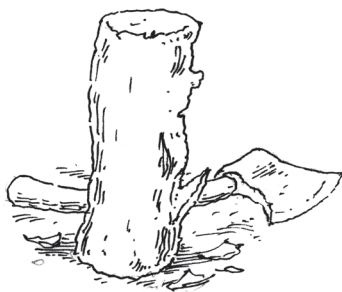


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*The Adventures of
Pinocchio*



I

ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WAS...
“A king!” my little readers all shout.

No, children, you’re wrong. Once upon a time there was a piece of wood.

There was nothing special about it. It was just an ordinary woodpile log, the kind you put in the stove or on the fire to keep it burning and warm the rooms.

I don’t know how it happened, but one fine day this piece of wood turned up in the workshop of an old carpenter named Antonio – except that everyone called him Mr Cherrynose, because the tip of his nose shone bright red, just like a ripe cherry.

When he set eyes on the piece of wood, Cherrynose was mightily pleased. He rubbed his hands in glee and muttered to himself:

“Just what I needed! I’ll use it to make a table leg.”

And he immediately took hold of his axe to start to peel off the bark and whittle the wood down. He was just about to make the first stroke of the axe when his arm suddenly froze at the sound of a tiny little voice warning him:

“Don’t hit me so hard!”

Just picture good old Cherrynose when he heard that!

His eyes looked wildly round the room to see where the voice had come from. There was no one! He looked under his workbench: no one. He looked inside a cupboard he always kept closed: no one. He looked in the basket of wood shavings and sawdust: no one. He opened the door of the workshop and took a glance down the street: no one. What then?...

“Oh, I see,” he said, laughing and scratching his wig. “I must have imagined it. Back to work.”

And he picked up the axe and gave a resounding blow to the piece of wood.

“Ouch! That hurts!” the little voice squealed resentfully.

Cherrynose stopped in his tracks. His eyes started out of his head in fright, and his mouth gaped open with his tongue lolling out, right down to his chin. He looked like a gargoyle.

When he managed to speak, he said, shaking and stammering with fear:

“It said ‘ouch’ – but where’s it coming from?... There’s not a living soul in the room. Don’t tell me it’s the piece of wood crying and whining like a small boy – I can’t believe it. Look at it... a piece of firewood, like all the others... good for heating a pot of beans. What then? There’s someone hidden inside it? Well, if there is, he’s got it coming to him. I’ll fix him!...”

And he grabbed the wretched piece of wood with both hands and got ready to smash it pitilessly against the wall.

But first he listened for the little whining voice. He waited two minutes: nothing. Five minutes: nothing. Ten minutes: nothing!

“I see what’s happened,” he said, trying to laugh and rumpling his wig. “I just imagined a voice saying ‘ouch’. Back to work.”

But he’d been given a real fright, so he tried humming to himself to keep up his courage.

He put the axe to one side and picked up the plane to scrape and polish the wood. But as he moved the plane up and down, again he heard the little voice laughing:

“Stop it! You’re tickling me all over!”

This time Cherrynose fell over with astonishment. When he opened his eyes, he was sitting on the floor.

His face was completely transformed – and even the tip of his nose, instead of being red as it usually was, had turned blue from fright.



2

AT THAT MOMENT there was a knock at the door. “Come in,” said the carpenter, who didn’t have the strength to get to his feet.

At this, a spry little old man entered the workshop. His name was Geppetto, but all the children of the neighbourhood, when they wanted to enrage him, called him Custardface, because of his yellow wig, which looked a lot like a bowl of custard.

Geppetto was extremely touchy. It meant trouble if you called him Custardface. His temper would flare, and you couldn’t restrain him.

“Good morning, Mr Antonio,” Geppetto said. “What are you doing sitting on the floor?”

“I’m teaching ants how to count.”

“Good for you.”

“What’s brought you here, neighbour Geppetto?”

“My legs. I’ve come to ask a favour from you, Mastro Antonio.”*

“And here I am, ready to help,” said the carpenter, lifting himself onto his knees.

“An idea popped into my head this morning.”

“Let’s hear it.”

“I thought of making a fine wooden puppet – a really extraordinary one that can dance, fight with a sword and do somersaults, like an acrobat. I could take it round the world and earn my keep in bread and wine. What do you think?”

“Brilliant idea, Custardface!” the little voice shouted, as if coming out of nowhere.

On being called Custardface, Geppetto went as red as a beetroot with fury. He turned on the carpenter and angrily said:

“Why have you insulted me?”

“Who’s insulted you?”

“You called me Custardface!”

“It wasn’t me.”

“So it was me then, was it? Of course it was you!”

“It wasn’t.”

“It was.”

“It wasn’t.”

“It was.”

They got angrier and angrier. Words turned into blows. They jumped on one another, scratched and bit and knocked each other about.

