

LADYBIRD CLASSICS



The Jungle Book

CHAPTER ONE

The Man-Cub



IT WAS A warm evening in the jungle. In a cave high in the hills, Mother Wolf lay with her four cubs playing and tumbling around her. Father Wolf woke from his day's rest, yawned and stretched his strong legs. It was time to go hunting.

Suddenly a blood-curdling roar filled the air. The wolves recognized the sound. It was made by a tiger, but not just *any* tiger.

Mother Wolf peered out of the cave. There was a rustling of leaves nearby. She stared in amazement as a tiny brown baby came crawling out of the bushes!

'Quickly, bring the little one to me,' she said to Father Wolf. At once, Father Wolf went to the baby. He picked him up as gently as he would pick up one of his own cubs. His sharp teeth didn't even mark the smooth skin.

He laid the baby at Mother Wolf's side. The baby sat up and smiled, and then he pushed between the cubs to get closer to Mother Wolf.

'How soft he is,' sighed Mother Wolf. 'And not in the least bit afraid of us.'

Suddenly the cave went dark. Shere Khan's great head and shoulders filled the entrance.

'What do you want?' asked Father Wolf, standing in front of Mother Wolf and the cubs.



'I was hunting a man-cub,' growled Shere Khan. 'His parents ran off. I saw him come this way. Give him to me!'

Father Wolf wasn't frightened. He knew that the huge tiger couldn't squeeze into the cave.

'The cub is ours now,' he said.

'How dare you! *Give me the man-cub!*' roared the angry Shere Khan.

At that, Mother Wolf sprang forward.

'The man-cub is *mine!*' she cried, her eyes blazing with anger. 'He shall not be killed by you. He shall live with us, as one of our own cubs. Leave us in peace. Go back to your own part of the jungle!'

Shere Khan knew that it was useless to argue. He backed out of the cave. But, as he did so, he shouted, 'The man-cub *shall* be mine one day!' Then he stalked off down the hill.

'We won't let that tiger come near you again,' Mother Wolf said softly to the baby.

The baby gurgled happily.

'What shall we call him?' asked Grey Brother, the eldest of the cubs.

'Let's call him Mowgli,' said Mother Wolf.

'And when he is grown up he shall hunt Shere Khan,' added Father Wolf.

Mowgli laughed innocently. He knew nothing yet of the adventures he would have as he grew up in the jungle!

CHAPTER TWO

The Pack Council



ON THE NIGHT of the full moon, Father and Mother Wolf took their four cubs and Mowgli to the Council Rock. This was a very special place. All new cubs had to be brought here to be inspected by the pack.

It was an anxious time for Mother Wolf. Mowgli had been a part of her family for two weeks now. She had grown to love

him as much as her own cubs. But it was up to the pack to decide whether Mowgli could stay.

At the top of the rock lay Akela, the leader of the pack. Below him, in a circle, sat forty or fifty wolves, young and old.

In the centre of the circle, the new cubs were playing together. One by one the older wolves came forward. They had a good look at each cub.

At last, they came to Mowgli who sat in the middle of the circle, playing with some pebbles.

Suddenly there came a roar from behind the rocks. It was Shere Khan.

‘The man-cub is mine!’ he growled. ‘What do wolves want with a man-cub?’

Some of the younger wolves agreed. ‘We don’t want a man-cub in our pack!’ they shouted.

‘Silence!’ commanded Akela. ‘You all know the law of the jungle. If two



members of the pack will speak for Mowgli, he may stay.'

Mother and Father Wolf looked all round the circle of wolves. If only someone would get up and speak for Mowgli! As they were his new mother and father, *they* were not allowed to speak for him.

The wolves sat quite still. Just as Mother Wolf thought that she was going to lose Mowgli, she heard a grunt behind her.

It was Baloo, the sleepy brown bear. His job was to teach the cubs the ways of the jungle. He was the only creature other than the wolves who was allowed to sit with the Pack Council.

He grunted again as he sat up. 'I speak for the man-cub,' he said. 'Let him run with the pack. I shall teach him.'

But Akela said, 'We need one more to speak for him.' Just then a dark shadow dropped down into the circle. It was Bagheera, the black panther.



