

Edith Nesbit
THE PHOENIX AND THE CARPET

Read by **Anna Bentinck**

JUNIOR
CLASSICS



1	It began with the day...	5:15
2	Next day all was forgotten and forgiven...	4:48
3	They traced strange figures with chalk...	3:49
4	The children were all choking with wonder...	3:38
5	'I had resided as your book says...'	4:06
6	The next day was Saturday.	4:09
7	Everyone looked and everyone thought.	4:32
8	As soon as the carpet came to a stop...	4:06
9	So the Phoenix fluttered up...	4:03
10	'I say, talking of stones,' said Robert	4:38
11	Then quite suddenly the floor seemed to tip up...	3:20
12	The next day, Cook came to mother...	3:42
13	For some reason or other...	3:48
14	Anthea felt rather uncomfortable...	3:46
15	The old ranee or queen...	3:32
16	All this had taken some time...	4:02
17	The children sidled away...	5:16
18	So they went.	4:43
19	'We shan't be able to go anywhere on the carpet...'	3:29
20	'Has anyone got any matches?' said Anthea.	4:10

21	The stone was heaved up.	3:34
22	So they all went in...	4:08
23	They went down the road...	2:36
24	Mother arranged with Aunt Emma...	4:35
25	Everything was nicely washed up...	4:18
26	At this point the Phoenix...	3:14
27	It was Jane who awoke with a start...	3:07
28	'Well, miss,' said the burglar...	3:59
29	The morning after the adventure...	4:30
30	'Good gracious,' said Jane...	4:01
31	So the children arranged to wait...	3:04
32	And instantly they were.	4:28
33	'Hooray! Hooray! Hooray!...'	3:42
34	When she had gone out the Phoenix...	3:54
35	The songs in the play it took to be hymns...	4:09
36	But a fierce waft of smoke and hot air...	2:59
37	No one had noticed the Phoenix...	3:07
38	Anthea put the last touches...	4:58
39	When they got home, there lay the carpet...	3:30
40	'Whatever have you done with the carpet?'	3:15

Total time: 2:38:23

Edith Nesbit

THE PHOENIX AND THE CARPET

Edith Nesbit was born on 15 August 1858, the youngest child of Sarah and John Collis Nesbit, an agricultural chemist and teacher. She had two brothers, Henry and Alfred, one sister, Mary and a half sister, Sarah. The first four years of her life were happy, but then tragedy struck. Her father died suddenly when she was four; and four years later, her sister Mary was diagnosed with tuberculosis, a common but dangerous disease at that time. There was no cure except to move to a warmer, dryer climate, and so began Edith's life of constant change.

Between 1866 and 1872, Edith went to almost a dozen different schools in England, France and Germany. Some were harsh boarding schools where Edith was lonely and sad. In her autobiography she recalls being placed alone and hungry in cold schoolrooms in the middle of winter. Then there were periods without formal schooling when her mother travelled around the south of France with her three girls (the boys having been left at boarding schools in England).

Yet in this unsettled childhood, she managed to let her imagination grow, developing ideas for stories and their

characters which she stored away. Later these ideas formed the basis for characters in her most famous books: *The Railway Children*, *The Treasure Seekers*, *The Wouldbegoods* and *Five Children and It*.

After Edith's sister Mary died of tuberculosis in 1871, the family returned home to a more settled life at Halstead Hall in Kent. It was in this perfect countryside, with woods and hills, that Edith, now aged 13, started to write poems and stories in secret. When she was 17, she decided to show her work to her mother, and this resulted in the first publication of a poem in a magazine. It was the beginning of a busy writing career. As an adult she moved in key literary and political circles, counting George Bernard Shaw and H.G. Wells among her friends.

Although lasting fame has been established by a specific handful of her works, including *The Railway Children* and the Bastables' adventures (*The Story of the Treasure-Seekers* and *The Wouldbegoods*), she wrote over 100 novels and books of poetry. She died in 1924.

There are three 'Psammead' novels, starting with *Five Children and It* (1902). This

was followed by *The Phoenix and the Carpet* (1904) and *The Story of the Amulet* (1906).

The Phoenix and the Carpet continues the adventures of Robert, Cyril, Anthea, Jane, and their baby brother, who is called the Lamb, because the first thing he ever said was 'Baa!'

In *Five Children and It*, the children had found a Psammead, or sand-fairy, and it had let them have anything they wished for. In this second Psammead novel, the children encounter a Phoenix which first appears as an egg brought to them wrapped in a magic carpet.

November 5th was to have been a wonderful day, with fireworks, but, having decided to test the fireworks in advance, the children succeed in causing a fire and ruining their carpet. As a result, all the fireworks are taken away and November 5th is not such a fun day after all. However, the consequence of this is much more exciting than anyone could have guessed: the ruined carpet has to be replaced, and who would ever have imagined that the new one could be a *magic* carpet?

The magic carpet allows them a certain number of wishes each day, but it is not always easy to remember how many they have had – and this gets them into some uncomfortable situations. They visit all kinds of different countries and meet a whole

variety of people, some nice and some very nasty indeed. They always try their hardest to be helpful, but sometimes things just don't go quite as they expect. The Phoenix, being a magical creature, also knows of the Psammead, which is just as well when the children find themselves trapped in a dark tower in France.

The Phoenix, described variously as a 'yellow fowl', an 'orange-coloured cockatoo' and a 'beautiful golden bird', is a gentle, helpful creature most of the time, but when he sees the dazzling scene inside the theatre he is completely overwhelmed! He spreads his fiery wings and, without meaning to, causes complete havoc. Once again, the children see things going horribly wrong. But because the Phoenix is a 'bird of fire' he is also able to use his magic to restore things to normal. Suddenly the scene is just as it was, not a hair out of place: did it really happen at all?

The imagination of *The Phoenix and the Carpet*, in which an ordinary group of children experience such extraordinary adventures, is captivating. And as the reality of our world comes slowly back into focus, we all start to feel 'if only I could have done that'...

Notes by Sylvia Helsby

**The music on this recording was taken
from the NAXOS catalogue**

DELIUS ORCHESTRAL WORKS La Quadroöne English Northern Philharmonia / David Lloyd-Jones	8.553535
DELIUS ORCHESTRAL WORKS Scherzo English Northern Philharmonia / David Lloyd-Jones	8.553535
DELIUS MARCHE CAPRICE Royal Scottish National Orchestra / David Lloyd-Jones	8.557143

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The Phoenix and the Carpet is the sequel to *Five Children and It* and continues the adventures of Robert, Cyril, Anthea, Jane and their baby brother, Lamb. They encounter a phoenix wrapped in a magic carpet, and thus begins a series of adventures – captivating, extraordinary and fun, even if some of them go horribly wrong.



Anna Bentinck was trained at The Arts Educational School and has made over 800 broadcasts for BBC radio. Animation voices include the series *64 Zoo Lane*, and on TV she has played Mary Dickens in *Charles Dickens* and Mary Rutherford in the *Marie Curie* series. Her many audio books range from *Lyra's Oxford* by Philip Pullman and *A Little Death* by Laura Wilson to *Queen Victoria* by Evelyn Anthony. She also read *Five Children and It* for Naxos AudioBooks.

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2:38:23