

# The Tackle Box

BY RALPH FLETCHER

**O**n April fifth I turned twelve and got the best present ever: a fishing tackle box. I fell in love with the solid weight. The six little drawers were made of clear hard plastic so you could see the stuff inside. There were extra hooks in one drawer, sinkers in another, extra fishing line in a third, bobbers in a fourth, fishing lures in the fifth. In the sixth drawer I found a brand-new fishing knife with a jagged blade snug in its own leather pouch.

For my birthday Dad took me and Nate and three of my friends to Fenway Park in Boston. We watched the Sox pound the Yankees eleven to five (I almost caught a foul ball) and came home for pizza and cake and ice cream and presents. After I had opened the tackle box I started looking forward to everyone going home.

After the last kid left I took the tackle box up to my bedroom, closed the door, and put it on my bed. I'd never seen anything so beautiful. I opened it up and took out the gear. I spread everything out in separate piles, taking care not to get the piles mixed up.

I figured the best place to keep my tackle box could be under my bed. It had to be a safe place where people (Teddy) couldn't get into it. Nate and I shared the bedroom but I never worried about him. He didn't mess around with my stuff, and I didn't mess around with his, especially his junk.

Nate collected junk. He was famous for it. If you peeked into his junk drawer you'd see all sorts of weird things: big metal bolts, a drop line with sinker, trilobite fossils, a bird's skull, a rusty hubcap, a broken gyroscope, links from a bike chain, a chunk of fool's gold, a golf ball with the cover ripped off, quartz crystals, arrowheads, wires, watch gears, ball bearings.

Just then Nate came into the bedroom.

"That's cool," he said, touching the tackle box's smooth red side. "That would be perfect to store my junk."

I shot him a look.

"Just kidding. Hey, can I come fishing when you go?"

"Yeah. I guess."

"When?"

"When Dad takes me," I said. "Whenever that is."

Nate's question got me thinking. Later that night I asked Dad. "When can we go fishing?"

"Maybe next week," he said. "Right now I'm just buried alive at work."

But next week when I asked Dad again he gave me the same answer. "Later."