When the fight was over, Antonio was left holding Geppetto’s yellow wig, while Geppetto realized he had the carpenter’s grey wig between his teeth.

“Give me my wig back!” shouted Antonio.

“And you give me mine and we’ll make up.”

So the two old men exchanged wigs, then shook hands and swore undying friendship for the rest of their lives.

“So, neighbour Geppetto,” the carpenter continued, as a sign they were reconciled. “What was the favour you wanted?”

“I’d like a piece of wood to make my puppet. Could you give me one?”

Antonio was delighted, and went immediately to the bench to take the piece of wood which had given him such a fright. But just as he was about to hand it to his friend, it gave a big

shake and, slipping out of his hands, banged against poor Geppetto's lanky shins.

"So this is the nice way you give presents to people, is it, Mastro Antonio? I can hardly walk!"

"It wasn't me."

"Oh, so it was me then, was it?"

"It's the wood's fault."

"I know it was the wood, but you were the one hitting me!"

"I didn't hit you!"

"Liar!"

"Geppetto, don't insult me – because if you do, I'll call you Custardface!..."

"Ass!"

"Custardface!"

"Donkey!"

"Custardface!"

"Ugly monkey!"

"Custardface!"

On hearing himself called Custardface for the third time, Geppetto lost control and jumped on the carpenter – and they went at it with no holds barred.

When the battle was over, Antonio found he had two more scratches on his nose and Geppetto had lost two buttons from his jacket. Having evened the score in this way, they shook hands and swore undying friendship for the rest of their lives.

Then Geppetto took his nice piece of wood, thanked Mr Antonio and limped home.



3

GEPETTO LIVED in a ground-floor room lit by a window under the stairs. The furniture was basic: a rickety chair, an uncomfortable bed and a wreck of a table. On the wall at the back of the room there was a fireplace and a fire burning in it – but it was painted. Next to the painted flames there was a painted cooking pot which was bubbling and puffing away merrily. It looked like real steam.

As soon as he entered, Geppetto took up his tools and started to carve and construct his puppet.

“What shall I call him?” he wondered. “I’ll call him Pinocchio. That’ll bring him luck. I knew a family called the Pinocchios – the father’s name was Pinocchio, the mother was Pinocchia, and the children were all Pinocchi. They had a good life. The richest one used to beg on the streets.”

After he’d decided on the puppet’s name, Geppetto got properly down to work. He carved his hair, his forehead and then his eyes.

When he’d done the eyes, you can guess how astonished he was when he saw the eyes move and stare at him.

Seeing those wooden eyes looking at him so hard, he almost felt resentful and said reprovingly:

“Hey, wicked Wooden-Eyes, what are you looking at?”

But there was no reply.

So, having done the eyes, he made a nose. But the nose, as soon as it was formed, started to grow... It grew and grew and grew until in a few minutes it became a huge nose of immeasurable length. Geppetto tried to cut it down, but, as hard as he worked away to shorten it, that impudent nose just got longer and longer!

After he'd done the nose, he carved the mouth.

But he hadn't finished carving it before it started to laugh at him.

“Stop laughing!” Geppetto said, annoyed. But he might as well have been talking to himself.

“Stop laughing, I tell you,” he shouted threateningly.

So the mouth stopped laughing, but stuck out its tongue.

Geppetto didn't want to spoil the work he had done, so pretended not to see and went on carving. After the mouth came the chin, then the neck, then the shoulders, the tummy, the arms and the hands.

As soon as he had finished making the hands, Geppetto felt someone lifting his wig off. He looked up and what did he see? The puppet was holding his yellow wig in his hand.

“Pinocchio, give me back my wig now!”

But Pinocchio, instead of giving it back, put it on his own head, which almost disappeared inside it.

This insolence and mockery made Geppetto sadder and more depressed than he'd ever been. He looked at Pinocchio and said:

“You wicked lad! You're not even finished and you're already making fun of your dad. You should be ashamed of yourself, my lad!”

And he wiped away a tear.

He still had to do the legs and the feet.

As soon as he'd finished the feet, he got kicked right on the tip of his nose.

“I was asking for it,” he said to himself. “Too late to complain now – I should have thought first.”

Then he lifted the puppet up and stood him on the floor so he could start to walk. Pinocchio’s legs were stiff, and he couldn’t move them, so Geppetto held his hands and showed him how to put one foot in front of the other.

As soon as his legs could move easily, Pinocchio started to walk by himself and run about the room. Then he ran out through the door and jumped into the street and took to his heels.

Geppetto ran after him, but couldn’t keep up. That rascal Pinocchio was leaping like a hare, and the noise of his wooden feet on the pavement made as much racket as twenty pairs of clogs.

