

The Adventures of Rikki-Tikki-Tavi: A Synopsis

"**Rikki-Tikki-Tavi**" is a short story in the 1894 anthology *The Jungle Book* by Rudyard Kipling. This play was adapted by Tim Kelly from that story by Rudyard Kipling.

Best enjoyed by adults and children of all ages.

Things to Know About the Show:

- The play is set in India during the days of the British empire.
- At that time, holy men wandered the jungle begging for alms and sharing stories with those who gave them food.
- Some characters in the play, such as SHERE KHAN, the tiger, and the cobras, NAG and NAGAINA and the QUEEN COBRA, might scare very small children.

Synopsis of the Play (Spoiler Alert)

The play takes place in various locations in the jungle. The first and last scenes take place in the garden of an English family.

Act 1, Scene 1

The lights come up to reveal morning in the garden of an English family. PURAN BHAGAT, an elderly holy man, enters. PURAN BHAGAT tells the audience that he walks through the forest and could tell wonderful stories if he had something to eat but his begging bowl is empty. A jungle citizen offers him fish and rice, which he starts to eat. The jungle asks him to tell the story of RIKKI-TIKKI-TAVI.

RIKKI-TIKKI-TAVI lived in a garden like the one seen on stage. Since snakes feared mongooses, they were always welcome in an English garden. PURAN BHAGAT calls RIKKI-TIKKI-TAVI and he comes dancing on stage, full of energy and curiosity, and greets the audience. PURAN BHAGAT withdraws from the stage and the audience is left with the story that he is telling.

DARZEE the tailor bird enters, along with IKKI, the porcupine, looking for their friend RIKKI-TIKKI-TAVI, who had been hiding in the bushes observing what others were up to. DARZEE and IKKI tell RIKKI-TIKKI-TAVI that they have seen the terrible cobras, NAG and his wife, NAGAINA, who they are afraid will eat a bird's egg or even the bird itself. DARZEE faints as IKKI tells RIKKI-TIKKI-TAVI about the cobras. They help him up. RIKKI-TIKKI-TAVI assures his friends that they have nothing to worry about because he will kill the cobras if they come into the garden. DARZEE and IKKI feel better and the three friends take a walk in the lime grove, exiting.

A group of very silly Bandar-log monkeys scamper on stage. The MONKEY POTENTATE complains about RIKKI-TIKKI-TAVI's air of superiority and stresses to the

other monkeys that no one can be as clever as a Bandar-log monkey. They chant and dance about the stage, saying and doing silly things.

The MONKEY POTENTATE finds a lady's hand mirror and studies his reflection, as the other monkeys crowd around him to see it and try to figure out what it is. The MONKEY POTENTATE suggests that they take it back to the Lost City and play with it. As they argue about who will carry it, the ENGLISH HUSBAND, his DAUGHTER, and his WIFE are heard coming on stage, looking for the mirror that the DAUGHTER has lost. The monkeys hurry off to the Lost City as the English family enters, with the HUSBAND yelling at the monkeys to get out of the garden and all of the family complaining about what thieves they are.

RIKKI-TIKKI-TAVI enters and the family sings his praises, remembering when they found him lying near death and nursed him back to health. They explain that RIKKI-TIKKI-TAVI is a curious creature who protects them from snakes who may enter the house. After not finding the mirror, the family exits.

DARZEE and IKKI enter, calling for RIKKI-TIKKI-TAVI, who has deserted them while they were on their walk. He explains that he gets restless and curious. He asks them to help him find the daughter's mirror. IKKI tells him that would be useless since they heard the monkeys said that they have it and are taking it to the Lost City.

RIKKI-TIKKI-TAVI is in awe since no one knows where the Lost City is.

RIKKI-TIKKI-TAVI tries to convince IKKI and DARZEE to come with him to find the mirror since the DAUGHTER's heart will be broken if it is not found. They refuse, since they are afraid, so RIKKI-TIKKI-TAVI runs off on his adventure alone.

NAG and his wife NAGAINA, two evil cobras, slither into the garden, feeling safe since RIKKI-TIKKI-TAVI has left. NAG tells NAGAINA to slither into the jungle to tell the other cobras that RIKKI-TIKKI-TAVI is coming their way and must be destroyed. NAG plans to kill the bungalow's inhabitants and take over the bungalow for the cobras.

Act 1, Scene 2

In a clearing in the jungle, BILLY GUMPTION, a soldier of the empire, is on guard duty, marching back and forth with military precision. RIKKI-TIKKI-TAVI dances in and is greeted by BILLY. RIKKI tells BILLY that he is looking for the Lost City where the Bandar-log monkeys have taken the mirror they stole from RIKKI's heartbroken friend. BILLY calls for the camp animals, the CAMEL, HORSE, and MULE, hoping that they can help, since they are all seasoned military campaigners. The animals introduce themselves to RIKKI and quarrel with each other about which is the best campaigner. BILLY reprimands them and they come to attention. The CAMEL gives RIKKI directions as to the possible route to the Lost City. The others provide helpful suggestions of what to look for. RIKKI goes off following their suggested path.

Act 1, Scene 3

In the jungle, the QUEEN COBRA is sunning herself. NAGAINA enters with a warning from NAG that RIKKI-TIKKI-TAVI is in the jungle searching for the Lost City. The QUEEN COBRA assures her that she will warn the others and deal with RIKKI herself.

