

sound, and sure enough it was a baby! The fellow in knickers ran out. He didn't pay any attention to me. He was like a maniac, jumping up and down and howling. I never saw anybody act like that before. He hammered his chest and kept right on yelling.

"Whoopeee!" he yelled. "Wahoo! Yipee! Hot dog! I knew it! I knew it all the time! Yahoo! It's a boy! It's a boy!"

He threw himself on the bank of the lake and rolled over and over, laughing and digging his fingers into the grass and pulling out handfuls; but I could see he was crying, too. The tears were coming out of his eyes, all over his face, and there he was, laughing and laughing.

Then it came to me that this was the way babies were born. The way that girl moaned and ached was the same way with Mother. My own mother had to go through all that, for me, too, when I was born, and right that very day, and maybe the same thing had happened to her that happened to Jim Henderson's mother. Doctor Fenton was right there; but I couldn't ask him. I didn't care about my new fishing pole, and I didn't care about my sweater, which I'd left hanging on the pier. All I wanted was to get home in a hurry and see for myself. I cut across the golf course and made a dead sprint for the house. I never ran so fast in my life.

DAD was coming down the stairs as I went up. He grabbed me. He looked great. He was all smiles and dressed for dinner. I started to ask about Mother; but he gave me a hug and pulled me downstairs.

"She's sound asleep, Jack. You can see her when she wakes up."

"Are you *sure* she's all right?"

"Cross my heart and hope to die."

A nurse walked away from the downstairs linen closet. She was all smiles, too, carrying a lot of towels. I watched her go upstairs. Instead of going into Mother's room, she turned the knob on the door leading to the sunporch.

"Is that where it is?" I said.

"A fine way to talk about your baby sister," Dad said. "Don't you want to see her?"

"Nah," I said. "I'll see enough of her anyway."

Dad laughed. We went into the library. Dad made me sit in the red-leather chair. He went over to the cabinet and pulled out one of the books in the encyclopædia set.

"Son," he said, "it's time you knew something about life and the mystery of its origins. As I told you this morning, I am now going to give you the details of the process of creation. There need be no further superstitions or inhibitions. You're old enough to know the naked, straightforward truth, and as your father, I feel it my sacred duty to acquaint you with these powerful facts."

"When can I see Mother?" I asked.

He opened the big book and smoothed the page with his thumb. "As soon as Mother wakes up you can see her," he said. "But now I want your strict, undivided attention."

"Dad," I said, "I'm kinda fed up with babies for today. Besides, I know a lot more than I did this morning."

"Ha!" Dad said. "That's precisely where you're wrong. You're young, impressionable, gullible. You have not seen life or experienced it. But here in this book the facts are presented clearly, concisely, and