



mothering

NATURAL FAMILY LIVING

the
mothering
mall

make mothering.com your home page

subscription services
current issue

discuss | experts | activism | news | book reviews | peggy's kitchen | poems | shopping guide
pregnancy & birth | new baby | growing child | body & soul

editorial columns

choose a column

family tools

choose a tool

community features

choose a feature



body & soul
● inspiring stories

Featured Product

Comfy Joey

Trendy Reversible Slings, Organic Carriers & more. Carefully Designed with YOU in Mind. Shop ComfyJoey & Save 10% w/code **MOTHERING**

Crossing Tracks with Skater Boy

By Amber J. Keyser

Web Exclusive - February 11, 2008

Snow fell softly. I was cross-country skiing on the Virginia Meissner Trail at Mt. Bachelor, one of North America's premier skiing destinations. Gliding along in a steady rhythm, I was elated, gleeful even, and very peaceful because my two-year-old daughter was fast asleep in the sled I pulled behind me. Other skiers passed me and smiled at my dozing, bundled girl, only her eyes and nose exposed.

"That's a helluva way to ride," said one, perhaps impressed that my idea of extreme sport exceeded Gymboree. After the first mile, I was positively smug. A dad passed me hauling his toddler in a Chariot, a custom kid coach on mini-skis that I recently priced out at \$500 dollars. After that, I was almost gloating since I made my pulk for under \$25 bucks with a plastic sled, an old fanny pack, eye screws, wooden dowels, and wire ties. I smiled the smile of compatriots and joked, "You've got the Mercedes, and I'm driving a Pinto." But I loved it! My Pinto and I were slow, but we were out of the house and into the wild.

Popular Nordic trails have mutually agreed upon traffic control. Outermost lanes are dedicated to snowshoers; middle lanes are for classic skiers, who like to travel in two smooth tracks made by all the skiers who went before; and the center is for skaters, who zip along leaving a herringbone track in their wake. I chose, with some thought, the classic lane. The sled flattened out the track a bit but wouldn't obliterate it, and I really didn't want to get in the way of the hotshot skaters.

About two miles in, one of those hotshots passed me. He wore a skintight red unisuit, and as he zipped up the hill, I couldn't help but notice that he wore it well. A full fifty yards ahead he slowed his pace. He turned. He skied back down and stopped in front of me. Was twenty-something Skater Boy going to comment on my skiing chutzpah?

No.

Instead, he asked, "Could you please ski in the middle? Your sled is ruining the track for the classic skiers."

For an interminable moment, my mind cartwheeled trying to grasp his intent. He was polite, so polite.

I reran the tape: "Your sled is ruining the track for the classic skiers."

He did not consider me a classic skier.

"I didn't want to get in the way of the skaters," I stammered.

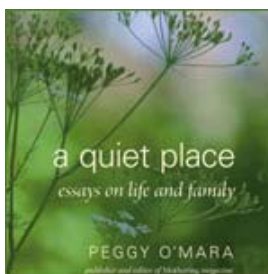
"We can work around you," he said.

I was an obstacle to be worked around.

He gave me the look reserved for the simple-minded and said, "Thanks," before turning and skiing off.

I stood still for a long while. My exultation in the day evaporated, and I felt like the last girl picked for the team. Yet Skater Boy's comment was no big deal. Why the hell did I feel so puny? Like the Grinch, I stood in the snow "puzzling and puzzling: How could it be so?"

Then I got it.



a quiet place
A new book
by Peggy O'Mara



Subscription Center



Subscribe

Give A Gift

Renew

Change Address



Chico, CA





SUBSCRIBE TO THE FREE MOTHERING NEWSLETTER

enter email

- subscribe
 remove

process

Skater Boy's comment fractured my self-satisfied perspective. Defying all physical laws, I catapulted into his eyes and saw myself: a thirty-something, fuddy-duddy in baggy snow pants hauling a snow-covered lump that could erupt into yowling at any moment. If Skater Boy's frame of reference is a line-up of naked twenty-somethings, fresh and fecund but still new on the lot, then how could I show up on his radar screen as outdoorsy, sexy, or fast? It was impossible to invite him to my line-up so he could see how my not-so-hard body rates among the weary and birth-scarred.

The ugly truth is this: it mattered to me what he thought, and it had mattered what the other skiers thought too. Let me pause and slap myself around the head a few times. I know better than that! An objective and wholly self-derived perception of who I am is definitely beyond my ken, but I don't want the praise of other skiers or the disdain of Skater Boy to be in charge either.

How about this instead? For my yardstick to the self, I'll to stick to my *own* expectations. I was a classic skier before I was parent, and I always expected to keep skiing. This body of mine is not so perfect, but it has no problem pulling this sled, and it prefers the forest to the playground. If Warren Miller can ski into his eighties, I can claim a place on this trail.

I set off in a long stretch with no other skiers in sight. The quiet swish of my skis and almost imperceptible whisper of falling snowflakes lured me back toward equilibrium. I reached the warming hut, and my daughter woke up, shaking the snow off like a polar bear cub. We shared a chocolate bar. We rubbed noses. We loaded up and headed back. Every time I turned to check on her, my daughter was watching me. When I asked her if she wanted to take a break, she said, "Keep skiing."

So I did.

Amber Keyser is a mother of two who finds her bliss combining wilderness and family. When not camping or cross-country skiing, she writes for children. Her picture book about a girl on a solo canoe trip is due out this summer (<http://store.algonquinpark.on.ca/cgi/algonquinpark>).

Sled Super Sale →

Huge Selection of Sled Low Prices, 30% Off
& Free S/H!

Buy Women Ski Pants

2012-2013 Women's Ski Pants

Sled Snow

Bargain Prices.
Smart Deals. Shop for Sleds!
Shopzilla.com

X-C Ski Apparel

CW-X Anatomically Engineered Winter Sports Apparel.
www.cw-x.com

XC Skiing Vacations

Cross country ski vacations in Minnesota's famed Northwoods
ely.org/

Nordica Skis

The Trusted Name in Skis & Boots.
Competition Grade Performance Gear.
www.Nordica.com

[current issue](#) | [article index](#) | [about us](#) | [advertising](#) | [submission guidelines](#) | [calendar](#) | [books](#) | [back issues](#) | [employment](#)