

The Adventure Box

A morning rainstorm had kept Binky stuck inside for hours. He had built a blanket fort in the living room, drawn pictures at the kitchen table, and annoyed his mother twice by bouncing a ball in the hallway.

By lunchtime, he had officially run out of things to do.

He wandered through the house looking for something—anything—that seemed interesting. When he couldn't find anything there, he headed toward the garage to see what his dad was doing.

The garage smelled like grass clippings, motor oil, and wet concrete. Water dripped steadily from the roof as the last of the storm moved away.

His father knelt beside the lawn mower with a wrench in his hand and grease on his fingers. Tools were scattered across the floor around him.

"Dad?"

His father looked up. "Yeah?"

Binky leaned against the doorway and sighed dramatically.

"I'm bored."

Dad nodded slowly like he was considering a very serious problem.

"That does sound serious."

"It is serious."

Dad tried not to smile.

"What's your proposed solution?"

Binky brightened immediately.

"Play catch?"

Dad glanced toward the open garage door, where patches of sunlight were beginning to break through the clouds. He tightened one final bolt and pointed toward a shelf along the back wall.

"I think we might actually have a chance. You grab the baseball and the gloves while I finish this up."

Binky pushed off the doorway and hurried to the shelf. He found one glove quickly, and the baseball was tucked neatly inside it.

The second glove was buried beneath an old jump rope, a fishing reel, and a dented metal lunch box with faded paint and bent corners. Binky pulled the glove loose, but the lunch box shifted and slid toward the edge of the shelf.

He caught it before it crashed to the floor, but the metal lid rattled loudly in his hands.

Across the garage, Dad's head snapped up.

"Hey—be careful with that."

Binky froze and looked down at the scratched old box. Nearly every corner was bent, and the paint had been worn away in long streaks.

"This thing?" he asked. "It's just an old lunch box."

Dad stood slowly and wiped his hands on a rag. His expression softened as he walked over and gently took the box from Binky's hands.

"That may be what it looks like," he said quietly. "But that's not really what it is."

Binky frowned as Dad sat down on an overturned bucket. He quickly sat on an old crate nearby while the baseball and gloves were forgotten on the floor.

"Then what is it?"

Dad ran his thumb across one of the dents in the lid and smiled.

"Well... that's a longer story."

"When I was about your age, I found this exact same box sitting in your grandpa's garage. I thought it was junk too."

Binky blinked.

"Grandpa had it?"

Dad nodded.

"Yep. And when I picked it up, Grandpa told me the exact same thing I just told you."

"Be careful with it?"

Dad laughed.

"Exactly."

He looked down at the old lunch box and smiled at the memory.

"When your grandpa was a boy, he loved baseball more than anything. He told me he once carried this box into the backyard and somehow ended up taking batting practice with Babe Ruth."

Binky's eyes widened.

"The Babe Ruth?"

"The very one."

"That can't be real."

Dad grinned.

"That's exactly what I said."

He tapped another dent on the side of the box.

"Your grandpa was crazy about trains. He spent weeks pretending he was a railroad engineer crossing the country. And he loved airplanes. He used to talk about flying with barnstormers and air racers."

Binky looked down at the old box differently now.

"So when Grandpa told me those stories, he handed me this box."

Dad lifted it carefully.

"He called it the Adventure Box."

Binky smiled.

"The Adventure Box?"

Dad nodded.

"That's what he called it."

He leaned back against the workbench.

"He told me to be careful with it... and have some fun."

Dad laughed quietly to himself.

"At the time, I was obsessed with race cars and motorcycles. I spent half a summer racing across giant desert tracks."

Binky grinned.

"Did you win?"

"Most of the time."

Dad smiled.

"I was also crazy about monster movies back then. There were a few close calls involving giant creatures."

"That sounds dangerous."

"It probably was."

Dad looked at Binky and gently placed the old lunch box in his hands.

"The funny thing was... none of my adventures looked anything like Grandpa's."

Binky looked down at the box.

“Why?”

Dad smiled.

“Because they were mine.”

He tapped the lid once.

“And whatever happens next?”

He smiled again.

“That’ll be yours.”

Binky looked down at the Adventure Box. The dents and scratches suddenly didn’t seem old anymore.

They seemed important.

He turned toward the open garage door that led to the backyard.

Dad picked up the baseball glove from the floor.

“Hey, Bink?”

Binky stopped and looked back.

“Still want to play catch?”

Binky glanced down at the Adventure Box and grinned.

“Maybe later, Dad.”

Then he ran out of the garage and into the backyard.