

SETTING: *The jungle of Africa. Ropes hanging from ceiling to floor represent both trees and vines. Cubes represent the rocks, and can be moved quickly, along with shifts in lights and sound, to change locations.*

AT RISE: *The jungle along the coast. We hear the noise of the jungle as the SPIRITS OF THE JUNGLE enter one-by-one and take their place on the set.*

SPIRIT #1

I am the Sights of the Jungle – the red and blue parrot flashing against the trees of green...

SPIRIT # 2

I am the Touch of the Jungle – the press of heavy, moist air and the sinking soft earth...

SPIRIT #3

I am the Taste of the Jungle – the tang of sweet papaya and the bite of bitter leaf...

SPIRIT #4

I am the Sounds of the Jungle – the whine of a mosquito and the screech of a monkey...

SPIRIT #5

I am the Smells of the Jungle – the aroma of exotic flowers and the stench of rot...

SPIRIT #1

I am the Jungle...

SPIRIT #2/SPIRIT #3/SPIRIT #4/SPIRIT #5

I am the Jungle!

SPIRIT #1

The Jungle is Life...

SPIRIT #2/SPIRIT #3/SPIRIT #4/SPIRIT #5

The Jungle is Life!

SPIRIT #1

The Jungle is Death.

KALA (O.S.)

No! Stay back! Stay back!

*(KALA runs on, clutching her baby.)*

KALA

Kerchak! Help me! Kerchak!

*(SABOR enters behind her. KALA turns to face the leopard.)*

Please, Sabor, leave us be.

*(SABOR starts to stalk her.)*

SABOR

Sabor is hungry. Sabor will kill the mother gorilla first, then the baby. Sabor will eat them both.

KALA

*Kerchak!*

*(With a roar, KERCHAK enters upstage, leaping onto a rock.)*

KERCHAK

The mighty leopard wants to hurt my family. You will have to kill me first, Sabor.

SABOR

This gorilla is big. This gorilla is dangerous. But Sabor is hungry. Sabor will kill them all.

*(The SPIRITS drum on the cubes as KERCHAK beats on his chest. He and SABOR come together in a highly stylized fight to the death. The drumming continues under. KERCHAK swings at him.)*

KERCHAK

*Strike!*

*(SABOR avoids it. KERCHAK swings again.)*

*Strike!*

*(SABOR avoids it again, then swipes at KERCHAK.)*

SABOR

*Slash!*

*(KERCHAK avoids it. KERCHAK swings.)*

KERCHAK

*Strike!*

*(The blow lands. SABOR falls to the ground.)*

SABOR

*Pain!*

*(SABOR rolls onto her back, and swipes at KERCHAK with her foot.)*

*Slash!*

*(KERCHAK grabs his leg.)*

KERCHAK

*Pain!!*

*(SABOR sits up and swipes at KERCHAK with her hand.)*

SABOR

*Slash!*

*(KERCHAK is knocked to the ground.)*

KERCHAK

*Pain!*

*(SABOR stands up.)*

SABOR

Sabor is strong. Sabor is hungry. Sabor will kill.

*(The drumming and the action shift to slow-motion as SABOR pulls back his hand and prepares to land a deadly blow...)*

KALA

Kerchak!

*(Action and drumming resume normal motion as KALA, still holding her baby, grabs SABOR from behind and bites him.)*

*Bite!*

SABOR

*Pain!*

*(SABOR wheels on KALA and swipes at her.)*

*Slash!*

*(KALA falls to the ground, the baby falling away from her.)*

KALA

*Pain!*

*(SABOR grabs the unattended baby and runs off.)*

KALA

Noooo!

*(She tries to run after SABOR. KERCHAK stops her.)*

KERCHAK

Kala.

KALA

My baby! My baby!

KERCHAK

It is too late.

KALA

*(Realization)*

My baby...

KERCHAK

It is too late. Come, Kala.

*(He tries to pull her off opposite. KALA doesn't move.)*

Come.

*(KALA allows herself to be led off. The drumming shifts to the sounds of the jungle, as the SPIRITS imitate the various animals – monkeys, birds, etc. Then...)*

MARLOWE (O.S.)

Keep on, lads – just a little further. That’s it...

*(JAKES and HALSEY enter carrying a trunk between them. Entering behind them are JOHN CLAYTON and his wife, ALICE. JOHN supports ALICE with one arm and holds their infant son in the other. MARLOWE enters behind the CLAYTONS, a gun trained on their backs, carrying a canteen.)*

MARLOWE

All right, that’s far enough. Set it down.

*(JAKES and HALSEY set down the trunk.)*

Go back to the boat and wait for me there.

JAKES

Not so fast, Marlowe. Me and Halsey was talkin’...

HALSEY

We figure we’re entitled to some of whatever’s in this trunk.

JOHN

What?!

JAKES

Lord and Lady Greystoke are nobility – and you know how them nobility are. They’re bound to have jewels and all sorts of treasure in this trunk.

HALSEY

What harm would it do ‘em to share the wealth?

JOHN

The only thing in that trunk are the supplies necessary for my family’s existence in this godforsaken jungle! If you pirates weren’t marooning us...