“Stop that boy! Stop that boy!” Geppetto was shouting, but the people in the street, when they saw that wooden puppet running along like a racehorse, just stopped and stared – and you can’t imagine how they laughed and laughed and laughed!

Luckily a *carabiniere** at last appeared. He’d heard all the commotion and thought a young horse had broken loose, so he planted himself in the middle of the road, determined to stop the beast and prevent any accidents.

When Pinocchio saw from afar that the *carabiniere* was blocking the road, he decided to take him by surprise and try to duck through his legs – but he came a cropper.

The *carabiniere* didn’t move an inch, but grabbed him gently by the nose (which was so prodigiously long it was made to be grabbed by a *carabiniere*) and handed him back to Geppetto. Geppetto wanted to box Pinocchio’s ears hard to give him a good telling off – but he couldn’t find them! Can you guess why? That’s right – he’d been so absorbed in his carving he’d completely forgotten to make any ears for Pinocchio!

So he took hold of the scruff of his neck and pulled him along, all the while shaking his head menacingly at him.

“It’s straight back home for you, my lad. And when we get there, you’ll pay for this – you can be sure of that!”

When he heard this, Pinocchio threw himself on the ground and refused to budge. Inquisitive passers-by and loiterers started to gather round and form a crowd.

There were comments from all sides.

“Oh, poor little puppet!” some said. “Of course he doesn’t want to go home! Who knows the beating he’s going to get from Geppetto, that wicked man!”

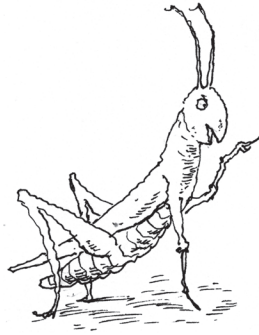
And others added maliciously:

“Geppetto seems such an honest fellow, but with children he’s a real tyrant. He’s quite capable of tearing that poor puppet limb from limb, if he stays with him.”

The remarks and reactions of the bystanders eventually persuaded the *carabiniere* to free Pinocchio and take Geppetto into custody. The poor man was too speechless to defend himself, and wept like a baby calf on his way to the jail, sobbing and stammering:

“Wicked child! And I wanted to make him such a fine puppet! But I’m to blame – I should have known better!...”

What happened next is so strange it’s quite hard to believe. I’ll tell you all about it in the following chapters.



4

SO, CHILDREN, while poor Geppetto was led off to prison through no fault of his own, that rascal Pinocchio, who had escaped the *carabiniere*'s clutches, took to his heels across the fields to get back home more quickly. As he raced along, he leapt over high embankments, thorn bushes and ditches full of water, just like a young goat or hare being chased by hunters.

When he reached home, he found the door ajar, so he pushed it open and went inside. As soon as he had bolted the door well, he stretched out on the ground and heaved a deep contented sigh. But that didn't last long, as he heard someone saying:

"Cri-cri-cri!"

"Who's that?" Pinocchio said, filled with fright.

"It's me!"

Pinocchio turned and saw a large cricket climbing slowly up the wall.

"And who are you, Cricket?"

"I am the Talking Cricket, and I've been living in this room for over a hundred years."

"But I live here now," said the puppet, "so do me a favour and buzz off. And don't look back!"

“I’m not leaving,” said the Cricket, “before I tell you an important truth.”

“Tell me, then – and make it short.”

“Children who rebel against their parents and leave their family home on a whim should watch out. They’ll never come to any good in this world, and sooner or later they’ll bitterly regret what they’ve done.”

“My dear Mr Cricket, you can chirp away to your heart’s content, but what I’m going to do is leave here as soon as it’s daylight, because if I stay I’ll be made to go to school like all the other children do, and have to study whether I want to or not. And let me tell you a little secret: I don’t want to study – not one little bit: I’d rather chase butterflies and climb trees and catch little birds.”

“You poor fool! Don’t you know that if that’s how you carry on you’ll end up a great ass, and everyone else will make fun of you?”

“Shut your trap, wicked Cricket of ill omen!” Pinocchio shouted.

But the Cricket was patient and philosophical, and, instead of taking offence at Pinocchio’s rudeness, continued in the same tone of voice:

“And if you don’t like the idea of going to school, then why not learn a trade, so you can earn an honest penny?”

“You know why?” replied Pinocchio, who was starting to lose patience. “There’s only one trade I really want to learn.”

“And what would that be?”

“Eating, drinking, sleeping, having fun and wandering about all day long.”

“Just so you know,” said the Talking Cricket in his usual unruffled tone, “all those who follow that line of work end up either in hospital or in prison.”

“Just watch it, wicked Cricket of ill omen! Take care I don’t get angry!...”

“Poor Pinocchio! I feel really sorry for you!”

