

We had an incredible summer vacation in France this year. Though a trip to Europe sounds sophisticated and glamorous, our extended vacation there was more like a retreat to the country. After two weeks in Paris, we rented an ancient house in a hilltop village in Provence and took meandering daytrips around the region. We became experts on places not in the guidebooks and even discovered things some natives did not know.

Halfway into our vacation, Eamon missed his playmates and became anxious to play with other kids. He was a little self-conscious about not knowing the language. French children would interpret his silence as hostility, and one

often), French people would be terribly flattered. He highly prided himself on going alone to Marie's *alimentation* (grocery store) and buying his favorite treat for Isa and himself, all to the letter of French protocol. Even though he wouldn't allow us to follow him, we knew exactly what he said, because he had been rehearsing it for two days.

It's hard to imagine that the kids will ever forget the wonderful hikes in the hills, the sweet wild figs, having a picnic



give us this day our (FRESH) DAILY BREAD

by Cristina Ford

simply dumped sand over his head at the playground. I had been trying to drill Eamon and Isa on the most basic French phrases all along, but it wasn't until they found the need to communicate on the playgrounds that they began to understand that the drill wasn't just a game, and they would ask me, "How do you say... in French?" and then go repeat it to their little playmates, who would not acknowledge that they understood, though I could see the little lightbulb go on above their heads. Most of the time Eamon's primitive sign language did the trick. When English-speaking kids came along, Eamon and Isa would chatter happily away with them without wasting any time. When Eamon would say a simple something in French (which was not too

lunch in old castle walls, the outdoor markets, discovering a forgotten magical fountain overgrown with moss, the paths leading to fantastic viewpoints, or the accordion player who began playing in our street spontaneously at ten in the evening. What they probably will remember are the chocolate "kindereggs", carousels, handmade lollipops, their anglophone friends, climbing trees, the ocean, and just having time to ponder what fun thing to do next. As now back home in Oregon, we literally run around trying to keep to a schedule, a part of each of us remembers often and longs for the simple, ritualistic village life where most things are the same as they always have been. (But what we really miss is the fresh baguettes and ripe, tasty cheeses!)

We were faced with Eamon's seventh birthday a week after returning home from France. As I had promised Eamon some months ago, we invited his entire first-grade class to celebrate at our house. After sending out

twenty invitations, I was informed that there were nine new children in the class. As they were hastily invited, the final turnout for the party was a rambunctious eighteen. "Tickets" for a free paddle-boat ride on our pond, navigated by Captain Mike, were passed out, which excited the crowd.

Last year Eamon and Isa took gymnastics and Eamon also had piano lessons. This year I asked him, "What'll it be? Soccer, basketball, swimming, karate, or more of the same?" (Lucky, lucky boy.) After less than a month of basketball, he decided that what he really wanted was more free time to play (Smart, smart boy.) Yes, it's hard enough getting to bed on time after all the things one has to do. Eamon has built up quite an elaborate after-school routine leading up to bedtime which must include any or all of the following: homework, snack, call on playmate Eric, bike-riding, chess game with Daddy, checking on location of favorite toys, dinner, dessert, bath or hot-tub, wrestling, story, brush-teeth, "dig-a-dig" ride to bed (sing "dig-a-dig" to the tune of William Tell). Is it any wonder we decided to cancel the TV cable service? It's been off for months and the kids haven't even noticed.

Isa has an opposite but complimentary personality to Eamon's. Absolutely feminine in every way, she can turn on the charm when needed, to the horror (and delight) of her daddy. This usually wins Eamon over, to whom it would never occur to compromise his principles. But predictably, the argument starts when Eamon refuses to be charmed, and Isa becomes highly insulted. She lives in her own mystical world, often holding loose beads in her hands and randomly

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OUR DAILY BREAD

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humming or singing. She seems to appear and disappear without a sound. Twice we have searched for her all through the house and outside only to find her sound asleep under a blanket on the floor.

Like her mother, she has a supernatural ability to sense when and where there is chocolate. She will also do anything to get it. She is the willing target of Disney marketing, owning six versions of the *Cinderella* storybook, five versions of *Snow White* and four *Sleeping Beauties*. After requesting three *Cinderella* books be read to her in succession, she picks apart all the details and discrepancies. Why were the stepsisters jealous? Did Cinderella know she was beautiful? What happened to the horse? Fantasy and reality start to become blurred, as she gets quite carried away in pretend play. We think that her apple-phobia jumped right out of *Snow White*.

Isa's preschool went on a pumpkin patch field trip (just like every other class of little school-kids in America). The first feature was the apple press which the kids were impressed with, but which Isa regarded with a kind of morbid curiosity. She was slowly turning green and then they passed around generous samples of cider and she broke into hysterics as if they were going to throw her into the press. Next was the petting zoo which after the first incident, appeared to her as the wild animal pit. Just as she

thought she could finally escape, the teacher announced, "And NOW, everybody to Casper's Maze!" No wonder Isa went over the top - after the trip we learned that Eamon had tipped her in on Casper's Maze, "It's darker than NIGHT in there!" Poor Mike, who was her escort, thought the field trip would be a nice break from work...

Eamon and Isa know each other's emotional "buttons". Eamon's best weapon is "The Evil Eye" which can provoke a most paranoid reaction from Isa. Isa's weapon is her power to exclude him from her elaborate games of drama and theater, at which she can appear to be having an absolutely wonderful time by herself. For some reason this exasperates Eamon to no end. On the positive side, Eamon is the only one who can wake up Isa in a good mood, and Isa is the only one who can entice Eamon to play with any old toys.

Once Eamon had taken it upon himself to keep his own "star chart" for Isa. He would give her stars for good deeds (from his standpoint, of course) or take away stars for bad, until she eventually said, "I DON'T CARE!" Despite all the quarrelling, I hear just as often, "Can we be friends now?" Isa passionately defends Eamon when he gets in big trouble with Mom and Dad, and she is his lawyer. Every minute in time-out, "Can he come out now?" And if he is being scolded, "Don't talk to him like that!" One thing by now is apparent; in spite of all the arguments which really stem from a deep love for each other, these two will be lifelong best friends. **LL**



HAPPY TOGETHER

Bill and Jovits Redux



Bill and Jovits are all smiles because...

10. Jovits promised not to wear a beret and a blue coat-dress.
9. Bill has a secret line to Jovits for untraceable phone sex.
8. Jovits got Bill to promise to personally sign Rey's citizenship papers.
7. Bill is positive there is no Linda to Tripp him and Jovits.
6. Jovits got Bill to promise a No loan on Rey and Jovits' new home.
5. Bill will get all the minority votes through his Jovits dalliance.
4. Jovits got Bill to promise to remove the quota for Filipino immigration.
3. Bill knows he's lying about his promises.
2. Jovits knows Bill's lying so she dallied with Al Gore too.
1. Bill doesn't know Ken Starr is Jovits' dad.