



Kim

Rudyard Kipling

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Kim, the 'little friend of all the world' and chela or disciple to the questing lama, is caught up in the espionage of 'the Great Game'. The real protagonist in his magical adventure, however, is India in all its teeming life, mystery and beauty, highlighted by a captivating narration. --Rachel Redford, The Observer

Espionage has become so sophisticated and hi-tech that it's difficult to believe that this, the greatest of all spy stories, was published more than a century ago when agents relied on wits rather than gadgets. Set against the background of the Great Game being played between Britain and Russia on the north-west frontier after the second Afghan war, it tells the story of an 11-year-old orphan boy who looks and sounds like a native but beneath his filthy rags is white. Kim, né Kimball O Hara, wears his Irish soldier father's ID round his neck and survives by running errands for a wily Pashtun horse trader with an ancient Islamic proverb to suit every occasion. 'Children should not see a carpet on the loom until the pattern is made plain,' he advises, his great red beard wagging solemnly. What Kim doesn't know is that his mentor is also a chain man or spy for the British. Mahbub Ali's constant travels through the subcontinent, selling horses to army officers and maharajahs, affords the perfect cover. How Kim, travelling with a holy lama in search of the sacred river, meets Colonel Creighton, who recognises his unique qualifications and talents and sends him to a mysterious spymaster to learn the secrets of espionage, is riveting. Adventures aside, Kipling's descriptions of India, its exotic people and places, are awesome, as are Sharma's seemingly inexhaustible collection of accents British and Indian in Kim's case, a subtle mixture of both. No mean feat. --Sue Arnold, The Guardian

Kimball O'Hara, orphaned son of an Irish soldier, survives by his wits in the back streets of India's teeming cities. Caught and identified as a white boy, he is sent against his will to boarding school, then trained as a spy in the 'Great Game' the power struggle between Britain and Russia for control of India and central Asia. Kim, 'little friend of all the world,' works with an Afghan horse trader serving as a British agent, outwits Russian spies in the high Himalayas, and becomes the disciple of a Tibetan holy man in search of a sacred river. With his rich old-school elocution and Shakespearean training, British actor Madhav Sharma is the perfect reader for this book. Sharma grew up in Calcutta, studied drama in London, and has appeared in stage, television, and radio productions in the U.K. The Calcutta Telegraph calls him 'the Indian actor in England with... the most impeccably spoken English.' Sharma's career has taken him back to India, as well as to Singapore, Malaysia, and Hong Kong. He has read Kipling's Jungle Books and Rikki-Tikki-Tavi for Naxos, too. Each CD in this production has its own separate jacket, the tracks identified either with chapter numbers or phrases identifying the start of the track. That helps greatly in finding a passage or in pairing the listening with reading. A little booklet tells you about the book and the author. --Betsy Woodman, SoundCommentary.com

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