

PINOCCHIO: A NOSE FOR FLESH

written by

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OVER BLACK

SUPER: "ITALY - 1883"

A sound like nails raked against chalkboard.

Drowned out by loud, heavy SOBS.

GEPETTO (V.O.)  
It's a miracle.

FADE IN:

INT. COTTAGE - WORKROOM - NIGHT

A door creaks open -- GEPETTO, 50's, kneels with his back to us, tufts of wiry grey hair inflamed by a lantern's glare.

GEPETTO  
Don't be shy. Have a look.

At the doorstep --

ELISA, 15, plain features, strong cheek bones, steady and confident as a woman twice her age.

JULIET, 7, willful and stubborn, peeks out from behind her big sister's elbow.

In the corner of the room is what appears to be a young boy.

Head bald. Oval eyes cratered beneath an overlarge forehead. Tiny, snub nose leaking out over frozen, dark lips.

He steps forward, skin shimmering in the light -- not skin at all -- wood.

Brown, leathery wooden legs that pivot oddly as he moves. Thick, rough wooden arms tapered down to gnarled fists.

This is PINOCCHIO.

ELISA  
What witchcraft is this?

GEPETTO  
Nay, a gift from God.

JULIET  
Does it talk, father?

GEPETTO  
(to Pinocchio)  
Go on, speak.

Pinocchio's jaw opens -- a faint raspy quality to his voice.

PINOCCHIO

Hello.

JULIET

Hello. My name's Juliet.

PINOCCHIO

I'm Pinocchio.

GEPPETTO

God hath made me his instrument.  
Through these trembling hands his  
divine will flows.

ELISA

(suspicious)

We must take it to town. See what  
the priests say.

JULIET

But I wanna play with it--

ELISA

The priests will know if there's  
evil afoot.

GEPPETTO

I won't hear it!

Geppetto whirls, eyes wild, spittle across his chin.

GEPPETTO

God delivered the boy unto me... he  
is my son. I declare it.

Elisa bites her tongue, face clouded in worry.

Pinocchio looks up at Geppetto adoringly. Wooden lips curled  
in a wide, loopy grin.

INT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Pinocchio sits with the family at supper, a plate of stew  
before him, untouched.

The family dog, BRUNO, patters up in search of scraps.

A fifth plate set out in front of an empty seat next to  
Geppetto.

Pinocchio eyes it curiously. Geppetto catches him staring.

GEPETTO

Is there something you wish to say  
to my wife?

Pinocchio freezes, scared and confused. Elisa comes to his  
rescue.

ELISA

(awkward, embarrassed)  
Our mother. She's... here in  
spirit.

GEPETTO

Not in spirit. Right here in the  
room. Do you not see?

PINOCCHIO

Yes, I see her.

Pinocchio's nose suddenly GROWS -- stretches out a full inch  
in length.

JULIET

Look! His nose!

ELISA

What magic is this?

He covers his face, embarrassed.

PINOCCHIO

I... cannot tell a lie.

ELISA

A witch did this. I beg of you  
father, be rid of it!

GEPETTO

Don't you see? His soul rebels  
against wickedness. He cannot  
deceive. He is blessed.

ELISA

Father, please--

GEPETTO

You must answer this question,  
Pinocchio.

PINOCCHIO

Anything.

GEPETTO

Do you love me with all your heart  
as my only son?

PINOCCHIO

With all my heart.

Pinocchio's nose remains steady. He beams a crooked, boyish smile.

Bruno GROWLS softly from under the table.

EXT. COTTAGE - MORNING

Thin, tendriled clouds stretched across a grey dawn.

Elisa and Juliet work the fields, Bruno playfully nipping at their heels.

Pinocchio approaches -- an AXE in one hand, held at his side.

Elisa steps defensively in front her sister. Bruno beside her, ears up, alert.

PINOCCHIO

Father's asked me to fetch  
firewood.

ELISA

He is not your father nor you his  
son. He is unwell, since mother  
died.

PINOCCHIO

I think he's a wise and great man.

ELISA

He's confused. When he comes to his  
sense you'll be on your way.

PINOCCHIO

You resent his love for me.

ELISA

He loved this stray dog once. Took  
it in, fawned over it. Then next  
day forgot to feed it. And the  
next.

Pinocchio lurches forward, menace in his eyes.

PINOCCHIO

(dark)

Father loves me. Always.

ELISA

Then you'd best fetch his firewood,  
lest he grow cross.

Elisa holds her ground. Bruno BARKS at Pinocchio, teeth bared.

Pinocchio glares at the dog, turns and storms off.

INT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

The family at supper. Juliet stands at the open door, calls out into a starless night.

JULIET

Bruno! Here boy!

Pinocchio watches her from the table, expressionless.

ELISA

Probably off chasing birds.

Reluctantly, Juliet returns to the table.

Pinocchio turns his attention to Geppetto -- who's settled into a deep lethargy.

PINOCCHIO

Father, I was wondering if I may  
have some clothes.

GEPPETTO

(spacey)

Eh?

PINOCCHIO

Something to wear. A boy should  
have clothes.

GEPPETTO

You're not a boy. You're made of  
wood.

Pinocchio blinks like he's been slapped.

PINOCCHIO

But--

GEPETTO  
 (squinting)  
 Look at your nose, there's  
 something wrong with it.

PINOCCHIO  
 Father, have I offended thee--

GEPETTO  
 (turns to Elisa)  
 Make it stop speaking to me.

