

Bodiocchio

by Cassie Ingaben

Once upon a time, there was a piece of wood.

The good old carpenter Cowley was very lonely, so he decided to carve himself a puppet out of the piece of wood. He sat at his desk and started working. In the end, he painted the puppet's hair black and his eyes blue. He looked at his handiwork and smiled, saying: "You are really beautiful! You will be the son I never had, and I will call you Bodiocchio." The old man carefully put down the puppet next to the fireplace and went to bed.

The city clock had just struck midnight, and all was silent in Cowley's house—then a twinkling bluish light started to emanate from the middle of the living room. In a flutter of wings the Badly Permed Fairy appeared, and looked at the inert shape of Bodiocchio as he sat propped against a wall.

"Cor! The old man must be nuts! Beautiful? The nose looks like a pencil, the hair is painted on, and Cowley's hands shook when he drew the eyebrows... Let's not mention the name too. Where the hell did he find a stupid name like Bodiocchio?" The Badly Permed Fairy pushed up his sleeves and started to rummage in his jeans pockets, wiggling madly as they were too tight. He finally extracted a magic wand and a jar of pickles. Waving the wand in front of Bodiocchio, the Badly Permed Fairy mumbled some incantation—and lo and behold, the wooden puppet took life, and became beautiful indeed. As Bodiocchio started to blink in confusion, and move his limbs experimentally, the Badly Permed Fairy considered his work.

"Uhm, not bad. Still a bit expressionless, but that can't be helped too much. And now, the final touch!" He unscrewed the

lid of the jar of pickles, carefully selected one and then bent towards the suddenly alarmed Bodiocchio. A sort of scuffle ensued, with lots of yelping from the former puppet—the Badly Permed Fairy finally stood up and looked once again at the final results. Bodiocchio was staring between his legs, too, a bewildered expression gradually becoming interested and then gleeful. He opened his mouth, spewed a mouthful of sawdust, and said: "Oh! I will always be in your debt, Badly Permed Fairy! You have made a man out of me! And a beautiful one, albeit slightly fish-faced!"

The Badly Permed Fairy waved the compliments aside with utterly false modesty: "Call me Ray, I don't stand on ceremony. And by the way, since we are talking about names, from now on I rename you Bodie. Bodiocchio is just too ridiculous."

Bodie stood up, brushing away more sawdust from his arms, and smiled engagingly: "Uh, Ray—do you think you could show me how my newest body part works?"

Ray grinned, exclaimed "let's go!" and waved his magic wand—with a sort of a "poof" noise (what else?) they disappeared in a cloud of glitters. Faintly in the distance, undecent joyous sounds could be heard.

The morning after Cowley woke up to discover that his beloved son Bodiocchio had disappeared. He started to pull his hair out, wailing: "AHH! My son, my Beautiful Bodiocchio—still unfinished, and now gone forever!!!!"

On the other hand, Bodie and Ray lived quite happily ever after.

3 August 2000

*First published in DIAL 23
Autumn 2002*

*Contact the author at
cassieingaben@yahoo.co.uk*