

A painting depicting a scene from 'The Adventures of Pinocchio'. Pinocchio, a small wooden puppet with a large nose, is lying down, wearing a red jacket and a red hat. He is being held by a woman whose torso and arms are visible. She is wearing a white, off-the-shoulder dress. The background is dark and indistinct.

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THE ADVENTURES OF PINOCCHIO

CARLO COLLODI

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The Adventures of Pinocchio by Carlo Collodi.

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Chapter 1

How it happened that Mastro Cherry, carpenter, found a piece of wood that wept and laughed like a child.

Centuries ago there lived—

“A king!” my little readers will say immediately.

No, children, you are mistaken. Once upon a time there was a piece of wood. It was not an expensive piece of wood. Far from it. Just a common block of firewood, one of those thick, solid logs that are put on the fire in winter to make cold rooms cozy and warm.

I do not know how this really happened, yet the fact remains that one fine day this piece of wood found itself in the shop of an old carpenter. His real name was Mastro Antonio, but everyone called him Mastro Cherry, for the tip of his nose was so round and red and shiny that it looked like a ripe cherry.

As soon as he saw that piece of wood, Mastro Cherry was filled with joy. Rubbing his hands together happily, he mumbled half to himself:

“This has come in the nick of time. I shall use it to make the leg of a table.”

He grasped the hatchet quickly to peel off the bark and shape the wood. But as he was about to give it the first blow, he stood still with arm uplifted, for he had heard a wee, little voice say in a beseeching tone: “Please be careful! Do not hit me so hard!”

What a look of surprise shone on Mastro Cherry’s face! His funny face became still funnier.

He turned frightened eyes about the room to find out where that wee, little voice had come from and he saw no one! He looked under the bench—no one! He peeped inside the closet—no one! He searched among the shavings—no one! He opened the door to look up and down the street—and still no one!

“Oh, I see!” he then said, laughing and scratching his Wig. “It can easily be seen that I only thought I heard the tiny voice say the words! Well, well—to work once more.”

He struck a most solemn blow upon the piece of wood.

“Oh, oh! You hurt!” cried the same far-away little voice.

Mastro Cherry grew dumb, his eyes popped out of his head, his mouth opened wide, and his tongue hung down on his chin.

As soon as he regained the use of his senses, he said, trembling and stuttering from fright:

“Where did that voice come from, when there is no one around? Might it be that this piece of wood has learned to weep and cry like a child? I can hardly believe it. Here it is—a piece of common firewood, good only to burn in the stove, the same as any other. Yet—might someone be hidden in it? If so, the worse for him. I’ll fix him!”

With these words, he grabbed the log with both hands and started to knock it about unmercifully. He threw it to the floor, against the walls of the room, and even up to the ceiling.

He listened for the tiny voice to moan and cry. He waited two minutes—nothing; five minutes—nothing; ten minutes—nothing.