

## Thou shalt not covet, but thou can buy your neighbor's stuff

By Esther Baird  
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BEVERLY, MASS. -

We recently had a multi-family yard sale up here on Prospect Hill. I didn't think it'd be a big deal. I pictured a crisp morning of casual banter with my neighbors while selling a few old trinkets to pleasant and jovial customers.

But then my neighbor — of gardening fame — threw herself into the yard sale with an energy that I hadn't anticipated. She spent a full week sorting through boxes and riffling through clothes. She emerged from her house each afternoon looking frazzled and slightly dusty declaring, "I want it gone. I want *all of it* gone!"

All of it. Wow. That sounded like a lot of work. My basic plan had been to sell whatever I found on the kitchen counter, which to be sure was a lot but certainly not *all of it*.

Despite my lackluster efforts, early that Saturday morning I managed to cover my driveway with odds and ends. The weather was, as hoped, crisp and I felt festive and social. It was just what I'd imagined — for about two minutes.

Then the early birds descended. Maybe it's just me, but if you're going to show up at somebody's house nearly two hours before the advertised start time, when I am *clearly* drinking my *first* cup of coffee, then you ought to at least have a smile on your face. These people were neither pleasant nor jovial. They were brusque in a way that suggested what they should have been doing at that hour of the morning was getting a wee bit more sleep. And on that crack-of-dawn note, the yard sale began.

As the morning progressed my items sold in dribs and drabs. Meanwhile my neighbor had a virtual store in her driveway that even I was attracted to. Her mother, who had come to help, shook her head. "Look at this skirt. It's lovely. I don't know why my daughter won't wear it anymore."  
"Mom, it just doesn't fit properly," my neighbor replied.  
"Well you should buy it," her mother said to me. "Do you have brown boots?"  
"Well no, but I have black ones."  
"Black would work, too. It's such a lovely skirt," her mother sighed.  
She had a point, so I bought it.

Meanwhile, in my driveway, the oddest things were selling. The grapevine ashtray we — who never smoke — received for our wedding sold. The grey, used mouse-pad sold. The annoying and barely read copy of, "Who Moved My Cheese?" sold. But the white, painted child's rocker? It sat forlorn.

The sun beat down and my mind wandered to the coming evening. My husband and I were going out to dinner and I had a new outfit but was missing just the right pair of shoes. My gaze slid, ever so casually, to my neighbor's driveway. There they were! The perfect red summer sandals!  
"These would be just right for my outfit tonight." I said.  
"You should buy them — I'm not sure why my daughter is selling them," my neighbor's mother agreed.  
"Mom, I don't wear them anymore!" my neighbor said.  
"They are so cute," I said trying them on.  
"They're adorable on you," she agreed.  
Another great point and I handed her some cash.

I happily sold some singing, squeaky baby toys, more books and a lamp. Still the rocker sat. I was starting to feel sad — I wanted someone to want it.

Meanwhile my neighbor was on a roll. As her clothing rack freed up, I realized she was selling her boys almost-new snowsuits. Well imagine that! A new snowsuit was on my daughter's list for the upcoming school year.

"I think I might buy that snowsuit for my daughter," I told my neighbor's mother.

"Navy is a very nice color for both boys and girls," she said. "I know and it looks brand new."

"It is," my neighbor conspired. "The boys hardly wore them last year."

My husband rolled his eyes as I threw the snowsuit inside on top of the skirt and shoes. "You are buying more things than you're selling!" It wasn't entirely true, but it wasn't totally off base either, especially as the white rocker continued to sit.

Finally a pleasant, and dare I say jovial, lady walked up to the rocker. "Sold!" She declared. She then went on to explain that she was purchasing children's furniture, decorating it, and re-selling it at her vendor-based store, "Pollywollydoodlebug."

It was the happy ending I had wanted for the rocker and frankly it was a happy ending to my yard sale. I stuck a big "free" sign next to the rest of my stuff and declared myself done with *all of it*.

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