

THE JUNGLE BOOK

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 TIMELESS CLASSICS



Mowgli's Brothers

It was a very warm evening when Father Wolf woke up from his day's rest. Mother Wolf lay beside him. Her nose was draped across four tumbling, squealing cubs. The moon rose over the mouth of the cave where they all lived.

"Arugh!" said Father Wolf. "It is time to hunt again." He was about to run downhill when a little shadow crossed the entrance of the cave.

A small voice whined, "Good luck go with you, O Chief of the Wolves. And may your children never forget those who are hungry!"

It was the despised jackal, Tabaqui—the one who runs about making mischief and telling tales.

Father Wolf said stiffly, "Enter then, and look for yourself."

Tabaqui found a bone with some meat on it. Licking it merrily, he said, "Shere Khan has moved his hunting grounds. He will hunt here next."

Shere Khan was the tiger who lived near the Wainganga River, 20 miles away.

Father Wolf cried, "He has no *right!* The Law of the Jungle forbids him to move his hunting grounds without fair warning. He will frighten off the game for ten miles around!"

Mother Wolf said quietly, "His mother did not call him Lungri (the Lame One) for nothing. That is why he has only killed men's cattle. The villagers of the Wainganga are angry with him. Now he has come here to make our villagers angry. They will hunt the jungle for him, and we must be ready to run when they burn the grass."

"*Out!*" snapped Father Wolf.

"I go," said Tabaqui. "But listen! You can hear Shere Kahn coming now. I might have saved myself the message."

From the valley below the cave came the angry whine of a tiger. He had caught nothing and did not care if the whole jungle knew it.

Father Wolf said, "The fool! Does he think our deer cannot hear such noise?"

"Hush," said Mother Wolf. "It is not our deer he hunts tonight. It is Man."

"*Man!*" Father Wolf snorted in disgust. "And on *our* ground, too! Who does he think he is?"

The Law of the Jungle forbids every beast to eat Man—except when he is showing his children how to kill. The reason is that man-killing brings white men riding on elephants and carrying guns. Along with them, the white men would bring hundreds of brown men with gongs and torches.

They heard the full-throated “Aaarh!” of the tiger’s charge, followed by a howl.

Father Wolf frowned. “The fool! He must have jumped at a woodcutter’s campfire again. He probably burned his feet.”

“Something is coming up the hill,” Mother Wolf warned, twitching one ear. “Get ready.”

When the bushes rustled near the cave, Father Wolf sprang. But the big wolf stopped his leap in midair. He landed almost where he left the ground.

“Man!” he snapped. “It’s a man’s cub. Look!”

Right in front of him stood a naked brown baby who could just walk. The child looked up into Father Wolf’s face and laughed.

“A *man’s* cub?” said Mother Wolf. “Quickly—bring it into the cave.”

Father Wolf’s jaws closed gently around the child’s back. Then he laid the naked baby down among the squirming cubs.

“How little and smooth he is! How *bold!*” said



Mother Wolf softly. The baby was pushing his way between the cubs to get closer to the mother wolf's warm hide.

“Ahai!” cried Mother Wolf. “Look! He is taking his meal with the others. Was there ever a wolf who could boast of a man's cub among her children?”

Suddenly the moonlight was blocked from the cave by Shere Khan's great head and shoulders. Behind him Tabaqui squeaked, “My lord, it went in here!”

“I have come for my game,” said Shere Khan. “Give me the man's cub at once.”

The wolves could see that Shere Khan was furious from hunger and the pain of his burned feet. But Father Wolf knew the mouth of the cave was too narrow for him to enter. "The wolves take orders from the head of the pack," he said, "not from a striped cattle-killer. The man-cub is ours—to kill if *we* choose."

"What talk is this of choosing? Must I beg for what already belongs to me? It is I, Shere Khan, who speaks!"

Mother Wolf sprang forward. Her eyes, like two green moons in the darkness, faced the blazing eyes of Shere Khan. She said, "And it is I, Raksha (the Demon), who answers. The cub is *mine*, Lungri—mine to me! He shall not be killed. He shall live to run with the pack and hunt with the pack. Someday, perhaps he shall hunt *you*! Now go back to the jungle, lame cattle-killer! Go!"