JAKES

Oy!

HALSEY

Watch who you’re callin’ pirates, mate – we’re mutineers.

JOHN

There’s no difference, from where I’m standing. A murderer’s a murderer.

HALSEY

That's it...

*(HALSEY and JAKES pull their knives. MARLOWE steps in front of JOHN, his rifle aimed at them.)*

MARLOWE

Put your knives away, boys.

HALSEY

Marlowe, think a moment. These folks witnessed a mutiny. They saw us kill Cap'n Billings and his officers! If they was ever to tell...

JOHN

I give you my solemn vow – my wife and I will never reveal your secret.

JAKES

*(Derisively)*

Ha! Only way to make sure the likes of you keep quiet is to slit your throats...

*(Again, they start forward. MARLOWE once more aims the rifle at them.)*

MARLOWE

*Put your knives away!*

*(They do so, reluctantly.)*

There's no need to kill 'em. They'll never make it out of the jungle. Lord and Lady Greystoke live. Now get back to the boat.

*(JAKES and HALSEY exit. ALICE sags against JOHN, unconscious.)*

JOHN

Alice!

*(He lowers her to the ground and crouches next to her.)*

Mr. Marlowe, you can't leave us here. My wife has been sick with fever ever since our son was born. Without food or shelter, she will surely die.

MARLOWE

Lord Greystoke...

JOHN

Please. We have no time for titles. My given name is Clayton. John Clayton.

MARLOWE

Very well, Mr. Clayton – you heard my men. They want blood. Leaving you here is the best I can do. Take this canteen. You can use it to fetch fresh water from the river. It's right through those trees.

JOHN

What about food?

MARLOWE

You'll have to hunt for it. Here...

*(He holds out the rifle. JOHN carefully places the baby on a nearby rock, then takes it. MARLOWE pulls a small, leather bag out of his vest pocket. He hands that to JOHN as well.)*

Ammunition.

JOHN

It's not much.

MARLOWE

It's all I can spare.

*(Suddenly JOHN aims the rifle at MARLOWE.)*

JOHN

If you don't take us with you, I'll kill you!

MARLOWE

You won't kill me. You're a gentleman. And a gentleman ain't gonna shoot another man in the back.

*(MARLOWE turns his back on JOHN.)*

Goodbye, Mr. Clayton. Good luck.

*(MARLOWE exits. JOHN lowers the rifle. ALICE stirs.)*

ALICE

John...?

JOHN

Alice.

*(He crouches next to her, placing the gun on the ground.)*

ALICE

The baby. Where's the baby?

JOHN

He's fine, my darling. He's sound asleep.

ALICE

Give him to me.

JOHN

You're not well. You need to rest.

ALICE

Give me my son.

*(JOHN picks up the baby and places him in ALICE's arm. He cries a bit.)*

ALICE

There, there, now, little Johnny – it will be all right. Shh...

*(The baby quiets.)*

My locket...

*(She struggles to take a locket from around her neck. She holds it out.)*

ALICE

Inside is a picture of you and me on our wedding day. I want Johnny to have it when I'm gone.

JOHN

Alice...

ALICE

I want him to remember his mother. Promise me you'll give it to him. Promise!

JOHN

I promise.



*(She kisses the baby's head.)*

ALICE

Remember me...

*(To JOHN)*

Take him.

*(She gives the baby to JOHN.)*

JOHN

Alice...

ALICE

Remember me...

JOHN

Alice, don't leave me! Alice!

*(She dies.)*

Alice...?

*(Beat.)*

SPIRIT #1

The Jungle is Life...

SPIRIT #2/SPIRIT #3/SPIRIT #4/SPIRIT #5

The Jungle is Life.

SPIRIT #1

The Jungle is Death.

*(JOHN stands up, holding the baby, and takes a step back. During the following, SPIRIT #2 and SPIRIT #3 approach ALICE, and escort her Spirit off.)*

SPIRIT #2

What dies in the Jungle, belongs to the Jungle...

SPIRIT #3

Becomes the Jungle...

SPIRIT #2

Becomes the trees, the flowers...

SPIRIT #3

Becomes the water, the earth...

SPIRIT #2

Remember, Man, that you are dust...

SPIRIT #3

And unto dust you shall return...

*(SPIRIT #2, SPIRIT #3, and ALICE exit. JOHN hold up the locket.)*

JOHN

I will never forget, Alice – and when our son is old enough, your locket shall belong to him. But for now...

*(He crosses to the trunk and opens it.)*

...it will live in this trunk for safekeeping.

*(He places the locket inside the trunk. The baby starts to cry.)*

Hush, Johnny – hush now. I know you're hungry. Papa has to find you food and water.

*(He looks around for a place to put the baby, finds a crevice near a rock, and places him there.)*

You'll be safe in here. The river is right through the trees.

*(The baby cries louder.)*

I'll just be gone a minute.

*(He grabs the canteen, picks up his gun with the other, and exits. The baby cries even louder. Beat. KALA enters on a rock upstage. She looks around for the source of the sound.)*

KERCHAK (O.S.)

Kala...?

*(KERCHAK enters behind her.)*