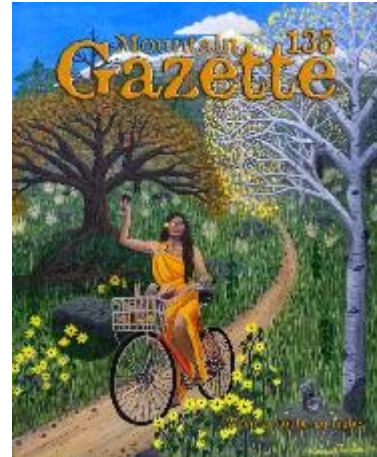


Dear superfluous carabiner guy:

By Brendan Leonard
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I see you coming down the trail again, Superfluous Carabiner Guy. I'm not trying to be elitist or anything, but we need to have a talk. You have to take that shit off your backpack.

You know what I'm talking about: The brand-new carabiner you have clipped there, on the shoulder strap, on display. It's not getting you any credibility amongst those of us who own more than one of those clippy things – maybe others are slightly impressed, but probably not.



Listen, I know – no, don't clip your Swiss Army knife to it; that doesn't make it any more useful.

Listen, I know where it came from.

A while back, you were at that chain outdoor store. We'll call it "Adventure Mart." Maybe you were picking up a new backpack, some Clif Bars, trying to talk your wife into letting you buy a mountaineering tent. Standing in the checkout line, you saw the carabiner keychains, the ones clearly marked "NOT FOR CLIMBING." Those are kind of cool-looking. Heck, they're even made by Black Diamond, which sounds pretty cool in itself. But you know what would be a lot cooler-looking ...

Sixty seconds later, you were wandering around the store's climbing department. An employee asked,

"Can I help you find anything?"

"Nah, I'm just looking at some carabiners," you said. (Maybe you even said "biners.")

"Replacing some stuff on your rack?" he asked.

"Nah, I just need one for my water bottle," you said.

"Let me know if you have any questions," he said, walking off.

And you grabbed it. Not the \$6.50 wiregate, but the \$10.95 locker. And now it's a fashion accessory.

It's a red flag, though, buddy. What are you going to do, rig a Munter rappel off that backpack strap? Yeah, no shit.

Look, it's awesome that you're out here, on the trail, in nature, enjoying it. I mean, look at this place.

But you're trying too hard to look the part, and you don't need to. If you like it out here, you're already one of us. Just keep spending your weekends out here, and the change on the inside will show outside. Or maybe it won't. Who cares? Wearing a football jersey on Sunday doesn't make me part of the team, right? Right.

Next time you're at Adventure Mart, ignore the climbing hardware and spend the money on a good guidebook instead. I promise you won't regret it.

In the meantime, though, why don't you give me that carabiner? I'll find a good home for it. Come on, I'll trade you a beat-up old Nalgene bottle with a bunch of stickers on it.

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