

WOULD TELL NO LIE

by

STRINGS ATTACHED

Darkness. In the distance, wooden chimes clatter.

A voice, strong and clear, breaks the reverie:

MAN'S VOICE (VO)

He was carved from pine wood.
The joints of his arms and
legs were attached with heavy
twine. His hair was cut from
the tail of a horse. His eyes
were buttons plucked from a
winter coat. He was no boy,
not yet, but a puppet for
amusement and exploitation.

FADE IN:

INT. BOY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A flame dances inside a kerosene lantern.

The walls of the room are alive with images of a child's
imagination. Across the ceiling is a black sheet, painted
with white stars and a bright moon.

FATHER, mid-40s, sits at the bedside. He's a tall, thin man.
Lying beside him, under blankets, is his SON, a lad of 9.

The Father peers lovingly at his son.

FATHER

This small wooden boy was
brought into this world with a
singular purpose.

SON

To be the father's son?

FATHER

(nods)

The son Gepetto never had.

SON

And what of the son's nose?

FATHER

It would grow narrow and
sharp. With each lie the son
told. It was to be his curse.

SON
His curse.

FATHER
And his salvation.

SON
(softly)
His salvation.

FATHER
For this puppet desired to be
a real boy. To run and play,
and share all the joys of
life. His name to be...

SON
Was Pinocchio.

FATHER
(softly)
Pinocchio.

INT. WOODCARVER WORKSHOP - DAY

A dreary room lit by sunlight diffused by a window shade.

Clutter everywhere.

Uncut lengths of 2x4 lumber. Plank wood in sheet. And from
the rafters, hang

WOODEN ARMS AND LEGS

GEPETTO, 60s, sits in a small chair.

Thick gray hair and a paint-brush moustache. Small glasses
teeter on his nose. His hulking frame buried under a sweater.

He faces a wooden puppet, PINOCCHIO, who rests on a stool
against the work bench.

Gepetto fastens a bow tie to Pinocchio's shirt. The puppet
wears a white shirt and knee pants. And a sad expression.

PINOCCHIO
Papa, please, I don't want to
be a puppet. It's Halloween.
Can't I be...

GEPETTO
A real boy? Flesh and blood?

He smiles and brushes the puppet boy's hair.

PINOCCHIO

Yes.

GEPETTO

To be a real boy takes more than a Halloween outfit. To be a real boy means he must believe that all is possible. The puppet must be good. He must listen and obey. Do all that his Papa asks of him. Not questioning his judgment.

PINOCCHIO

But I have done all that –

Gepetto places a finger to Pinocchio's lips

GEPETTO

Stop. A real boy makes smart choices. What he believes in his heart. But he must have a real heart. Are you a patient boy with a ticking heart?

Pinocchio looks solemnly at Gepetto. The old man smiles.

GEPETTO

Not tonight, dear Pinocchio.

EXT. FRONT PORCH, OLD HOUSE – NIGHT

A group of CHILDREN approach. Ring the doorbell.

They're dressed in a variety of costumes, including a ghost, a fireman, a cowboy, a lion, a soldier, and a kitty cat.

CHILDREN

Trick or treat.

Gepetto opens the door. A bowl of candy in one hand.

He chuckles at the sight of the costumes.

GEPETTO

Oh my goodness, more children that I can count. Okay, who wants candy?

The children collectively raise their hands. And laugh. Gepetto hands out treats.

GEPETTO

One for you, and one for you,
and you...

The kids leave one by one. Until only the KITTY CAT is left. She is around 9, chubby build, curly blonde hair and holding a bag of candy in the other. Her wears a kitty face paint.

Gepetto looks at the kitty, then at his empty bowl.

The cat girl looks up with sad eyes.

GEPETTO

Terrribly sorry, but I'm out of
candy. Whatever will we do?

The kitty girl's shoulders droop. She turns and walks away.

A small voice, Pinocchio, commands her back.

PINOCCHIO (O.S.)

I have a Baby Ruth bar.

Hearing the boy's voice, the kitty girl pauses. She turns around. Looks at the now empty doorway.

KITTY

Who said that?

PINOCCHIO (O.S.)

I did.

KITTY

Where are you?

PINOCCHIO (O.S.)

Inside the house. With a big
bag of candy.

KITTY

Where? I can't see you.

PINOCCHIO (O.S.)

I'm here. Do you want to share
candy? I have an Almond Joy.
Big size. And Snickers.

The cat girl steps cautiously toward the open door.

KITTY

Where?

Pinocchio shakes a bag of M&Ms to lure her inside.

PINOCCHIO (O.S.)
I have two chocolate bars.
Would you like one?

Kitty steps into the house. The front door closes behind her.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Pinocchio stands in the semi-dark. He wears a grin.

OS is a struggle. The kitty cat girl SCREAMS. Gepetto grunts.

PRINCESS
Stop it!

Pinocchio's smile falls. He lowers his head as he listens to the kitty girl's muffled SCREAMS.

