

The Fly and the Fool

Inspired by a Vietnamese folk tale

Lou Kuenzler

Characters



The Judge
a fair and honest man



Mr Lo
a rich but **deceitful** merchant



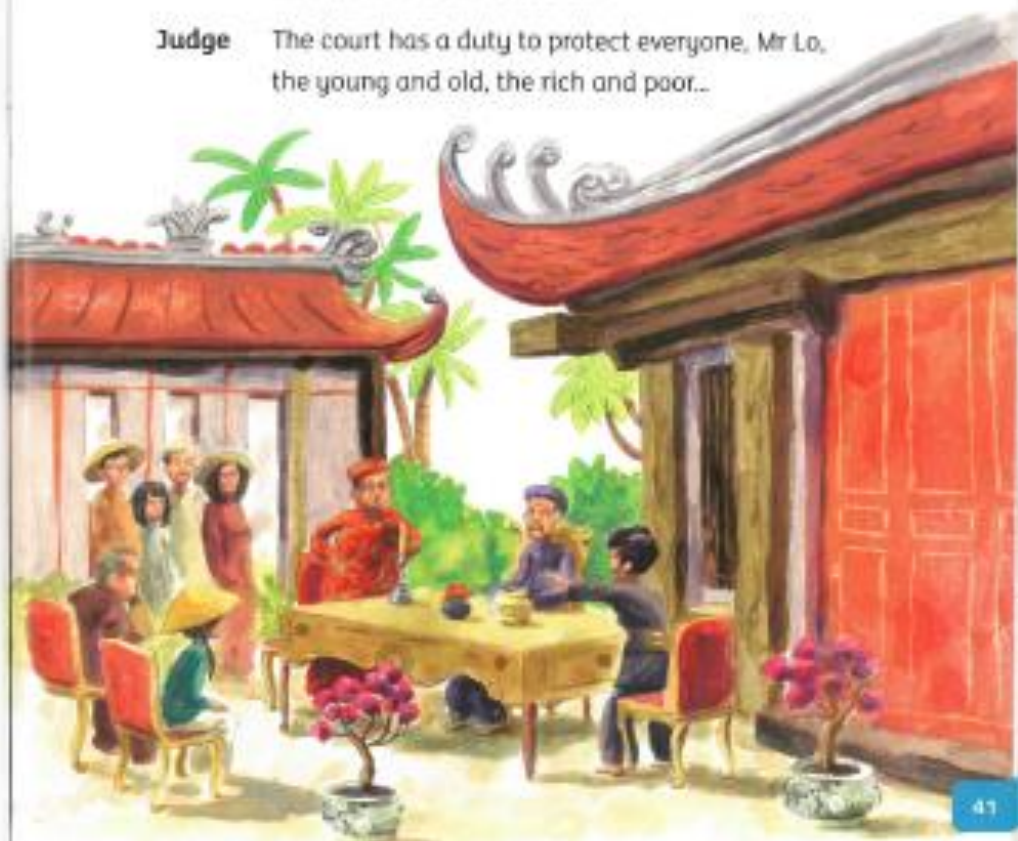
Lan
a clever village boy who
loves telling riddles



Kym
his high-spirited sister

In an outdoor meeting place, The Judge leans on a large, **imposing** desk. To his left sits Lan and to his right Mr Lo, who looks very cross. The actors should treat the audience as if they are local people watching the trial. Kym sits amongst this crowd.

- Judge** (To audience) Quiet please. Settle down. (Turning to Lan) What is your complaint, lad? Tell the court why you are here.
- Lan** (Stands, nervously) Please, Your Honour, I want to complain about this man. (He points at Mr Lo.)
- Mr Lo** (Jumping to his feet) Surely the court will not waste time listening to a little grasshopper like this! I am a respectable businessman.
- Judge** The court has a duty to protect everyone, Mr Lo, the young and old, the rich and poor...



Mr Lo *(Edging towards the Judge's table, whispering)* I am very rich, you know. If Your Honour needs a loan... just say the word.



