

KAA'S HUNTING

(The First Jungle Book)

by Rudyard Kipling

*His spots are the joy of the Leopard: his
horns are the Buffalo's pride.*

*Be clean, for the strength of the hunter
is known by the gloss of his hide.*

*If ye find that the Bullock can toss you,
or the heavy-browed Sambhur can gore;*

*Ye need not stop work to inform us: we
knew it ten seasons before. Oppress not the
cubs of the stranger, but hail them as Sister
and Brother,*

*For though they are little and fubsy, it
may be the Bear is their mother.*

*«There is none like to me!» says the
Cub in the pride of his earliest kill;*

*But the jungle is large and the Cub he is
small. Let him think and be still.*

Maxims of Baloo

All that is told here happened some time before Mowgli was turned out of the Seeonee Wolf Pack, or revenged himself on Shere Khan the tiger. It was in the days when Baloo was teaching him the Law of the Jungle. The big, serious, old brown bear was delighted to have so quick a pupil, for the young wolves will only

learn as much of the Law of the Jungle as applies to their own pack and tribe, and run away as soon as they can repeat the Hunting Verse — «Feet that make no noise; eyes that can see in the dark; ears that can hear the winds in their lairs, and sharp white teeth, all these things are the marks of our brothers except Tabaqui the Jackal and the Hyaena whom we hate». But Mowgli, as a man-cub, had to learn a great deal more than this. Sometimes Bagheera the Black Panther would come lounging through the jungle to see how his pet was getting on, and would purr with his head against a tree while Mowgli recited the day's lesson to Baloo.

The boy could climb almost as well as he could swim, and swim almost as well as he could run. So Baloo, the Teacher of the Law, taught him the Wood and Water Laws: how to tell a rotten branch from a sound one; how to speak politely to the wild bees when he came upon a hive of them fifty feet above ground; what to say to Mang the Bat when he disturbed him in the branches at midday; and how to warn the water-snakes in the pools before he splashed down among them. None of the Jungle People like being disturbed, and all are very ready to fly at an intruder. Then, too, Mowgli was taught the Strangers' Hunting Call, which must be repeated aloud till it is answered, whenever one of the Jungle People hunts outside his own grounds. It means, translated, «Give me leave to hunt here because I am hungry». And the answer is,

«Hunt then for food, but not for pleasure».

All this will show you how much Mowgli had to learn by heart, and he grew very tired of saying the same thing over a hundred times. But, as Baloo said to Bagheera, one day when Mowgli had been cuffed and run off in a temper, «A man's cub is a man's cub, and he must learn all the Law of the Jungle».

«But think how small he is», said the Black Panther, who would have spoiled Mowgli if he had had his own way. «How can his little head carry all thy long talk?»

«Is there anything in the jungle too little to be killed? No. That is why I teach him these things, and that is why I hit him, very softly, when he forgets».

«Softly! What dost thou know of softness, old Iron-feet?» Bagheera grunted. «His face is all bruised today by thy — softness. Ugh».

«Better he should be bruised from head to foot by me who love him than that he should come to harm through ignorance», Baloo answered very earnestly. «I am now teaching him the Master Words of the Jungle that shall protect him with the birds and the Snake People, and all that hunt on four feet, except his own pack. He can now claim protection, if he will only remember the words, from all in the jungle. Is not that worth a little beating?»

«Well, look to it then that thou dost not kill the man-cub. He is no tree trunk to sharpen thy blunt claws

upon. But what are those Master Words? I am more likely to give help than to ask it», — Bagheera stretched out one paw and admired the steel-blue, ripping-chisel talons at the end of it — «still I should like to know».

«I will call Mowgli and he shall say them — if he will. Come, Little Brother!»

«My head is ringing like a bee tree», said a sullen little voice over their heads, and Mowgli slid down a tree trunk very angry and indignant, adding as he reached the ground: «I come for Bagheera and not for thee, fat old Baloo!»

«That is all one to me», said Baloo, though he was hurt and grieved. «Tell Bagheera, then, the Master Words of the Jungle that I have taught thee this day».

«Master Words for which people?» said Mowgli, delighted to show off. «The jungle has many tongues. I know them all».

«A little thou knowest, but not much. See, O Bagheera, they never thank their teacher. Not one small wolfling has ever come back to thank old Baloo for his teachings. Say the word for the Hunting People, then — great scholar».

«We be of one blood, ye and I», said Mowgli, giving the words the Bear accent which all the Hunting People use.

«Good. Now for the birds».

Mowgli repeated, with the Kite's whistle at the

end of the sentence.

«Now for the Snake People», said Bagheera.

The answer was a perfectly indescribable hiss, and Mowgli kicked up his feet behind, clapped his hands together to applaud himself, and jumped on to Bagheera's back, where he sat sideways, drumming with his heels on the glossy skin and making the worst faces he could think of at Baloo.

«There — there! That was worth a little bruise», said the brown bear tenderly. «Some day thou wilt remember me».