



AAC Publications

Lowering Error – No Stopper Knot

British Columbia, Squamish, Shannon Falls

On June 27 my climbing partner and I witnessed an accident on Cardhu Crack (one pitch, 5.8) in the Shannon Falls area. After successfully completing the climb, the leader was being lowered. When she was about four meters above the ground, the belayer's end of the rope went through her device and the leader fell to the ground. The belayer tried to catch the leader and was badly scraped and bruised in the process. Miraculously, everyone was able to walk away from the incident without any broken limbs. Both persons were wearing their helmets, and judging by a dent in the climber's helmet, it probably saved her from a much more severe injury.

ANALYSIS

The climbers (both in their 20s) said they had a 70-meter rope, which they believed to be long enough to lower from this route. However, guidebook descriptions should not be trusted blindly, and ropes often shrink with age and use. Although lowering from this route is possible with a 70-meter rope, care must be taken with the location of the belayer and the climber's landing. More to the point, tying a stopper knot at the end of the rope or tying in the belayer would have prevented this accident.

(Source: Yannick Gingras.)

Images

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