

In a flash, like an old fashioned camera bulb exploding, I found myself back in the fourth grade student stage production of "A Three-Hour Sale". Women (dressed up students) everywhere in the stage shop were pulling and tugging at purple and pink, at brown and orange and at sparkly silver bargains of the hour.

It was madness. It was fun. The audience laughed. The director, Mother Mary Clement, smiled. The play was a smash.

So, too, was the present day true life encounter of the same kind. It wasn't that I was tugging bolts of fabric from the arms of a quilter...noooo. The fabric was resting on a nearby chair as the quilter inched her way to the cutting table. It was an easy snatch.

"Ohhh, I like that bolt of fabric," I said to myself not realizing that I spoke out loud. I watched as the bearer of this sweet catch sauntered over to the cutting line. She had claim to the fabric. I would have to wait and hope that there would be yardage left for me to purchase.

The day was almost sunny for the annual New Year's Day opening at a popular quilt shop sale. A 50% of yardage was the bait. There was a lot of fish in this sea of fabric. Hordes of fishers, men and women were reeling in arm loads of multicolored bolts, like fish in a net. Although fabric bolts screamed, "Pick me, pick me" quilters seemed to want the bolts of cloth already chosen, plucked from the sea of color stacked from floor to almost ceiling, out of reach for some quilters.

Quilters from afar stood in a cutting line awaiting a turn at finally holding their prized win. After paying for the privilege of shopping in a mob each quilter would exit the shop with the satisfaction of a bargain while finding the perfect cloth, the big fish that didn't get away.

"Whose fabric is this?" I holler pointing to a chair filled with ten bolts of fabric. Among the spectacular rainbow of color I spotted a perfect back to a planned batik "Autumn Braid" design planned for my son.

"That's mine," comes a voice from the head of the line. "Do you want some?"

My reply is quick, hoping that she was only going to purchase a fat quarter. Fat chance! She wanted three yards worth, taking most of the leftovers on the bolt. Just then one of five cutters yelled. "I will take the next in line." A lady, a female anyway, jumped out of line and scurried to the chair I was hovering over and scooped up four bolts of fabric. Thinking that she couldn't carry the remainder six bolts I decided to be a good Samaritan and help her. Just two seconds after I bundled the bundle of bolts into my arms another voice up the line frantically hollers. "That's my fabric. That lady (again questionable) is taking my fabric. All eyes focused on me. I felt the heat. Smirks and smiles covered me like a crazy quilt.

My face felt as though it needed a splash of sea water. "Ah, err, Ummm I was taking it to the lady at the cutting table I mumbled becoming unsure of my existence. I thought that she needed help. I was just trying to help."

“That’s my fabric,” she countered. “You are taking my fabric,” she said in a cutting way. I slowly put back the fabric and scampered away attempting to hide among the fabric, hoping that the array of colors would wrap me in comfort. Pretending to search for a different perfect fabric I surface when a familiar voice yells. “Where’s the lady that wanted the rest of this bolt of fabric?”

My breath comes in gasps. I think that I have won the fabric that I was hooked on all morning. I reel in the three yards. Now, I only need five more yards of it. Somewhere there will be another ocean of fabric. I leave confident that there will be another chance to catch the big one.

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