



Jungle Book

"Something is coming uphill," said Mother Wolf, twitching one ear. "Get ready."

The bushes rustled a little in the thicket, and Father Wolf dropped with his haunches under him, ready for his leap. Then, if you had been watching, you would have seen the most wonderful thing in the world—the wolf checked in mid-spring. Before he saw what it was he was jumping at, he made his bound and then he tried to stop himself. The result was that he shot up straight into the air for four or five feet, landing almost where he left ground.

"Man!" he snapped. "A man's cub. Look!"



Directly in front of him, holding on by a low branch, stood a baby who could just walk—his eyes were alive with wonder. He looked up into Father Wolf's face, and giggled.

"Is that a man's cub?" said Mother Wolf. "I have never seen one. Bring it here."

A Wolf accustomed to moving his own cubs can, if necessary, mouth an egg without breaking it, and though Father Wolf's jaws closed right on the child's back not a tooth even scratched the skin as he laid it down among the cubs.

"How little, and—how beautiful!" said Mother Wolf softly. Pushing through the cubs, the baby found his way between them to get warmer. "Ahai! Now, was there ever a wolf that could boast of a man's cub among her children?"

"I have heard now and again of such a thing, but never in our Pack or in my time," said Father Wolf. "He is altogether without hair, and I could kill him with a touch of my foot. But see, he looks up and is not afraid."

The moonlight was blocked out of the mouth of the cave, for Shere Khan's great square head and shoulders were thrust into the entrance.

"Shere Khan does us great honor," said Father Wolf, but Shere Khan's eyes flashed with fury. "What does Shere Khan need?"

"My quarry. A man's cub went this way," said Shere Khan. "Its parents have run off. Give it to me."

But Father Wolf knew that the mouth of the cave was too narrow for a tiger to come in. Even where he was, Shere Khan's shoulders and paws were cramped, as a man's would be if he tried to fight in a barrel.



"The Wolves are a free people," said Father Wolf. "They take orders from the Head of the Pack, and not from any striped cattle-killer. The man's cub is ours—to kill if we choose."

"What talk is this of choosing? Why should I stand here in your pitful den to here your judgement? It is I, Shere Khan, who decides!"

The tiger's roar filled the cave with thunder. Mother Wolf shook herself clear of the cubs and sprang forward, her eyes shone with the light of two green moons in the darkness, facing the blazing eyes of Shere Khan.

