and gold "treasures" (spray painted silver and gold) achieve the desired effect.

COSTUMES

In the original production, the humans were dressed in period costumes (India, circa 1850). The animals were dressed in "cartoon style" costumes depicting their character, but not as animals. Baloo dressed in overalls with a straw hat. Shere Khan wore a black suit with orange stripes sewn on, a white shirt and black bowtie. Tabaqui and Tabakoo were dressed as gangsters. Kaa wore a long, slinky evening gown, and so on. The effect worked very well. Performer's faces were not hidden by makeup or masks, and their characters were reflected in their outfits which lent a great deal of color to the production.

Props are listed at the end of the play.

ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: The village, evening of a day in the dry season. NILA, WOMAN ONE, and WOMAN TWO work in the fields, downstage. NILA carries a baby on her back. The women bundle rushes, strewn across the front of the stage.)

NILA: The jungle ... it surrounds us
Palm and fern and vine
We know our place is here
Where the sun is free to shine.

WOMAN ONE: But deep within the shadows
There dwell the jungle beasts
Lying in wait for one of us
To become a delicious feast.

WOMAN TWO: Baloo the bear lumbers deep
And Bagheera prowls the floor.
Kaa the python twists and turns
And wolves hunt by the score.

NILA: Cila the kite flies by night.
The White Cobra guards the gold.
Oh, but we must watch our step
Or we'll end up stiff and cold.

WOMAN TWO: But this is no time to think of fear.
We should speak with hearts of joy!

WOMAN ONE: Truly all the village smiles
Upon your newborn boy.

NILA: It's true, Machua and I couldn't be happier.

WOMAN ONE: *(At NILA'S back.)* And how is your son?

NILA: Hungry! Always hungry!

(NILA removes the wrapped baby from her back and gently places him on the rushes.)

WOMAN TWO: A good sign. You have been blessed. He
is strong, hungry and cries loudly.

NILA: You hear him?

The Jungle Book

- 6 -

WOMAN ONE: The whole village hears him! At night.
LATE at night. It's a wonder anyone can get up with the
sun in the morning!

WOMAN TWO: Have you decided on a name for him?

(MACHUA enters left to gather the bundles of rushes.)

MACHUA: How is my son?

NILA: What will you name him?

MACHUA: I don't know yet. A word that means the strength
of a hundred elephants, the courage of a tiger, and the
cunning of a jackal.

WOMAN TWO: One word? You might as well try to spin
gold from those rushes!

*(GAVIAL, ADJUTANT, and MUGGER enter left. They look
about the area.)*

WOMAN ONE: It appears you have company, Machua.

MACHUA: And who might I ask has honored us with a visit?

GAVIAL: *(Ignoring MACHUA.)* Does it suit my lord?

ADJUTANT: Oh, very nicely. This is the perfect spot.

NILA: What?

MUGGER: Can't you hear nothin', lady? He can see it's the
perfect spot! You natives ought to clean out your ears.

GAVIAL: It's quite all right, Mugger. This woman will soon
be the envy of all her neighbors.

MACHUA: And why will that be?

ADJUTANT: Oh, Gavial! There is a well somewhere, isn't
there?

MACHUA: Why do you want to know?

MUGGER: There's a well, my lord! A fine well behind the
house! I've checked it out.

ADJUTANT: And those trees there –

MUGGER: Peach trees. Biggest, sweetest fruit in the entire
province!

ADJUTANT: Excellent! My wife so likes fresh fruit in the
morning.

End of Freeview

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