

Going on a house hunt, I'm not scared. Got my kids by my side...

John and I usually go house hunting without the boys, but today John was busy packing and preparing for the move. And we were clearly in the way.

There were two open houses I wanted to attend, and I had two preschoolers who were willing to accompany me—and a few hours to fill.

So off we went.

In the car we talked about what we were looking for in a new house. Leo wants an attic, a big basement, and a whopping 21 bedrooms “just in case we have another child.” And they both want a yard.



As we walked inside the first house, an agent greeted us with a huge smile.

“Hi, I’m Kathy,” she said.

“Hello,” Leo said. “Does this house have an attic?”

She looked flustered. “Well, I don’t know, actually,” she said.

Leo considered that and let it go. “We would like to see the basement,” he said.

“It’s unfinished,” she said doubtfully.

“Even better,” I said.

And so we left the upstairs full of oriental rugs, exquisite crown molding, fireplace, and a gleaming new kitchen and crept down a dim, creaky stairway.

“This basement is big,” Leo said, “but the utility room is too small.”

And here I thought I had left his father at home.



When I could pry them away from the basement, we went upstairs to finish exploring. As the boys realized we were not only allowed but, in fact, encouraged to look inside closets and bathrooms, they threw themselves into the hunt with gusto.

“Go inside this one!” Leo said. “We’ll close the door, Mama, and you can see how spooky it is!”

It was pretty spooky.

When we looked out at the backyard, I commented that it wasn’t very large. It was, in fact, barely a yard.

“But Mama,” Leo said, “there’s a wall there that we can climb and walk on and jump off of!”



You have to be able to see the potential, right?

As we neared the end of that visit, the agent's smile seemed a little less warm.

"Aren't you brave to bring your boys!" she said.

"I'm not sure about brave," I said with a laugh. "Maybe a bit stupid."

"Mama!" Leo said. "Stupid is not a nice word. And this house is not stupid. Look, this chair is like a dentist's chair!" And he slid happily into a leather chair that almost certainly cost more than everything in our living room.

As we continued on our search, I realized the boys were spotting every detail—a saw hanging above a workbench, paint colors and electric lights, a laundry chute the agent hadn't even noticed, and other nooks and crannies I would have overlooked. They even tested faucets and commented on how much—and how little—water came out.



It was a bit of a whirlwind, and I'm not sure I can recommend this approach to house shopping. But it went much better than I had expected. And I am hoping that seeing possible "new houses" will help the boys understand the process and not be so anxious about the transition.

Tonight I asked Leo whether he had enjoyed himself. He certainly seemed to be having fun.

"No," he said. "I don't like looking at houses we aren't going to buy."

I couldn't have said it better myself.