



## The Puppetmaster's Apprentice

**Lisa DeSelm**

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In Lisa DeSelm's feminist young adult take on *Pinocchio*, a girl who became real through enchantment comes into her own and fights for her community's well being.

Seven years ago, Piro was fashioned from wood and spoken to life under the magical light of the blue moon. Because such sorcery has long been forbidden, she and her father, the puppetmaster, keep the secret of her origins close, even from their friends and would-be allies in the makers' guild.

Piro is human in every sense that counts, save that splinters fly from her skin when she lies. She studies to take her father's place and ignites a romance with the tailor's son, though worrying that her truth could put him at risk.

As the next blue moon approaches, the Margrave and his sickly son, Laszlo, order an army of life-sized wooden soldiers from the puppetmaster. Piro has her worries about the ominous toys she's constructing, though she reasons that the Margrave can't possibly intend to use magic that's forbidden to the people. But when the Margrave dies and Laszlo's demands become more severe, it becomes impossible to ignore the truth: dark plans are forming in Wolfspire Hall.

The story is riveting as its characters reckon with what's moral and important. Piro and her fellow makers know that Laszlo has designs on an expanded and unforgiving rule; they wrestle with when they should stand up to him, and whether they should resist in more restrained ways. And as the wood beneath Piro's fingers whispers truths into her soul, she wonders over where she truly belongs: with her sister trees of the forest, or beside her true love's side. *The Puppetmaster's Apprentice* is an enchanting coming-of-age tale set in a time when magic cannot be restrained.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (November / December 2020)

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