INT. WOODCARVER WORKSHOP - NIGHT

Gepetto carries the body of the kitty girl in his arms. She's lifeless. Into the workshop.

Pinocchio follows. Walks on shaky legs. Tries to keep up.

ADJACENT ROOM

Gepetto slams the door behind him. Pinocchio stands puzzled.

Behind a closed door comes the tortuous screams and choking sounds of the kitty girl.

Pinocchio places his hands over his ears.

He peers across the room at a

WOODEN CAGE

where another young girl is held captive.

This girl is dressed in a FAIRY PRINCESS costume. She is 8, with dark hair and clutching a magic wand.

KITTY
Help me. Please.

Pinocchio stares at the fairy.

KITTY
Won't you help me?

Pinocchio stops. He paces back and forth. Unsure.

PINOCCHIO
He's my Papa.

KITTY
He's a bad man. He's hurting
children.

PINOCCHIO
I cannot disobey him. I won't.

KITTY
Use your mind. Think it
through.

PINOCCHIO
No.

KITTY
Help me. And I'll help you.

PINOCCHIO
No.

The fairy weeps. Pinocchio turns toward her. His expression a mask of guilt and uncertainty.

PINOCCHIO
I'm just a wooden boy. What
could I do?

INT. ADJACENT ROOM - NIGHT

It looks like spare living quarters. Bed, table, fridge.

Reflected in the mirror of a medicine chest. It closes and Gepetto's reflection is now in the mirror.

Blood smeared across his face and moustache.

The old man runs his tongue across his red, wet lips. He savors the taste of blood.

INT. WOODCARVER WORKSHOP

Gepetto button his shirt, as he steps out of the adjacent room. Closes the door behind him.

He glances around the workshop. Stares at an empty cage. Swings his gaze to Pinocchio, who sits on a stool.

GEPETTO
Where is the girl?

Pinocchio sits motionless.

Gepetto confronts the puppet.

GEPETTO

Do you remember our
conversation about being a
real boy?

The puppet nods.

GEPETTO

That a real boy has faith. He
has trust. That everything his
Papa says and does is for a
greater good. Do you recall?

PINOCCHIO

Yes, Papa.

GEPETTO

Pinocchio, I ask you this as
your loving papa. Where is the
girl that was in the cage?

Pinocchio hesitates.

GEPETTO

Did you free her?

PINOCCHIO

No.

Then, Pinocchio's nose grows.

GEPETTO

Liar. Did she run away?

PINOCCHIO

Yes. She ran home.

Pinocchio's nose grows another few inches.

GEPETTO

Another lie. You see, God is
punishing you. So, she is
still here. Where?

Horror in Pinocchio's eyes. He shakes his head.

His nose grows long, pointier.

Gepetto picks up a saw.

GEPETTO

I'm sorry, Pinocchio. You disappoint me. I thought you wanted to be a real boy. I must cut off your legs, so you never walk again. Unless you tell me now where is the girl?

Pinocchio refuses.

Gepetto saws off Pinocchio's right leg. The puppet boy cries in silence.

His left leg is cut. Pinocchio grabs his stumpy left leg.

GEPETTO

You can't feel that. You're not real. You are just —

FAIRY

Stop hurting him... I'm here.

Gepetto stops sawing. Looks across the room. Princess emerges from under a table. Waving her wand.

FAIRY

Leave us be. Or else.

Discarding the saw, Gepetto turns to face the girl. He smiles wide, revealing vampire incisors.

GEPETTO

What could you do to me, little girl? Huh?

FAIRY

It's not what I could do.

PINOCCHIO

Papa, I'm a real boy.

GEPETTO

Oh please...

Gepetto turns back to Pinocchio.

In time to see the wooden boy with his arms raised overhead. Then a swift plunge of the wooden nose into Gepetto's heart.

The old man staggers. Looks into Pinocchio's eyes a last time, then crumbles to the floor.

INT. BOY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The Father holds his son's hand. Wraps up story time.

FATHER

And Pinocchio lived happily
ever after.

SON

Tell me the whole ending.

Father looks at his son and nods.

FATHER

Pinocchio was adopted by the
best Mother and Father in the
whole world. They loved him so
much.

SON

Because he was a real boy.

FATHER

No, they loved him
unconditionally. Whether he
was real or wooden. Now go to
sleep.

The door to the bedroom creaks open. The MOTHER steps inside.
Mid 40s, dark hair, pretty.

She walks to the bedside, leans over and kisses the son.

He's asleep now.

The mother turns to the father. They trade whispers:

MOTHER

Why must you tell him that
monster story every night?

FATHER

Because he likes to hear how
we came to be.

MOTHER

At least it ends happily.

FATHER

And for the hundred-millionth
time, dearest, thank you.

They kiss.

Mother helps her husband stand. Father balances himself on
PROSTHETIC LEGS

He leans on her for support. They walk out together. Quietly
close the bedroom door behind them.

FADE TO BLACK.