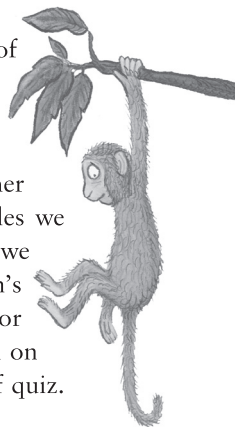
“And why is that, may I ask?”

“Because you’re a puppet – and, what’s worse, your head’s made all of wood too.”

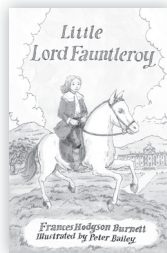
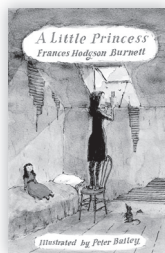
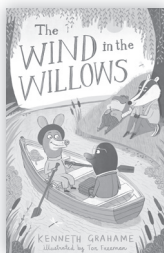
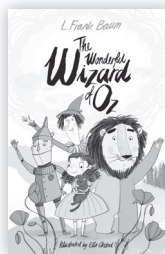
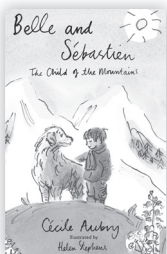
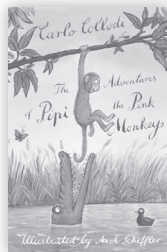
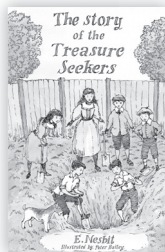
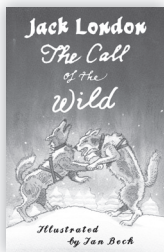
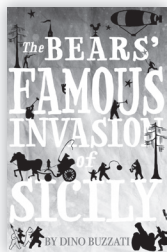
At these words Pinocchio jumped up in a rage, seized a hammer that was lying on the workbench and threw it at the Talking Cricket.

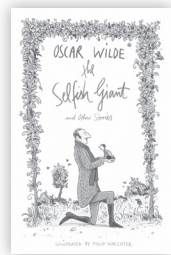
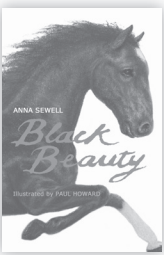
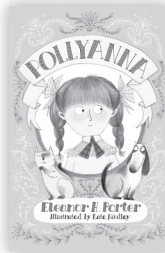
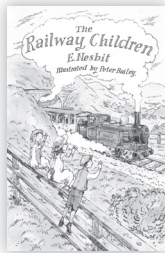
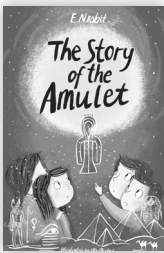
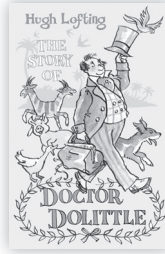
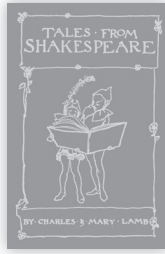
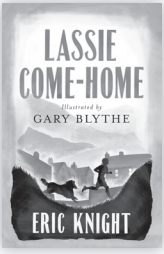
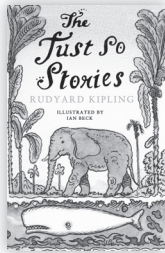
Perhaps he didn’t mean to hit him, but unfortunately he hit him bang on the head. The poor Cricket let out a faint “Cri-cri-cri” and remained squashed to the wall, dead as a doornail.

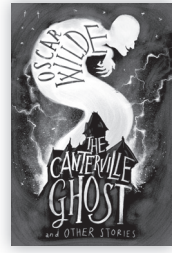
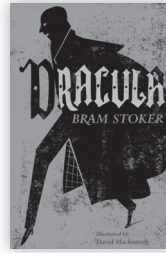
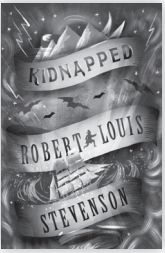
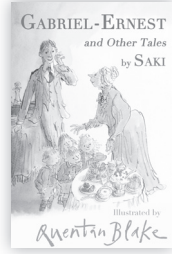
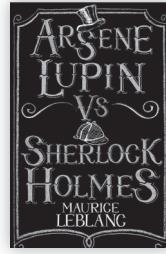
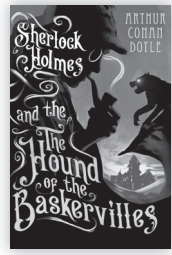
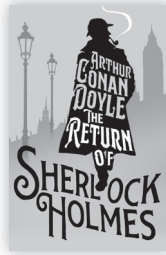
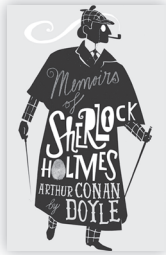
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