Act 1, Scene 4

In another part of the jungle, the holy man, PURAN BHAGAT, is found complaining that he is hungry, and his begging bowl is empty. The MONGOOSE HUNTER comes in, chasing RIKKI-TIKKI-TAVI. PURAN begs food from them as they pass by. PURAN asks the MONGOOSE HUNTER why he is scowling. He replies that he is unhappy that he has been unsuccessful in catching a mongoose for the Maharajah's palace to get rid of the cobras that have slithered in. PURAN tells him to go to the marketplace at Afzai to get one but the HUNTER is convinced he must capture the mongoose he has seen – RIKKI-TIKKI-TAVI. He continues his hunt without giving PURAN anything to eat. RIKKI dances in with a fish for PURAN. He then sits expecting a story from PURAN. After rejecting several stories, RIKKI agrees to a story about how the elephant got his trunk. This story is acted out by a CROCODILE, an ELEPHANT'S CHILD, and the KOLOKOLO BIRD.

The MONGOOSE HUNTER enters, looking for RIKKI, who dances away as the MONKEY POTENTATE and other monkeys enter, chattering and chanting. PURAN does not want to be bothered by them and leaves. They sing and dance off. The QUEEN COBRA comes on as the monkeys leave and invites SHERE KHAN, the tiger, who is hiding behind the bushes, to join her. She asks SHERE KHAN to kill RIKKI-TIKKI-TAVI in exchange for the jeweled crown he has always coveted, and a necklace of diamonds. SHERE KHAN agrees to do it.

Act II, Scene 1

RIKKI-TIKKI-TAVI is lost as he searches for the Lost City. He runs into a wolf pack, of whom he asks directions, tells them he is looking for the Lost City and the Bander-log monkeys because they have stolen his little mistress's necklace. One of the wolves gives him directions. The WOLVES are impressed that RIKKI knew the law of the jungle and recite it together.

Act II, Scene 2

While searching for the path, RIKKI bumps into the MONGOOSE HUNTER. He uses RIKKI's curiosity to get him to stick his head in his sack and immediately ties it closed, trapping RIKKI. SHERE KHAN, the tiger, appears and tells him that RIKKI is his. Shaking in fear, the MONGOOSE HUNTER drops his bag and RIKKI escapes. SHERE KHAN says he will let the MONGOOSE HUNTER go if he gives the mongoose to him, to which the HUNTER agrees, but he discovers that RIKKI has escaped. SHERE KHAN

threatens to kill him if he does not find RIKKI and bring him back to him. He rushes off to find RIKKI. IKKI and DARZEE appear, searching for RIKKI. DARZEE has sprained his ankle and can barely hop.

Act II, Scene 3

RIKKI is getting close to the Lost City and can hear the monkeys chant. When the MONKEY POTENTATE ENTERS, RIKKI-TIKKI-TAVI tells him he is glad to see him and is pleased when the MONKEY POTENTATE decides to take him back to the Lost City with them. RIKKI tells them he is looking for his mistress's mirror, which the monkeys think is magic. RIKKI tells them it is only a piece of glass. MONKEY POTENTATE tells him he can have the mirror back if he plays some games with them and they take him, protesting, to the Lost City. RIKKI tells them he will not play with them unless they show him the mirror. One of the monkeys scampers off and brings the mirror back to show him. Laughing, they all fall to the ground and RIKKI snatches the mirror, running off with angry monkeys following.

IKKI and DARZEE enter, still looking for RIKKI. The QUEEN COBRA hears them and comes in to greet them. She hypnotizes DARZEE by having him look into her eyes. Although IKKI warns him not to do so, DARZEE cannot look away. As QUEEN COBRA is about to strike, RIKKI jumps on stage and the QUEEN COBRA slithers off. While telling his friends about his adventures, RIKKI realizes he does not have the mirror. He starts to turn back to look for it when IKKI and DARZEE tell him that the QUEEN COBRA told them that SHERE Khan was hunting for him and that NAG and NAGAINA have returned to the garden and the humans are in danger. RIKKI tells them they are in danger too and to go back to the garden and keep an eye on the cobras. RIKKI reassures them that he will follow as soon as he finds the mirror.

AS IKKI and DARZEE go off, SHERE KHAN appears and tells RIKKI he plans to eat him to earn the necklace and crown the QUEEN COBRA has promised him. KHAN pounces but RIKKI deftly jumps aside, frustrating KHAN. KHAN tries again and again but RIKKI escapes each time, tiring out SHERE KHAN. Then RIKKI nips at KHAN in many places on his body. Finally, KHAN slinks away. RIKKI resumes his search for the mirror.

Act II, Scene 4

The wolves trot in, excited to have heard about KHAN's defeat and RIKKI's victory.

Act II, Scene 5

NAG and NAGAINA are in the garden, plotting to kill the humans and take over the house. They hide when they see the humans taking a walk. The humans discuss why they haven't seen RIKKI-TIKKI-TAVI and what they will have for tea and how nice a nap will be after tea. NAG and NAGAINA plan to strike them while they are sleeping. As they

move toward the bungalow, RIKKI jumps in and stops them. RIKKI nips at them and they fight off stage, with RIKKI killing the cobras. IKKI and DARSEE enter and RIKKI tells them he has just killed the cobras. The ENGLISH FAMILY enter to see what the commotion is and are happy to see RIKKI, who points off stage, where the ENGLISH FATHER finds the dead cobras, which he brings on to show his family. RIKKI runs off stage, remembering the mirror, which he brings on and gives to the DAUGHTER. They praise him for being so clever and they freeze in their places.

PURAN BHAGAT enters and speaks to the audience. He tells them that RIKKI was proud but not too proud and kept the garden as a mongoose should and a cobra never showed its inside the walls again.

The entire cast enters and chants a verse about the jungle law. They all applaud RIKKI.