

Pinocchio by Carlo Collodi

An old carpenter, Master Antonio, (also called 'Cherry' from his red nose) starts to chop up an old log only to find that it speaks and tells him not to strike so hard!

He turned his terrified eyes all around the room to try and discover where the little voice could possibly have come from, but he saw nobody! He looked under the bench – nobody; he looked into a cupboard that was always shut – nobody; he looked into a basket of shavings and sawdust – nobody; he even opened the door of the shop and gave a glance into the street – and still nobody. Who, then, could it be?

"I see how it is," he said, laughing and scratching his wig; 'evidently that little voice was all my imagination. Let us set to work again.'

And taking up the axe he struck a tremendous blow on the piece of wood.

"Oh! Oh! You have hurt me!" cried the same little voice dolefully.

This time Master Cherry was petrified. His eyes started out of his head with fright, his mouth remained open, and his tongue hung out almost to the end of his chin, like a mask on a fountain. As soon as he had recovered the use of his speech, he began to say, stuttering and trembling with fear: 'But where on earth can that little voice have come from that said Oh! Oh!?!.....Here there is certainly not a living soul. Is it possible that this piece of wood can have learnt to cry and to lament like a child? I cannot believe it. This piece of wood, here it is; a log for fuel like all the others, and thrown on the fire it would about to suffice to boil a saucepan of beans.....How then? Can anyone be hidden inside it? If anyone is hidden inside, so much the worse for him. I will settle him at once.'

So saying, he seized the poor piece of wood and commenced beating it without mercy against the walls of the room.

Then he stopped to listen if he could hear any little voice lamenting. He waited two minutes – nothing; five minutes – nothing; ten minutes – still nothing!

..... Putting the axe aside he took his plane, to plane and polish the bit of wood; but whilst he was running it up and down he heard the same little voice say, laughing: 'Have done! You are tickling me all over!'

This time poor Master Cherry fell down as if he had been struck by lightning. When he at last opened his eyes he found himself seated on the floor.

His face was quite changed, even the end of his nose, instead of being crimson, as it was nearly always, had become blue from fright.