Pinocchio practically vibrates with shame and anger.

PINOCCHIO  
 I... don't understand.

GEPETTO  
 Cast your glance elsewhere, beast!

Elisa puts a soothing hand on Geppetto's shoulder.

ELISA  
 Why don't you have something to  
 eat?

She spoons out a mouthful for him. Geppetto takes a bite,  
 sits back, mollified.

Pinocchio watches in silence. Face twisted in a horrible  
 grimace stained by thick, oily tears.

EXT. CLEARING - MORNING

Elisa carries a basket of clothes towards the cottage. Stops  
 when she sees

A SWARM OF FLIES

Swirling around a patch of brush.

She steps closer. Reaches out a hand, pushes foliage aside --

Bruno's HEADLESS BODY lies prone, stomach torn open as if  
 devoured, maggots squirming inside.

Elisa gags, stumbles back.

INT. COTTAGE - MORNING

She rushes inside to find Geppetto standing at the window,  
 staring out, bleary-eyed.

ELISA  
 Somethings happened. Can you hear  
 me, father?

GEPETTO  
 I'm very tired.

Elisa helps him into a seat at the table. He studies her  
 face, runs a hand along her cheek.

GEPETTO  
 I remember when you were born. Took  
 two midwives to get you out.  
 Stubborn as a mule, just like your  
 mother.

Tears flash in his eyes.

GEPETTO  
 She's gone...

ELISA  
 Not gone. She's with us, when we  
 are strong. So have strength,  
 father.

He smiles, embraces her tight, tears flowing freely from both  
 father and daughter.

Elisa finally straightens up, wipes her eyes, alert.

ELISA  
 Where is Juliet?

GEPETTO  
 Went to the woods with Pinocchio.  
 To find the dog.

A shadow crosses her face. Then a sudden, horrible  
 realization.

She turns, without a word, takes off out the door--

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Running through the deepest part of the forest.

Branches slashing at her face and hair.

The canopy above thick as smog.

ELISA  
 Juliet!

Not stopping to listen for a reply.

A SMEAR OF BLOOD

Against a patch of leaves.

She slows. Follows the trail.

More swaths of blood up ahead. Followed by a thick line of trees, beyond them -- a dark figure barely visible.

Her breath quickens, hands claw through branches, stumbles forward into

A CLEARING

Pinocchio is bent over something on the ground.

He turns sharply, a string of bright blue intestines dangling from his jaw.

Beneath him -- Juliet's mangled corpse, chest cavity split open, entrails splayed out in a pool of disgorged blood.

ELISA

Gods no...

Pinocchio scrambles up, greedily wipes his mouth.

PINOCCHIO

Can explain. Was an accident.

His nose grows. Elisa backs away, trembling.

PINOCCHIO

Would never hurt anyone.

His nose snakes out further still.

PINOCCHIO

(determined)

Will you tell father?

Her back foot reaches the edge of the clearing.

PINOCCHIO

Answer me!!!

Elisa turns and runs.

Pinocchio BELLOWS behind her, wooden legs SCRAPING and GRINDING in disharmony.

Elisa's human legs pumping in rhythm, gaining separation--

Then the ground disappears and she tumbles

DOWN A RAVINE

Rocketing end over end.

Her elbow snaps underneath her own weight.

Knee shatters against rock.

Lands with a sickening CRACK against the base of an oak tree.

Coughs BLOOD. Dazed. Tries to stand, crawls instead, on hands and knees behind the thick oak.

Back against the trunk, drenched in sweat, an eerie silence settled over the forest around her.

With great effort, she leans out ever so slowly, peers around the tree--

Empty forest. Silence.

A SNAP.

To her other side. Extremely close.

PINOCCHIO (O.S.)  
Little girl, where are you?

The voice is practically on top of her. Another twig SNAPS.

She clamps a hand over her mouth, stifles her breath.

Shifts her head slowly to the right.

PINOCCHIO (O.S.)  
Just want to talk, that's all.

Enough to see the end of Pinocchio's nose slither out from the edge of the tree.

PINOCCHIO (O.S.)  
Would never, ever harm you.

Gliding out like an eel, grown to preposterous length -- half of it out in front of her.

Elisa gathers herself, Pinocchio's blood-smearred face looms into view--

She lunges--

Grabs his nose, SNAPS it clean off.

Pinocchio rears back, SHRIEKS in agony.

She takes off, limping, half-dragging her wounded leg behind her.

A gap in the forest ahead, the cottage a tiny dot on the horizon, sunlight hits her face.

FOOTSTEPS behind her.

A gnarled hand snatches her hair--

Yanks her back--

Pinocchio holds his own broken nose like an ice pick, PLUNGES it through her neck.

BLACK.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

A pitiful beam of light slithers across the forest edge. Geppetto's hand shakes against the lantern's weight.

GEPETTO  
(calling out)  
Elisa! Juliet!

A NOISE in the distance. He spins the lantern about - nothing but Stygian darkness.

GEPETTO  
Who goes there?  
(shaking)  
Show yourself...

PINOCCHIO (O.S.)  
Look at me, father.

Geppetto turns -- Pinocchio stands before him, covered in human skin, freshly flayed, tacked on from head to toe in a hideous tapestry. A young girl's nose stuck to the shattered stump on his face.

PINOCCHIO  
I'm a real boy now.

CUT TO BLACK.

The End.