Sad Saturdays

Saturday wasn't always an unhappy day for Pablito, but ever since mom got a weekend job, life just hasn't been the same. The house is super quiet and the days seem extra long. Papi tries hard to be cheery, but even Leona, the family dog, looks sad.

"Hey, Pablito, Mom won't be home until eight," Papi says. "Let's have a game night!"

"Umm, I don't know," says Pablito. "I don't really feel like playing board games without Mami." Usually, they played board games all together.

Papi smiles and says, "But listen, we can still have fun with just the two of us. And we can get even better at these games by the next time we play with Mami!"

"I know, Papi, but these games are no fun with just two players," Pablito replies with a shrug.

Papi thinks quietly for a moment. "I have an idea!" cries Papi as he jumps up from the table and heads down to their basement.

While Papi is downstairs, Pablito can hear the sounds of boxes being dragged around and opened. He feels bad—he knows Papi is trying to cheer him up, but Pablito just doesn't feel like being cheery right now.

A minute later, Papi reappears, holding a small box decorated with mountains and pine trees. The cover of the box says Komikan.

"What's that?" Pablito asks, pointing at the box.

"It's a game for two people, and it comes from Chile, where Abuelo and Abuela live," Papi explains. "Komikan comes from the Mapuche people."

"Mapuche?" Pablito asks. He has never heard that word before.

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"Yes, they are the original people of southern Chile. Your great-grandfather, my abuelo, was Mapuche, and he taught me how to play this game. That's why it is very special to me."

Suddenly, Pablito feels a little more interested in playing a game. "So, Papi, I'm part Mapuche?" asks Pablito.

"Yes, we both are. Be proud of it."

"Can you teach me to play Komikan?"

Papi gives his son a thumbs up, and opens the box. He takes out a game board with a triangular pattern on it. "One player is the puma and the other plays the part of 12 dogs. The puma wins if it **captures** nine dogs. The dogs can win by cornering the puma on the board."

"A puma—you mean like the big wild cat?" Pablito inquires.

"Exactly!" responds his father.

It takes Pablito a little while to learn the rules, but eventually he plays as the puma. And in the game, Pablito **captures** nine dogs. "I won!" he calls out happily, and does a little dance to **celebrate**.

"Hold on, Pablito, it's not that easy," Papi says, grinning. "Even though you won as the puma, the game isn't over yet."

"Huh?"

"Now we turn the board and you must play as the dogs. If you win again, then you are the **champion**."

"Whaaat? Okay, Papi, let's go—and this time I will be the **champion**!" Pablito says teasingly.

Papi throws his head back and laughs.

As they start the second half of their game, Pablito smiles. His Saturday doesn't feel so sad anymore.

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