

Free Sugar!* *on snow!

Sugar on Snow Party
 Sat, April 16 10 am - 2 pm
 Free sugar on snow & maple cotton candy!

Buy Local 2005 syrup courtesy of Peter Purinton
 Sugar house courtesy of VT Maple Board

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OUT in the MOUNTAINS

Views: In The Pits

I'm losing my mind. Lately I've been doing stereotypically menopausal things like putting library books in the freezer next to the Mocha Almond Swirl. I often find my keys there, but only because that's where my menopausal craving for Mocha Almond Swirl leads me—not because I remember finding them there last time.

The other morning I was rushing to get a package to the post office before work. I pulled on my new loose-weave wool jacket, slipped the keys off their special hook, and stepped out into the cold, sunny morning. I locked the front door, walked to the driveway, and unlocked the car. I hefted my bigger-than-a-breadbox parcel onto the passenger seat, pulled the door closed, and buckled my seat belt. When I went to stick the key into the ignition my hand came up empty. No keys. What th'?

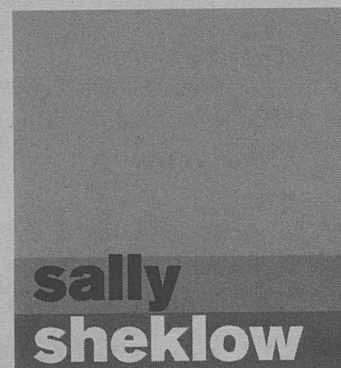
Had I left my keys in the car door? Slipped them into my jacket pocket while I maneuvered my package? Dropped them on the floor? Had they slid into the seat crack? Nope, nope, nope, and nope.

OK, they must've fallen onto the driveway as I guided the bundle past the steering wheel. I undid my seat belt, climbed out, and squatted down to search the ground. Nothing.

How could this be? I can't unlock the car door without the keys. They had to be nearby. I checked behind the front tire, in the flower bed next to the driveway, and underneath the car from every angle.

Gone. I still have enough brain cells to know my key ring is too heavy for a squirrel to haul off. It's loaded with work, house, and bike keys, a couple of mystery keys—whose purpose I hope will come to me when the need arises—a photon flashlight, Swiss army knife, and the miniature fake-fur-covered notebook I won playing Skee Ball at the beach with Wifey on our 17th anniversary.

Time was ticking by. I still had ten minutes to make the post office before work, but that margin was narrowing. Maybe I misremembered locking the door. In that case, the keys were probably inside, chilling next to the Mocha Almond Swirl. I checked, but the



front dead bolt was locked. I HAD to have had my keys when I stepped onto the front porch. I looked under the doormat, behind the flower pot, in the watering can.

I'm prepared for such lapses. I stash an extra set of keys with our lesbian neighbor around the corner. If Barbara was home, I'd be okay until the keys turned up. If not I was screwed—and not in a good way. To my relief, Barbara

"Show me exactly what you did."
 I lifted the box out of the car and walked back to the front door. I mimed locking the dead bolt. I mimed unlocking the car, then re-enacted every detail. I opened the door, climbed in, and hoisted the package over to the passenger seat.

"Stop right there," Barbara commanded, as if she'd busted a Spanish student passing notes. "Do that again." (She may have actually said, "Repita.")
 I lifted the box.
 "Alto!"
 I froze—nobody defies Profesora Bárbara—holding the box in midair.

"There they are."
 What? Was I losing my eyesight, too? I looked at the seat where the box had sat. Nada.
 "Check under your left arm." She was so smug. Arrogant. Fertile.

Barbara's not that much younger than I am, and she'll be losing her own marbles soon enough. Wait till she needs help finding her own keys or her glasses.

answered the door.

"I need my keys."

"When did you last have them?" Barbara stifled a chuckle. She admits to getting a kick out of watching Wifey and me go through all the mood swings and memory loss of The Change while she's still ovulating away.

I needed to get going but my neighbor insisted on investigating.

"I definitely had them when I left the house. I've retraced my steps a million times. I'm running late." I blabbered to Barbara all the way around the corner and up the driveway.

"I'll find them." Barbara teaches Spanish to college freshman and is famous for not excusing absences, accepting late papers, or taking any bull from her students. I wasn't about to challenge her.

She's not that much younger than I am, and she'll be losing her own marbles soon enough. Wait till she needs help finding her own keys, or her glasses, or figuring out why she just walked into the room.

But at the moment she was in charge and I needed my keys. I did as Barbara instructed and looked under my arm. There, with all its dykely attachments, hung my key ring, snagged in the loose-woven fabric of my jacket armpit.

From now on when my keys go missing, I'm checking there first. Or at least right after the Mocha Almond Swirl. ▼

Sally Sheklow takes her Ginkgo Biloba in Eugene, Oregon.