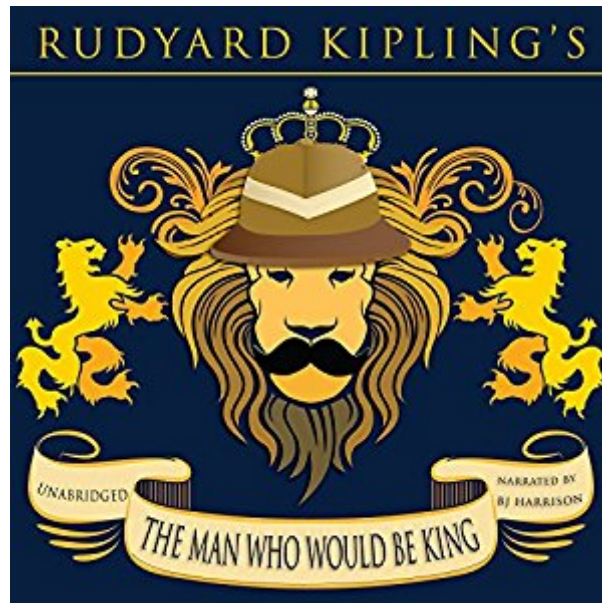




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# The Man Who Would Be King [Classic Tales Edition]



## Synopsis

Through the sands of the scalding deserts of India, two loafing vagabonds follow a half-scribbled map, heading for a land they hope to conquer.

## Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 1 hour 32 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: B. J. Harrison

Audible.com Release Date: August 9, 2016

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B01JSE4SWO

Best Sellers Rank: #56 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Fiction & Literature > Drama #121 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Fiction & Literature > Literary Collections #165 in Books > Literature & Fiction > British & Irish > Literature

## Customer Reviews

This is an interesting and iconic short story by Rudyard Kipling. It moves along quickly and I did not really want to put it down. It was written in 1888 while Queen Victoria was still queen and there was still a seemingly, gleaming British Empire. Two men set out to conquer, and become rulers of their own country. The story is set in India and Afghanistan and there is certain condescending attitude towards the native population. I feel that Mr. Kipling was conveying what was accepted as conventional wisdom about the superiority of the British people. At the end of the story, there is an obvious mystery left unanswered. I felt that ending left the possibility for a sequel of some sort. If there is a later continuation of the story, I am not aware of it. This story is the basis of an equally interesting movie. I have seen the movie in the past, but now plan on seeing it again for purposes of comparing and contrasting. I enjoyed the reading experience very much. I listened to the short story while reading it at the same time on Kindle. The audiobook was well done with some editing out of some ethnic references. The story was available free on Kindle. I am grateful to have been able to access and read this fine short story for free. Thank You...

Having seen the John Houston movie, I sought this book with great interest. With only a few minor

modifications, the film followed the spirit of this book very closely. It is a riproaring story of adventurers in British occupied India and there it further adventures in the remote Himalayan Kingdom of Kafiristan. They are men who seek riches and fame and ultimately become kings and gods. Unfortunately, their new subjects discover that their gods have feet made of clay. In Rudyard Kiplings masterful hands, the story rolls off the page in visual images that lend themselves to cinema almost without editing. This masterfully crafted story made for an hour of time very well spent.

This is a short book. I saw the movie years ago, starring Sean Connery and Michael Caine. I thought that the movie was brilliant. This book, short that it is, packs in a punch. It is rich in imagery, it is rich in style. Not one word is wasted. You are left thinking deeply about the imaginary events that would have taken place in the mountains of Afghanistan. It is a story of megalomania, it is a story of superstition. It is a painting cast in words. It's a story for a lost time, yet one that is alive today.

A fast and satisfying read. You will not be disappointed. Kipling is a master story teller. I was with the characters from beginning to end.

If one can read between the lines (understand Kipling's prose) one will have no problems with this book. I like the "The Light That Failed" better...(another Kipling story...) I will say that "The Light That Failed" has a rather abrupt ending. I am re-reading the books of my youth with the hope that I will better understand them. Kindle Fire is great for that purpose, the books are free... (saw movies of both titles)