'I come as a friend, Akela,' he purred. His voice was as soft and sweet as honey. 'I like the look of this man-cub,' he continued. 'If you let him stay in the pack, I will give you a whole bull. I have just killed him, and he is nice and fat.'

The wolves were always hungry. A whole bull would make a delicious feast. At once, they agreed to let Mowgli stay.

Shere Khan wasn't pleased. He gave a mighty roar and vanished into the jungle.

CHAPTER THREE

Lessons with Baloo



MANY YEARS PASSED. Mowgli lived happily with the wolves. Mother and Father Wolf were very kind to him, and the four cubs thought of him as their brother. He grew bigger and stronger as he learned to live in the jungle.

Whenever he felt dirty or hot, he swam in the forest pools. When he was hungry, he ate nuts and fruit, or honey from the

wild bees. Soon he could climb almost as well as he could swim, and swim almost as well as he could run.

Every day Mowgli went to see Baloo. The wise old bear taught him everything he needed to know about the jungle.

Baloo taught him how to tell if a branch was rotten before climbing on it. He told him how to speak politely to the wild bees if he came upon a hive. And Mowgli learned to warn the water snakes in the pools before diving in.

Then there were the hunting calls. Each creature in the jungle had a different call, and Mowgli had to learn all of them, in case he needed to call for help.

Often, if he hadn't learned what Baloo had taught him, the bear would smack him with his great paw. And sometimes Mowgli was naughty. Like most children he hated having to sit still all morning. Baloo became very cross when Mowgli



fidgeted and wouldn't pay attention.

Sometimes Bagheera, the black panther, came to see how Mowgli was getting on. He would lie along a branch, purring gently, watching and listening.

One day Baloo smacked Mowgli just as Bagheera arrived. The little boy ran off in a temper.

Bagheera said, 'He is only little. He can't remember *everything* you teach him.'

But Baloo replied, '*No one* in the jungle is too little to be killed. He *has* to learn. That is why I sometimes give him a gentle smack.'

'Gentle!' snorted Bagheera. 'The poor child is covered with bruises from your "gentle" paws.'

'I was teaching him hunting calls this morning,' said Baloo, 'and he wasn't paying attention.'

'I should like to hear them,' said

Bagheera. 'Where are you, Mowgli?' he called.

'I'm up here,' said a cross little voice above them. 'My head hurts.' Mowgli, still in a temper, came sliding down a tree trunk.

'Now, Mowgli,' said Baloo gently, 'let Bagheera hear the calls that I taught you this morning.'

At once, Mowgli's face lit up. He loved an opportunity to show off.

'Calls for which creatures?' he asked. 'The jungle has many tongues. I know them all!'

'Very well, then,' laughed Bagheera. 'Tell me how you would call the kite.'

Without having to think about it, Mowgli put his hands around his mouth. A long, clear sound came from his lips.

'Very good!' said Bagheera. 'Now, how about the snake?'

Mowgli gave a low piercing hiss. Then

he kicked his feet up behind and clapped his hands. He jumped on to Bagheera's back and sat drumming his heels against the glossy black fur.

