

buying this huge stuffed dog that I've seen sitting on the counter at Lionel Play World. It's butterscotch-colored, with a wide black tounge sticking out of its mouth. Anyway, I ask my father why he's buying the toy, and he says, "It's for my little girl." I tell him he must mean me, but he says, "No, I have another family now." I tell him he has to come home with me because Mommy needs him, but he says he has a new wife and she's waiting for him at their new house. When I wake up, I always try to remember what he looked like and sounded like in the dream, but I never can. All I can recall is a fuzzy face and a gruff voice, nothing very specific.

I do know that the man in my nightmares doesn't look at all like the pictures my mother has of Daddy. The legendary Daddy, in the photographs, is a stern-looking man with dark features, but the one I see in my sleep is blonde and moustached and smiling. Does that mean anything ?

My mother sometimes talks to the stern Daddy in the dusty silver frames, but she mumbles, so I can't tell what she's saying. Besides, she stops talking when she realizes I'm in the room. I wonder what she says to him. Maybe she asks him for advise, like what she should do when she runs out of money and stuff like that. I know she doesn't have many adults to talk to. She knows some of the people at the publishing house where she works as a secretary, but she has no close friends. And she doesn't like to "burden" me, as she puts it, with her problems. She says I'm too young; that I'll have enough to worry about when I grow up.