So begins Rudyard Kipling's "The Man Who Would Be King," with an echo of the last verse of the Masonic verse "Banquet Night," and there are quite a few references to Freemasonry in this tale, which is considered by many to be Kipling's finest short story. The author was born in Bombay (now Mumbai), in what was then British India, and he drew upon his experiences in Anglo-Indian society for much of his fiction. The winner of the 1907 Nobel Prize for Literature, he was the first English language writer to receive the coveted prize, and to date he remains its youngest recipient. He is regarded as a master of the short story, and his books for children are considered as enduring classics of children's literature. "The Man Who Would be King" is a unforgettable tale of adventure, and is told by a first-person narrator, a newspaperman in India who one can assume is Rudyard Kipling. While on a train, he meets a fascinating opportunist: "He was a wanderer and a vagabond

like myself, but with an educated taste for whiskey. He told tales of things he had seen and done, of out-of-the-way corners of the Empire into which he had penetrated, and of adventures in which he risked his life for a few days' food."The narrator soon learns that Daniel Dravot and his fellow vagabond, Peachey Carnehan, are both passing themselves off as journalists for the newspaper for which the narrator is a real correspondent. He is fascinated by them, but does stop them from blackmailing a minor Indian rajah. Some months later, they appear at his office in Lahore, and tell him their plan. In the words of Daniel Dravot, they have been "Soldier, sailor, compositor, photographer, proof-reader, street-preacher, and correspondents of the 'Backwoodsman' when we thought the paper wanted one. Carnehan is sober, and so am I. Look at us first and see that's sure. It will save you cutting into my talk. We'll take one of your cigars apiece, and you shall see us light."The pair have decided India isn't enough for them, and the next day they will go off to Kafiristan, to set themselves up as kings. They were going through the Khaiber with a regular caravan and with Dravot disguised as a native priest, stating, "Who'd touch a poor mad priest?" They have twenty Martini rifles, and with their camels, they plan to find a tribal leader, help him defeat his enemies, then take over for themselves. The pair sign a "Contract" (contract) as "Gentlemen at Large," with the narrator as witness, in which they will together "be Kings of Kafiristan," not "look at any Liquor, nor any Woman," and that if one gets into trouble "the other will stay by him." They ask the narrator for the use of maps and books of the area, as a favor because they are fellow Freemasons, and because he spoiled their earlier blackmail scheme. Two years pass, and on a hot summer night, an almost unrecognizable Peachey Carnehan creeps into the narrator's office, a broken man, a crippled beggar clad in rags. He tells an astonishing tale of how Daniel Dravot and he had succeeded in becoming Kafiri kings, taking over villages, and building a unified nation in Kafiristan (in modern-day Afghanistan). Carnehan explains how the Kafiris (who were pagans, not Moslems) came to regard Dravot as a god, and the immortal son of Alexander the Great. The Kafiris practiced a form of Masonic ritual, and the pair secrets of Freemasons that only the oldest priest remembered. But Carnehan explains that their grand schemes were shattered when Dravot made a decision that brought their kingdom down around them. And to explain any further would spoil the final outcome of this amazing tale. The Masonic connections to the growth and demise of the British Empire have been covered by many. It's a true literary masterpiece, and it's quite apparent that Kipling was quite conscious of the fact that the British Empire of that time was not eternal. It's no wonder that the late John Huston chose Kipling's tale to create his epic 1975 film *The Man Who Would Be King*, which starred Sean Connery (Daniel Dravot), Michael Caine (Peachey Carnehan) and Christopher Plummer (Rudyard Kipling). It had a superb supporting

performance from Saeed Jaffrey, along with a rare but pivotal appearance by Michael Caine's wife, Shakira. This was a film that director John Huston had planned for years, and was nominated for four Academy Awards. The film is very true to Kipling's story, but goes into less Masonic detail. One of the more interesting aspects of this tale is that it was loosely based on historical fact, of which Kipling was aware. Josiah Harlan, a Pennsylvania Quaker, journeyed to Afghanistan in the 1820s, and through a series of wheeling and dealing, was crowned the Prince of Ghor (a province in central Afghanistan). Ben Macintyre's book *The Man Who Would Be King: The First American in Afghanistan* details his story, including Freemason Harlan trading secrets with an old Rosicrucian sorcerer in an Afghan cave, and how the British overthrow of the sitting Afghan ruler soon forced his departure. But going back to Kipling's tale, the inevitable question arises: which is better, the book or the movie? That would be a difficult answer for this reviewer, as both have been real favorites for many years, and John Huston had gone out of his way to keep his film as true to Kipling's story as possible. Would have to say that I rate them equally, and can easily recommend them as 5-star choices, and fortunately *The Man Who Would Be King* is now available as a Kindle freebie. 9/16/2012

Entertaining from the start with good plot. Could have moved to five star if brought out more detail in the story. I wanted to know more about the main characters. Some background about how they had become the men they were, including some examples if their prior life experiences would have gone a long way.

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