Kym *(Leaping up from the audience)* He's trying to give you money, Mr Judge, so you won't listen to what we have to say!

Judge *(Firmly)* Order in the court! Sit down, young lady!

Kym Sorry. *(She sits.)*

Judge *(Turning back to Mr Lo)* But I do recognise a bribe when I hear one... I do NOT want to hear any more of them in this court. Understood?

Mr Lo nods, guiltily.

Judge I believe we are here because of a loan.

Lan Yes, Your Honour. Our family is not rich.

Kym We're very poor! Sometimes we don't even have money for food.



Lan My parents borrowed some money from Mr Lo. Just enough to buy something to eat until our rice harvest came in. But, when the harvest was over and we went to pay him back, he said the money was not enough.

Kym *(On her feet again)* He said we owed him twice as much now!

Judge Young lady! Compose yourself.

Kym *(Sits, grumbling)* I was only trying to say...

Mr Lo See the kind of ruffians we are dealing with! They've no respect for authority, whereas I am a fine, upstanding member of the community...

Lan After a year, Mr Lo said we owed him *ten times* the amount my parents had borrowed!

Mr Lo *(Shrugs)* I'm a businessman! I need to make a profit!

Judge *(To Lan)* You say Mr Lo called at your cottage yesterday. Tell me what happened.



Lan Kym and I were sweeping the path. *(He raises his eyebrows.)* She was pestering me as usual!

Kym comes out of the audience. The two children re-enact the scene, miming sweeping.

Kym Tell me a riddle, Lan...*please!* You know I can never guess the answers.

Lan All right! *(He thinks for a moment and then begins to walk slowly up and down the dusty path.)* Here's one: the more I take, the more I leave behind. What are they?

Judge *(Clapping his hands, excited)* I'm **immensely** fond of riddles!

Kym *(Shaking her head)* The more you take, the more you leave behind? I don't know...



Lan It's footsteps. *(He paces again.)* The more I take, the more I leave behind. See! *(He points at his prints on the dusty path.)*

Judge Very clever! Footsteps! I like that.

Mr Lo It's just a childish riddle!

Kym That's not what you said yesterday! You were desperate to solve riddles then.

Judge *(Shaking his head at Kym)* I suppose it is useless to ask you to sit down, young lady?

Kym I'll show you what happened! I'll pretend to be Mr Lo. Watch!

Kym rubs her belly and walks with her legs apart like a frog. The Judge tries not to laugh.

Mr Lo This is outrageous!

Judge I see. The bamboo is alive, but the fence will be dead! Brilliant!

Lan My mother's at the market, selling the wind and buying bright moonlight. She's selling paper fans – which will give a cool breeze – so she can buy oil to light our lamps and make them shine brightly at night!



Kym (as Mr Lo) Very clever! *(Under her breath, as if Mr Lo is whispering)* But you're a fool, boy, if you think a fly can be a witness.



The re-enactment ends. Lan and Kym approach the Judge again.

Kym I promise, that's how it happened.

Lan Later, when my parents went to thank Mr Lo for letting them off the money they owed, he pretended he had never spoken to me.

Mr Lo *(Leaping up)* There never was a deal. It's nonsense! Your family still owes me money!

Lan *(Smiles, cleverly)* But the fly was our witness. It landed right on the end of your nose, remember?

Kym Buzzzzzz! *(She taps Mr Lo's nose.)* Right there!

Mr Lo That's a lie! The fly was not on my nose! It was on the gate like you said!

Kym and Lan *(Together)* Ha!

Judge *(Sternly)* Since you remember where the fly was, Mr Lo, you must also remember making your promise! These children are telling the truth. You made a deal and this family are now free of their debt!

Mr Lo Oh no! *(He buries his head in his hands and groans.)* I tripped up on my own stupid lies. It is not the boy who is the fool...it is me!

Judge *(To audience)* All those who agree, raise your hands!

Kym and Lan Hurray!

