

Melanie looks up at Gordon. "Dad," she says, "I know the reason is not so good but it's nice to have you home when we get out of school. We love having you around more."

"I got to be with him all day," smiles Melinda.

Gordon carefully steps around the two girls and sits down between them. He puts his arms around both and pulls both to him. He kisses Melanie's cheek, then kisses Melinda's cheek. He looks from one to the other as he admits, "Maybe I don't tell you girls enough how much you mean to me, but I love you both so much, and you always make me proud."

After a moment of silence, without looking up from the game board, Mark asks, "What about me?"

"Oh, you're a man," Gordon admonishes, "be a man."

"I'm a boy, not a man," counters Mark, glancing up at his father, disappointed.

"You're a *little* man," Gordon insists, rising from the floor.

"No, I'm a little *boy*," Mark asserts, watching his father's every move until he stands directly above him.

"Stand up, little man," Gordon demands. When Mark is slow to respond, Gordon leans slightly and adds, "please."

Mark lumbers up from the floor and, once standing, turns to face his father. Gordon immediately wraps his arms around Mark's waist, lifts him off the floor, and swings him around several times. When the swinging stops, he holds Mark tight and kisses him on the lips. Smiling, he leans back and says, "Now, you don't feel left out, do ya?"

Mark smiles as he replies shyly, "No."

Gordon sets Mark back on his feet, but advises, "Just don't tell your friends that your Dad swings you around and kisses you like a girl." Gordon's eyes narrow when he adds, "Don't think they'd get it. Whadda *you* think?"

Mark still has a wide grin across his face as he sits down and says, "Never goes past me, Pop."