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Tales from the Lift Lines V: Pack Rat

Featuring: Kode 22

URL: <http://tinyurl.com/b8teqhz>

***Our fearless ski blogger
Mary-Colleen Jenkins wearing her new
Osprey Kode 22 pack.***

"I wish you had a backpack!"

We'd stopped to get rid of some layers. It was January, but we were hot. As I unzipped my daughter's jacket, I realized she had three layers beneath her lined jacket. I pulled her long-sleeved fleece through the arms of her vest, rolled it over a couple of times, and tied it around her waist.

"But I'll look fat with a big tire around me!" she said.

"You're nine." I replied.

"Why don't you have a backpack of your own?" Michael asked. I had just put my vest in his pack. Earlier I'd stowed my extra contact lenses and my just-in-case glasses and my spare chocolate with him.

"I do," I said. "It's in the locker room."

"Well, maybe you should wear it while you're actually skiing."

I'm perfectly capable of carrying my gear in a backpack, but I hadn't in the years since The Incident. I was wearing a backpack for the first time. It was basically flat, so I didn't imagine I'd fall off the lift if I wore it up rather than pulling it into my lap as other people did. As expected, I sat safely on the chair all the way up. At the top, however, I realized the other reason for keeping a pack in the lap: straps. I'd happily ridden the lift with a strap caught in the bars of the chair. When I stood to follow the kids forward, my strap yanked me sideways. The chair kept moving. I staggered forward trying to rip the strap out, and the people in the chair behind me readied themselves for a potential collision. The lift operator was poised to shut down the chair when I finally pulled free, barely keeping upright as I made my red-faced retreat. He yelled after me the warning posted at the bottom of every lift: "Pack in your lap!" Each season I pick a skill or two to work on. It sounds silly, but this year one of my skills-to-work-on is smoothly swinging my new backpack around to my lap when I ride the lift. I do, after all, have that long ago indignity to overcome.

