

Officer of Heaven

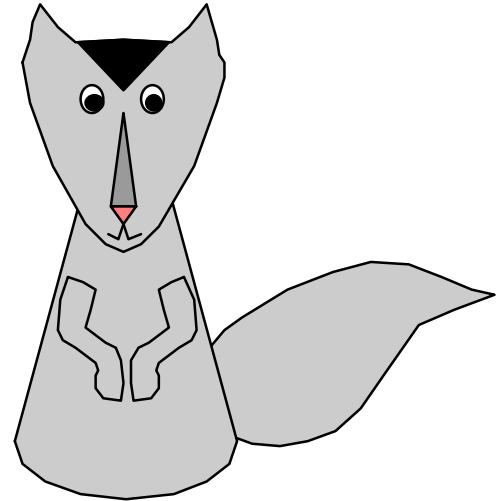
Folktale from Western China

Characters

Fox - clever

Tiger - bold and confident

Several other animals of the forest



Scene 1

The curtain opens on a fine day in the forest. Tiger enters from the left.

Tiger: (roars) Oh, I am hungry! I must find something to eat.

Fox: (Fox enters from the right whistling.) It's such a beautiful day. The sun is so bright the air is so clear.

Tiger: (sees Fox and roars) There's a tasty little morsel for my dinner.

Fox: (makes a startled cry) You aren't really going to eat me, are you?

Tiger: That's just what I plan to do.

Fox: I don't think that would be a good idea.

Tiger: I think it's an excellent idea.

(Tiger leaps towards Fox, ready to grab him)

Fox: Stop! I must tell you that Heaven has appointed me the ruler over this district. It would not be wise of you to eat an Officer of Heaven.

Tiger: That sounds like a very unlikely story. What proof do you have that you are in fact an Officer of Heaven?

Fox: It's quite easy to prove. Let us walk through the district so you can see the fear the creatures have for me as the Officer of Heaven. If I walk in front and you behind, then you can also see that I don't escape.

Tiger: Very well.

(Curtain drops on scene 1 as Fox leads Tiger deeper into the forest going offstage.)



Scene 2

The curtain opens on the forest with several animals to the right as Fox enters from the left with Tiger following. As the sly Fox expected, the creatures pay him little attention, but run off as soon as they see the feared hunter, Tiger.

Fox: (turns towards Tiger) Do you see what happens when I make my rounds in the district? The animals fear me and run away.

Tiger: The animals certainly are afraid of you. It does seem to be true that you are the Officer of Heaven and much too important to eat.

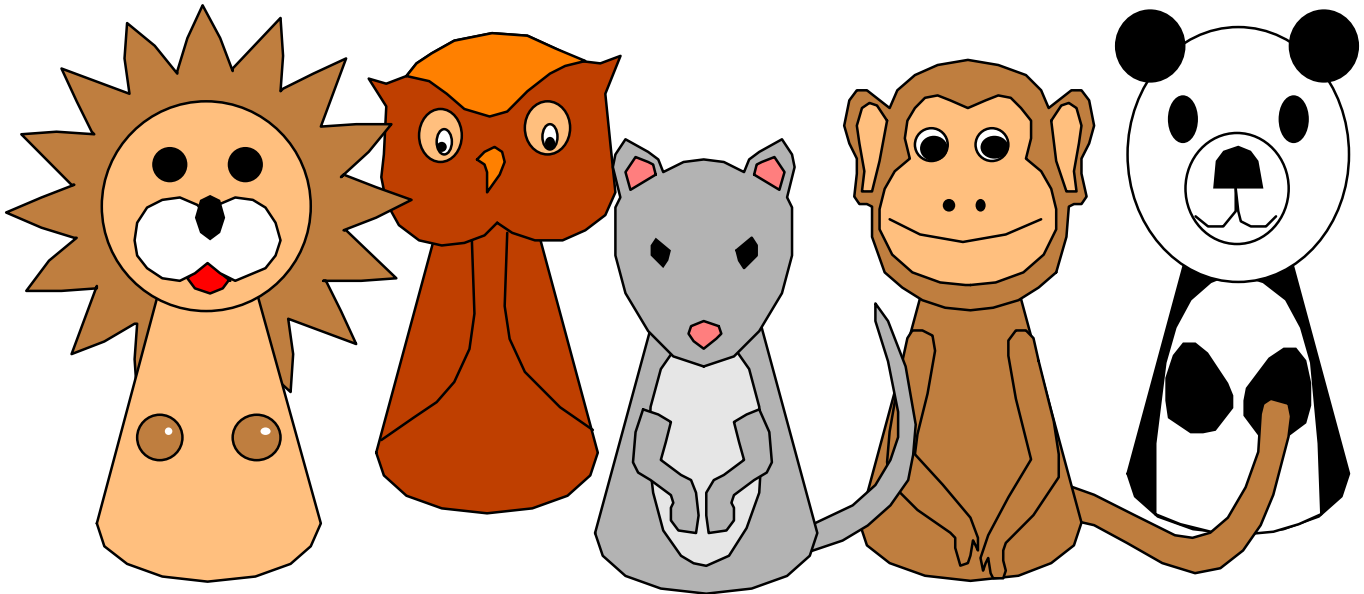
(Tiger turns around and starts to return the way they just came. He stops and turns

back towards Fox and bows his head politely)

Tiger: Good day, Your Excellency.

(Tiger leaves and Fox breathes a sign of relief.)

(Curtain drops. The End.)



About the Play - Officer of Heaven

<http://AuntAnnie.com/Puppets/ConeFinger>

In Chinese folklore foxes are often mischievous and tricky. Tigers are noted for their bravery but are sensitive and easily insulted.

Puppets

Make the Tiger, Fox and two or three other animal puppets from the Paper Cone Finger Puppets project at AuntAnnie.com.

Sets

You will need a forest backdrop for this play. For the forest backdrop draw several trees and a path.

Props

No props are needed.

Staging Tips

- This play is best with two or three puppeteers, but can be performed with one puppeteer. Be sure to make a stage large enough for the number of puppeteers.
- With one puppeteer, put the fox and tiger on different hands in scene 1. In scene 2 put them on the same hand and use the fingers on the other hand for the other animals.

The Story

In this story fox claims to be an Officer of Heaven. In Chinese folklore there are three levels of gods - Supreme Ruler (Yu Huang), city and town gods (Ch'eng Huang), and place gods (T'u Ti). Any of these might appoint an officer to carry out his orders on Earth.

Many other cultures have tales of a smaller animal tricking a larger and stronger one. The animal that plays trickster varies with coyote common in Native North American stories. Spider is a favorite trickster in African tales and fox is frequently found in South American stories.