

PINOCCHIO

I think therefore I am
—Descartes

He felt like an ass standing in front of that fairy, a jumble of loose dowel rods and crotchety pins. She was so blue—bluer than clear sky, blueberries in milk—bluer than frozen lips. The way she hovered outside that window seemed unnatural. How was she supposed to understand anything about being human? Who was she to judge a puppet from a boy? She must be here to punish me, he thought, imagining her sealed list: skipping school, gluttony, whaling. Three strikes for Pinocchio. He felt like a wooden bat whistling past a ball.

He'd read somewhere that fairies disappear if children don't believe. Conscience or no conscience, it was better to squeeze his eyes shut and do away with her. *I'm counting to ten*, he said, spreading his wooden fingers against the plate glass.