

The Jungle Book

We hear Mowgli and Bagheera (the panther) entering, talking as they go. Mowgli is carrying a fire-pot.

Bagheera If I've told you once, I've told you a hundred times, I don't want to see you messing about with the red flower.

Mowgli I'm not messing about. I can control it. The Bandar-log (monkeys) were very impressed. They want me to teach them how to make it.

Bagheera Don't you dare! I mean it. Promise me.

Mowgli Okay, okay, I promise.

(pause) The Monkey-People don't get cross with me. The Monkey-People gave me nuts and nice things to eat. And they carried me up to the top of the trees and said I was their blood-brother and that I should be their leader one day.

Bagheera They think something one day and forget it the next. They boast and chatter and pretend they are a great people, but they are shameless and selfish. Don't trust a word they say to you. Ignore them.

Mowgli You mean I can't even talk with them?

Bagheera They only talk gibberish: why would you want to talk gibberish?

Mowgli What's gibberish? Is it a special language? Can you talk it?

Bagheera Most animals talk it some of the time.

Mowgli Then I want to as well.

Bagheera Don't worry, you do. Now, forget the monkeys: there are plenty of other animals you can talk with. In fact, your survival in the jungle depends on how well you do learn to talk with them. Even the snakes.

Mowgli Snakes?

Bagheera Yes, snakes, birds, the wild elephants. Learn to talk with them all. You never know when you might need their help. Or when they might need yours.

Mowgli I already know the Strangers' Hunting Call.

Bagheera Of course you know it: I taught it to you. But you've still got a lot left to learn.