

## THE BUY, BUY BABY

Sometimes it takes a child to get to 'Sold!'

SOMETIMES, THE 8-YEAR-OLD IN THE family needs to take charge.

On a recent trip to Paris with my husband and daughter, I spent part of the flight reading a guidebook on the flea markets of Paris. By the time we landed, I knew which one I wanted to visit: the Porte de Vanves market. Stretching along three streets, it specializes in antiques. And, with only 200 vendors rather than thousands, it would be manageable.

On our first full day in the city, we spent the morning examining old furniture, dolls, jewelry, tools and books, each of us looking for a treasure. Then I saw mine propped against a bookcase. It was a 3-foot-square needlepoint. Against a background of gold, a tree with colorful leaves and blossoms expanded to the edges. A wildly plumed bird stood at the bottom of the tree. As I

admired it, I saw it not in the market, but on a wall in my living room.

"How much?" I asked the vendor.

The 50-Euro pricetag wasn't unreasonable, but at a flea market, bargaining is de rigeur. I offered 35, which he accepted. Still, I hesitated. The needlepoint was just large enough that it would be a hassle to get home.

The vendors began to pile on the charm. Even with my rudimentary French, I understood. "Buy it for *her*," one of them said, patting Sarah, my daughter, on the head. "Someday it'll be very valuable. It's an heirloom for her."

At that, my husband rolled his eyes and began to laugh.

"Mom, you *know* you want it," Sarah said. She was eager for

the lunch we'd promised her. "Just get it so we can go!"

"I don't know," I looked at my husband. "How will we get it back?"

I turned back to the needlepoint and grimaced at it for several minutes. Should I flip a coin? Find a flower and play "She buys it, she buys it not" with the petals?

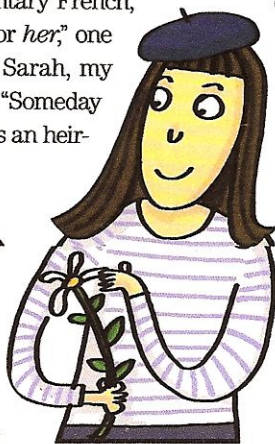
Then Sarah strode toward the vendors, who'd retreated to watch us from the back of their van. She said something to them, then came back and stared at me.

"What did you say?" I asked.

"That we'd take it," she said. "But I said it in English, so I don't know if they understood me."

From the speed at which the vendors brought the needlepoint to me, it was evident that they understood a fundamental truth about families: Often it's the smallest person who has the last word.

—Margaret Foley



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