



BY KELLY CORDES

Short Guy Chooses Night Skiing Over Cyanide Pill

A crisp snap echoes in the night as I lock into my bindings. Somehow, that tiny motion, that tiny sound, reminds me that joy and concern are not mutually exclusive.

Off go the interwebs. Radio, too. The Kelly is cooked. Media headlines, rants and imaginary arguments spin through my mind. The ever-falling sky clouded/consumed/swallowed/devoured my day in doom and gloom. Now I'm grumpy, damn it, and, like boxers, rappers and bad politicians, I'm referring to myself in the third person. I rise and mumble something that rhymes with "duck lit."

As I grab my skis, my incessantly nattering narrator taunts me: How dare you fiddle while Rome burns? The Kelly fires back: Shut your cake hole.

I pause in the doorway. The day's last light flickers along the skyline of Rocky Mountain National Park. Maybe I should make a marg. Save gas. Global warming, you ruinous rube. But it's cold, and if I stay I'll keep the heat on. More fossil fuels. You are part of the problem. Double damn it.

I dance a jitterbug half-step on the porch. Park, booze, park, booze?
Out of cyanide pills, the park it is.

My mushy gray matter molds alternative headlines, first shaped by my snarky side: *Secret Tapes Show Satan Saving Puppy Dog*. *Conscientious Earth Goddess Revealed as Pro Wrestling Fan*. I laugh for the first time all day.

Random clips continue on the drive: *God Busted for Littering His Cheeseburger Wrapper*. That's blasphemous. *Jesus Shaves*. David Sedaris rip-off.

Liberal Snowflake Deigns Self to Humor in Troubled Times.

I giggle and park at the trailhead, then step out and stare into the darkness.

God how I love the stars, the sound of silence and the illusion of universal stillness in the night sky. I am so small. The world is so old. Sometimes involuntary laughter escapes from me, simple amusement at the complexity and improbability of human consciousness.

A crisp snap echoes in the night as I lock into my bindings. Somehow, that tiny motion, that tiny sound, reminds me that joy and concern are not mutually exclusive. But sometimes I wonder: The voting, marching, the countless letters to my representatives, the money I've donated, is it enough? The Kelly slips back in: not even close. I parry: OK, I'll start a Kickstarter for my climbing expedition to Asia to raise awareness for the kids. Chuckle. Yesss. #bestideaevery.

I put in earphones to override my internal chatter. Lately I've been listening to Leonard Cohen's last album, practically on loop. I first heard it two weeks before his death, in early November of last year, and I haven't stopped since.

I begin to move, gliding across a long, easy trail of snow. Cohen's aging, tired, raspy voice delivers another beautiful, dark, haunting verse from one of his poems.

A couple of hours in, finally I'm traveling light, and I turn off the music and listen to the silence. I

round a bend and between the trees I see a flash. Then another. Headlamps. They're several hundred feet above me on a long, steep slope. I ski closer and yahoo. The headlamps turn. They yell back. Friends. Warmth rises in my chest. They ask, "if I'm coming up. I pause.

"No," I yell, "I'm trying to get some mileage in, gonna continue to blahblah and back. You guys wanna join me for some flat, boring skinning?"

Brief pause. I picture their faces. In the quiet beneath the stars I wonder if they're frightened, intimidated, don't want to be shown up. Is it The Kelly's extreme skiing moves?

"No!"
Real Skiers Opt Out of Plodding with Short Guy.

An hour later, I've returned for another lap. I round another bend and see another flash, this time far in the distance and far below. I watch as headlights bob and weave in rhythm, like fireflies dancing in the dark. They're too far to hear, but I know they're laughing and smiling.

It makes me smile, too.

While Kelly Cordes is determined to be less grumpy and (maybe) less of a hermit, he claims he can't do anything about his stature or his skiing.

As Kelly Cordes demonstrates, sometimes the best place for a snack is wherever you happen to be hungriest. **Kt Miller**