

Rudyard Kipling
RIKKI-TIKKI-TAVI
and Other Stories

Read by **Madhav Sharma**



1	Rikki-Tikki-Tavi	4:18
2	Nag, the big black cobra	7:22
3	Chuchundra, the muskrat	7:19
4	Darzee, the tailor-bird	8:50
5	Nagina and the last egg	5:33
6	Toomai of the Elephants	7:16
7	Petersen Sahib	7:32
8	Into the Garo forest	5:47
9	The elephants dance	10:21
10	The Miracle of Purun Bhagat	9:57
11	Bhagat's wanderings end	7:26
12	The mountain is falling	8:50
13	Quiquern	10:50
14	A savage autumn	6:42
15	The tornait has spoken	4:34
16	They follow Quiquern	3:53
17	The ice breaks	4:48
18	The White Seal	7:14
19	Seal hunters	8:54
20	The search for sea-cow	7:27
21	An island of safety	8:59

Total time: 2:33:28

Rudyard Kipling

RIKKI-TIKKI-TAVI

AND OTHER STORIES

Rikki-Tikki-Tavi • Toomai of the Elephants The Miracle of Purun Bhagat • Quiquern • The White Seal

In 1892 the newly-married Kiplings took a cottage in Vermont. In this honeymoon year Kipling did not write as much as usual but he did produce a ‘wolf-story called “Mowgli’s Brothers”’, and he then worked intermittently until 1895 on what were to be published (in two volumes) as *The Jungle Books*. The title derives from the stories featuring Mowgli, but in fact those tales are intermingled with others set elsewhere and with quite different characters.

The Jungle Books are normally regarded as children’s literature and of course they are marvellously successful as such – quite as successful as *Just So Stories* which Kipling wrote a few years later and which also take as their theme the character of animals. Both books reveal Kipling’s love of language as an almost musical medium, his deep affection especially for India, and his refusal to patronise or simplify for the sake of a young audience.

Rikki-Tikki-Tavi is perhaps the story most obviously aimed at children in this

collection. The hero of the story is Rikki himself, the little mongoose who adopts the English family in the Segowlee bungalow, but the most important human character is the son Teddy whose life he saves. Teddy is passive and dull compared to the Indian or Anglo-Indian children Kipling loves to describe (for example, Kim and Little Toomai) and all the spirit and zest of the tale is devoted to the resourceful mongoose who uses speed and skill to outwit and finally destroy the great cobras who lord it over the property.

Little Toomai in *Toomai of the Elephants*, like Rikki, must experience a rite of passage. Rikki makes his first kills; Toomai, having gone on a wild ride through the jungle, sees what few others have seen – the elephants’ midnight dance – and thus is ‘initiated and free of all the jungles’. Kipling loves to see the world with the freshness of a child’s vision – for Little Toomai, life in the camp when they catch the wild elephants is far more interesting than the dull life of the

Cawnpore elephant-lines, while his father prefers the safety of the plain. Perhaps only a child has the innocence and imagination to witness the great gathering of the elephants...

The Miracle of the Purun Bhagat is also set in India, and is perhaps the most purely beautiful piece of storytelling in the collection. This is very much the world of Kim – the 'long, white, dusty Indian road', the 'silence and the space' of the Himalayan foothills. Purun Bhagat has abandoned earthly power and prestige to seek spiritual enlightenment, but he must on one last occasion use his worldly authority to save the villagers who sustain him: like the lama in Kim, he finds that it is impossible wholly to leave behind the things of this life. Kipling shows us that the natural is more wonderful than the supernatural: Purun's 'miracle' is actually the product of his absolute intimacy with the natural world.

The White Seal tells the story of Kotick who, being different from his fellows, sets out to discover a safe haven for the seal-nurseries and must then persuade the others to leave the familiar behind and risk encountering the new. Kipling perhaps intends an allegory about the human fear of change and the role of a leader who stands out from the crowd – but, if so, it is all implicit and done with the lightest of

touches.

Quiquern is the mythical 'phantom of a gigantic toothless dog...supposed to live in the far North', seen by two starving and desperate Eskimo hunters of Baffin Land. Kipling's evocation of the utter bleakness of this northern territory is quite as vivid as his depiction of India. As in *Rikki-Tikki-Tavi* and *The White Seal*, his is a story of survival, but in this case the emphasis is human rather than animal. Once again, Kipling gives us a natural explanation for the supernatural: the Quiquern turns out to be two lost dogs whose harnesses have become entangled and who flit before the hallucinating hunters until they are all eventually reunited and the village is saved.

Rudyard Kipling was born in Bombay in 1865. Educated in England from 1871, he returned to India in 1882 and worked as a journalist, soon acquiring a reputation for cleverly-crafted short stories and skilful verse. Hugely popular in his lifetime, he eventually settled at Bateman's in Sussex. He produced a vast body of work, including the much-loved children's tales, *The Jungle Books* and *Just So Stories* and his masterpiece of adult fiction, *Kim* (also available on Naxos AudioBooks).

Notes by Perry Keenlyside

**The music on this recording is taken from the
MARCO POLO and NIMBUS catalogues**

HOLMES OUVERTURE POUR UNE COMEDIE	8.223449
Rheinland-Pfalz Philharmonic	
Ram Narayan – sarangi, Suresh Talwalkar – tabla	NI 5119
Shivkumar Sharma – santur, Zakir Husain – tabla	NI 5110
Hariprasad Chaurasia – Flute, Fazal Qureshi – tabla	NI 5298

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Five tales which range from the jungles of India to the frozen emptiness of the North... In all of them, Kipling's extraordinary powers of description and ability to identify with human aspiration and animal survival are vividly shown. Rikki-Tikki-Tavi must battle with Nag, the cobra, in his territory; Toomai has a unique glimpse of the elephant world; Kotick, the White Seal, searches for sanctuary, while Kotuko has to find food for his starving Eskimo village. Above all, Kipling's love of life in all its variety shines through.



Madhav Sharma, who made his professional acting debut with the Shakespearean International Company touring such places as India, Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong, works extensively on stage (including the world première of Tom Stoppard's *Indian Ink* in the West End), on screen and in radio in the UK, where he now resides.

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