

"You're a doctor," I said.

"Right. In other words, I should know whether or not a person is sick. Right?"

"Sure."

"Then you have it on my professional honor that your mother is in splendid condition. You should be very proud of your mother. Her condition is beautiful."

"Is she going to have that baby today?"

Dad sighed and sat down. "Lord knows we all hope so," he said.

"Sometimes they die," I said.

Dad dropped his glass on the rug and jumped clear out of his chair. He was nervous as the deuce, and his face turned white. "Die!" he said. "What do you mean?"

Doctor Fenton handed him the decanter and a small glass from the tray. Dad took it quick and poured one. He tossed it down so fast I hardly saw his hand. Then he was steadier.

"Pheeeeew!" he said. "It's no fun being a father. And so help me, this is the last time!"

The doctor laughed. "You're a fine example," he said.

Dad saw Clara in the hall and called her. He turned to me and said, "Jack, you're going fishing." Then he said to Clara: "Pack a lunch for him, Clara. He's going fishing."

"I don't want to go fishing," I said.

"You're going anyhow," he said.

IT DIDN'T do any good to argue with Dad. Clara brought my lunch, and he took me downstairs to his den. He surprised me by giving me his new pole; but even that didn't make me feel like fishing. Then he gave me a can of his imported, extra-special minnow bait, which was something he'd never done before. I didn't get excited, and he was disappointed. But I couldn't feel any other way. If a fellow's mother is sick, he just doesn't feel like fishing.

I crossed the golf course at the Country Club and got to the lake around noon. It was a warm, spring day, wonderful for bass. Nobody was around. I walked out on the pier and sat down. I wasn't hungry; but I ate Clara's lunch, anyhow. When I threw scraps of sandwich in the water, the big black babies came up and nibbled at them. I knew they were biting that day. Dad had told me not to come back till dark, so I baited up with the minnows and sat there killing time, not caring if I had any luck. Right away the bass started hitting my hook. Boy, they were hungry that day! In two hours I'd caught more fish than I'd caught all last summer. It didn't matter, though. Every time I thought of Jim Henderson's note, I felt like yelling and rushing home.

All at once I heard a man's voice. I turned around and saw a big sedan and a house-trailer parked in the trees. The sedan had a New York license on it, so they'd come a long way to Denver. A man was standing at the side door of the trailer. He waved his arms and yelled at me to come over. I got up, and he ran toward me. He was wearing a white shirt and white knickers, a fellow about twenty or so. His face was so white it made me think of a fish's belly.

"Kid," he said, "where can I find a doctor?"

I thought of Doctor Fenton; but I didn't say anything. He was at our house, and my mother needed him. The man looked into my face and kept cracking his knuckles and moving his feet.

"There aren't any around here," I said.