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Dramatic Publishing

A Play In One Act

RUDYARD KIPLING'S CLASSIC

Rikki-Tikki-Tavi

adapted by
SUSAN CARLE



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

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RIKKI-TIKKI-TAVI

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SUSAN CARLE SERGEL

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(RIKKI-TIKKI-TAVI)

RIKKI-TIKKI-TAVI
A Play in One Act
For one child plus 3-6 males and 3-6 females*

C H A R A C T E R S

RIKKI-TIKKI-TAVI	.....	a mongoose
TEDDY	.....	Rikki's friend
ALICE	]—	Teddy's parents
TED		
KARAIT	.....	a poisonous snake
DARZEE	]—	birds
DARZINI		
NAG	]—	king cobras
NAGAINA		
CHUCHUNDRA	.....	a muskrat

PLACE: A garden and house in India.

*Aside from the child and his parents, all parts are those of garden creatures.

Scene 1

(A garden in front of a small house in India. The family has been out for a walk after dinner. RIKKI-TIKKI-TAVI is lying on the path DR as curtain rises. ALICE and TED enter DL and stop by the tree to wait for TEDDY to catch up.)

TED. Come on, Teddy. Run and catch up, you can explore some more tomorrow. It's time for bed.

ALICE (to TED, taking his arm). It's all right, Ted, he needs to poke around. That little apartment in London was no place for the boy; here he has room to rove and explore. It's good for him. (They stop by tree.)

(TEDDY enters and slowly passes them as they talk.)

TED. It's good for us, too, Alice. How long has it been since we simply took a walk together?

TEDDY (stopping short as he finds RIKKI-TIKKI-TAVI on the path). Oh! Poor little thing! Mother, Father, look! It's a dead mongoose. Can we have a funeral for it? (TEDDY stops to have a closer look. TED and ALICE join him.)

ALICE. Don't touch it, Teddy!

TEDDY. Oh, please, let's have a funeral for it.

TED. No, Teddy. I don't think the little fellow's had it yet. (To ALICE.) Most likely the rains have washed out his burrow. Let's take him in the house and dry him off. (TED picks up RIKKI-TIKKI-TAVI and all move upstage to center of house area.)

TEDDY. When he gets well, may I keep him, Father? Please, may I keep him?

TED. That will depend entirely on him, Teddy. Now get a blanket. (TEDDY exits on the run UC to his bedroom. ALICE has gone to the kitchen area UL and is puttering with dishes.)

ALICE. How's he doing, honey?

TED. I think he will be all right when he dries off and warms up.

(TEDDY returns with blanket.)

TEDDY. Here, Father.

TED (refusing blanket by standing up). Go ahead and rub him down, Teddy. (Crosses to kitchen.)

TEDDY. All right! (Proceeds to rub.)

TED (to ALICE). What have we got that a mongoose might eat? The little fellow will be coming around soon.

(TED and ALICE proceed to put a plate of food together as RIKKI sits up, sneezes and sniffs the blanket.)

TEDDY (clapping hands and moving back a bit). Father! You were right! Look, Mother! Look at my mongoose!

(RIKKI begins moving, first in a slow circle around TEDDY, then faster around the kitchen table, knocking over a chair. All laugh at his antics and scampering, scurrying movements.)

ALICE. Good heavens, is this what happens when you let a mongoose in your life?

(RIKKI comes back behind TEDDY and puts his paws on Teddy's shoulders. TEDDY jumps in surprise. RIKKI pulls paws away, then as TEDDY relaxes, puts them back.)

TED. Don't be frightened, Teddy. That's his way of making friends. (He moves C toward them.)

TEDDY. Oooh, he's tickling my chin.

(RIKKI licks Teddy's ear, then moves DC and washes his face in the fashion of a raccoon.)

ALICE (returning from kitchen with plate of food in hands).

Are you sure he's safe, Ted? It's hard to believe he's really a wild animal. I suppose he just seems so tame because we've been kind to him.

TED. All mongooses are like that, Alice. If Teddy doesn't try to pick him up by the tail or put him in

a cage -- (RIKKI is moving again, sniffing about.)

-- he'll run in and out of the house all day.

RIKKI (stopping in front of ALICE). Tikk tikk tikk tikk tikk.

ALICE. Well, I guess he's ready for dinner. (Puts plate on floor. RIKKI eats happily, munching like a squirrel, sitting on haunches.)

TEDDY. He likes it, Mother. I think he likes it here with us. Please stay, little mongoose.

ALICE. All right, young man, it's well past your bedtime. Go wash up now.

TEDDY (moving hurriedly to bathroom area UR). All right, Mother. (Hurries through wash pantomime and calls out.) Do you think I can keep him, Mother? (RIKKI is cleaning his fur and ALICE picks up dish. She and TED go into the kitchen area.)

RIKKI. Rikk tikk tikk tikk tikk.

ALICE. We'll see, Teddy, but as your father said, it's really up to him. Right now it's time for bed.

TEDDY. All right, Mother, I'm going. (He moves UC.) Come on, little mongoose. Come on. . . . Come on, little . . . Ummm . . . (Realizes that he has not given his pet a name.) Come on, Rikkiatik . . . Come on, Rikki-Tikki-Tavi. Let's go to bed. (TEDDY pauses in UC doorway. RIKKI starts to follow but stops C as ALICE speaks sharply.)

ALICE. Oh, I don't know about this, Ted. He may bite the child.

TED. He'll do no such thing. Teddy's safer with that little fellow in there than if he had a wolfhound watching him. (To TEDDY.) It's all right, son, go to sleep. Come on, Alice.

TEDDY. Good night.

TED and ALICE. Good night. (TEDDY exits UC. ALICE and TED exit UL. They turn out light so that stage is dark except for light coming from Teddy's doorway.)

RIKKI (moving toward Teddy's door, pausing and sniffing; to himself and audience). There are more things in this house to find out than all my family could find out in all their lives. I shall certainly stay and find them out.

TEDDY (offstage, in a quiet singsong voice). Rikki-

Tikki-Tavi, come on. It's time for bed. (RIKKI bounces off UC after TEDDY. Light out.)