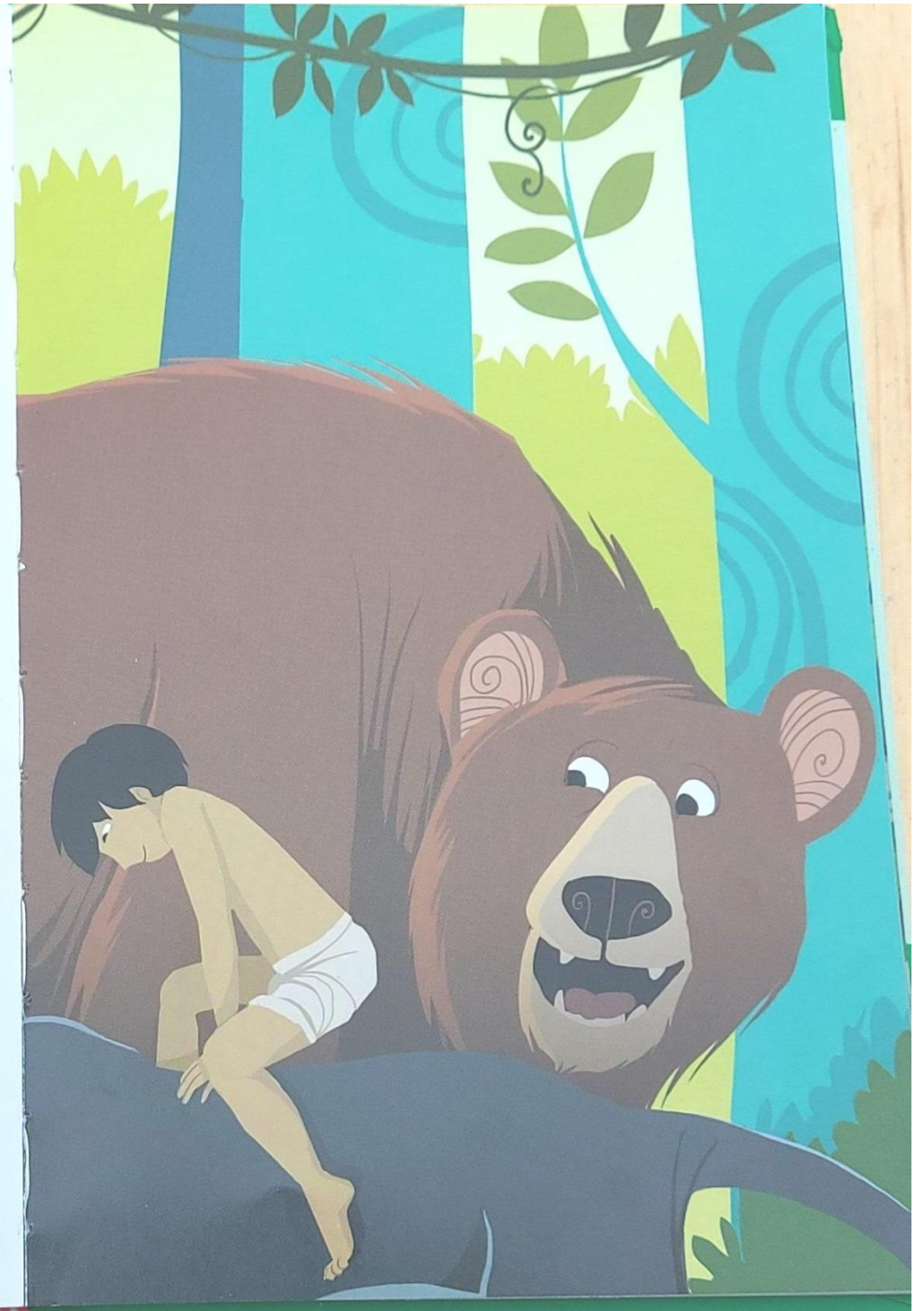
How Bagheera and Baloo laughed at the little boy's antics! He had learned the calls perfectly. Baloo puffed up his chest with pride. Bagheera never showed his true feelings, but he was very proud too.

Mowgli bounced up and down on Bagheera's back. 'I shall have my own tribe! I shall be the leader!' he shouted.

'What *are* you shouting about, Mowgli?' asked Bagheera. 'Stop jumping up and down and tell us.'

'Sometimes,' said Mowgli, 'when Baloo smacks me, the monkeys come down from the trees. They look after me. No one else cares about me.' He was close to tears.

'The *monkeys!*' snorted Baloo. 'They don't care about *anyone*.'



“They give me nuts to eat,’ continued Mowgli. ‘They say I shall be their leader one day. They have so much fun, Baloo. Why have you never taken me to meet them?’

Baloo looked down at him seriously. ‘Listen very carefully to me, Mowgli,’ he said. ‘The monkeys are not to be trusted. They have no law, as we do. You must have nothing to do with them.’

Mowgli stared at Baloo. He had never heard him speak so gravely before.

‘I’m sorry, Baloo,’ he said quietly. Baloo gave him a hug. ‘We’ll say no more about it,’ he said gently.





