



## AAC Publications

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### **Near Miss – Unclipped from Anchor**

New York, Shawangunks, Trapps

**On October 10, three climbers finished the second (last) pitch of Baby (5.6).** The leader (male, 31) was using a half-rope system, with each follower tied to an end of each half rope. The leader arrived at the bolted rappel station, clove-hitched himself to the ring anchors using the half ropes and two carabiners, and built a master point by tying an overhand onto the two strands of rope. This was different from his normal routine, which used a cordelette for a belay anchor while securing himself using a personal anchor system.

Once the rest of the party arrived, they clipped themselves to the anchor with their personal tethers. As the leader began dismantling the anchor to set up the rappel, he suddenly realized he was unattached to the anchor in any way. Luckily, the team was standing on a small ledge, so the issue was corrected and the party descended safely. (Source: Anonymous report from the leader.)

### **ANALYSIS**

The leader's analysis of the incident: "This happened because I deviated from my usual pattern of climbing and untied out of habit...not noticing that the rope was acting as my personal anchor." Another member of the party noted that, for himself, "even when he builds the master point with the rope, he prefers to not anchor himself with the rope, because making sure you don't unanchor yourself is one more thing to worry about when you're setting up rappels and lowers." Good habits are important, and it can be helpful to rely on the same proven and well-understood anchoring system. However, climbers confront a host of variables—available tools, weather, rock quality, other climbers—and safety is best served with a flexible set of methods that may be effective across a broad spectrum of scenarios. Whatever anchoring method is chosen, it's important to follow a generalized set of safety checks. As the leader noted, "I learned from this to take an extra moment to check myself when deviating from my usual patterns, and also to make an extra check whenever untying." (Sources: Anonymous report and the Editors.)

## Images



A belayer at the exposed stance atop the second pitch of Baby. Three people crowded this small stance during the near miss described in this report.

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