Shere Khan backed out of the cave's mouth. "We will see what the pack will say about this! The cub is mine, and to *my* teeth he will come in the end, you thieves!" he shouted.

Panting, Mother Wolf threw herself down among the cubs. "Shere Khan speaks the truth," Father Wolf said. "The cub must be shown to the pack. Will you still keep him, Mother?"

“He came naked and alone, yet he was not afraid!” she said. “Yes, I will keep him. Lie still, O Mowgli, for Mowgli the Frog is what I will call you.”

“But what will our pack say?” said Father Wolf.

The Law of the Jungle was clear. It said that when a wolf’s cubs are old enough to stand, they must be brought before the pack. This ceremony was to show the other wolves that they belonged.

Father Wolf waited until his cubs could run a little. Then, on the night of the pack meeting, he took them, along with Mowgli and Mother Wolf, to the Council Rock. This was a hilltop covered with stones and boulders.

There on his rock lay Akela, the great gray Lone Wolf. He led all the pack by his strength and cunning. Below him sat 40 or more wolves. They ranged from scarred gray veterans who could handle a buck alone to lively black three-year-olds who only *thought* they could.

Akela cried, “Look well, O wolves!” One by one, the wolves pushed their cubs to the center of the ring for the others to look over. When the time came, Father Wolf pushed Mowgli into the ring. The man-cub sat playing with some pebbles that shone in the moonlight.

A roar came up from behind the rocks. Then Shere Khan cried out, "That cub is *mine*! What have wolves to do with a man's cub?"

Akela didn't even twitch his ears. "And what have wolves to do with the orders of others? Look well!" he commanded.

Now the Law of the Jungle says that if there is any dispute over a cub, he must be spoken for by at least two members of the pack. And these must not include his father or mother.

"Who speaks for this cub?" asked Akela.

There was no answer. Mother Wolf got ready for a fight if it came to that.

Then Baloo rose up. Baloo was the only other creature who was allowed at the pack meetings. He was the sleepy brown bear who taught the wolf cubs the Law of the Jungle. Baloo said, "I speak for the man's cub. There is no harm in him. Let him run with the pack. I myself will teach him."

"We need yet another," said Akela.

A black shadow dropped down into the circle. It was Bagheera the Black Panther. Everyone knew Bagheera, and nobody cared to cross his path. He was as cunning as Tabaqui, as bold as the wild buffalo, and as reckless as the wounded elephant. But his voice was as soft as wild honey and his

skin was softer than down.

“O Akela,” purred Bagheera, “I have no right to be here. But the Law of the Jungle says the life of a cub may be bought at a price. Am I right?”

“Good! Good! It is the Law,” cried the young wolves, who were always hungry.

“To Baloo’s word I will add one bull, just killed, not half a mile from here.” Bagheera went on. “Will you accept the man’s cub in trade for this?”

Then a chorus of voices sang out. “What matter? What harm can a naked frog do us? He will die in the winter rains. He will burn in the sun. Let him run with the pack. Where is the bull, Bagheera?”

When the others went off to find the dead bull, only Akela, Bagheera, Baloo, and Mowgli’s own family of wolves were left. Shere Khan, too, had roared off into the night. He was very angry that Mowgli had not been handed over to him.

“Roar well,” Bagheera muttered to himself, under his whiskers. “The time will come when this naked frog will make you roar another tune—or I know nothing of Man.”

Kaa's Hunting

When Mowgli was a bit older, Baloo began teaching him the Law of the Jungle. Usually, young wolves learn only laws for their own pack. But Mowgli, as a man-cub, had to learn a great deal more by heart. He grew very tired of having to say the same thing over and over a hundred times. But as Baloo said to Bagheera one day, “There is nothing in the jungle too little to be killed. The Master Words of the jungle shall protect him with every stranger he meets. I will call Mowgli and he shall say them. Come, Little Brother!”

Mowgli slid down a half-fallen tree trunk. “I come for Bagheera and not for you, fat old Baloo!” he said rudely.

“That is all one to me,” said Baloo, though Mowgli’s words hurt him. “Tell Bagheera then. Tell him the Master Words I have taught you this day.”

Mowgli gave the Master Words—*We be of one*