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Opening extract from

Pinocchio

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I used to think, on account of my somewhat strange start in life, I suppose, that I was unlike everyone else. In one way I am. After all, I am now 130 years old and I think you'll find that is quite unusual, even in these days of advanced medicine. I have had a while to think on the important things in life. And one of the most important is the business of growing up: what fun it is, how difficult it is. It makes you what you are. It certainly made me what I am.

Now – there's no point in pretending here – I was, and still am deep down, a puppet. Everyone knows Pinocchio is a puppet – Signor Carlo Collodi first told my story, which made me instantly recognisable, and then Mr Walt Disney made a fantastic film about me, with songs, for goodness' sake; so I reckon I must be just about the most famous puppet the world has ever known.

But the truth is I'm not just a puppet, I'm more than just bits of wood and string. I'm me. So actually I'm quite like you. I mean you're not just skin and hair and flesh and bones, are you? You're you. So, in that sense, if you think about it, we're pretty much the same, aren't we? And we're the same for another reason too. To begin with I may have been just a block of wood about to become a puppet, but you were not much better; just

a little wriggly thing, about to become a person. Then we get born, one way or another. It wasn't just the block of wood or the wriggly thing that made us what we are – for better or for worse – it's what we then made of our lives, what happened to us afterwards. So I thought it was about time that I, Pinocchio, told you my story in my own words, not so you can learn from it so much, but so you can see that, no matter what we are made of, we all have an exciting and difficult time growing up.



Anyway, that's the boring bit over with. The rest is not at all boring, I can assure you. It will be a roller coaster of danger and disaster, mistakes and misery, hope and happiness. So here it is, the true story, the whole story with nothing left out, of all the pickles I

got myself into and out of. You won't know it yet, but when you get older your childhood will seem like a long dream; sometimes a happy dream, sometimes a bit of a nightmare, sometimes so unlikely you can hardly believe it happened. But it did. You were there, you know. My dream of childhood was just like that. But I know it happened. I was there.

