Davae Breon Jaxon's

Cinematic Environs

Mountains

Critical Hit
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Introduction

The material in this book is intended to add to the energy and excitement that one should feel when adventuring in a dangerous and mysterious environment. While it's true that combat and social interactions make up a sizable and important portion of most role-playing sessions, the exploration of uncharted locations is another critical element of immersive gaming. The intention here is to add to the overall drama of your game by engaging the senses and cranking up the tension with heart-stopping hazards that can help make your world come alive for your players.

The hope is that you enjoy using this "overlay" and are sparked to create even more memories in the years to come.

The Rule of Three

One of the most important aspects of cinematic role playing is the **Rule of Three**. When adjudicating the dangers presented in this book, be aware of what level of realism you, as a GM, are looking to provide.

In a realistic, brutal setting, allowing only **one** ability check or save to overcome the obstacle is acceptable.

A more adventurous, but still rather gritty feeling is achieved by allowing **two** ability checks or saves before lethal effects befall the heroes. This will give the players a real sense of danger, yet still encourage some heroic stunts.

And for a truly high-action, over-the-top cinematic feel, allow **three** ability checks or saves before the proverbial hammer falls on the characters.

For example, let's say that the party is attempting to climb a sheer cliff face to enter the Black Castle unseen. A deadly setting would see only **one** roll to avoid falling to one's death. In this case it might be that one poor Dexterity check would seal their fate.

A setting that mixes gritty action and heroic deeds would allow **two** rolls before dropping the characters on the rocks hundreds of feet below. In this case, perhaps the climbing roll fails, so an additional strength roll is needed to hold on with their fingertips.

In a cinematic setting of high fantasy and heroic actions, there would be at least **three** potential chances before tumbling down the rocky mountain wall. In this case, it might be that the climbing skill fails and the strength check fails, but perhaps a Dexterity roll could save the falling hero as she grabs a root dangling nearby.

The **Rule of Three** also applies in the opposite direction when a character attempts to perform a stunt. The more skill or ability checks required to achieve the stunt, the more realistic and dangerous the action will be. In other words, asking for more rolls to succeed will lead to barriers when you want your player group to engage in cinematic action.

For example, suppose a player wants their character to snatch a tapestry from the wall, throw it over an orc guard and then push them out of an open window. In a realistic setting, that player may have to roll to snatch down the carpet, another roll to hit the orc, and yet another roll to knock them over.

In a gritty game, the game master (GM) may ask for a roll to cover the guard and another to knock them prone.

In a cinematic world, a single roll is all that is needed to give the orc a blanket party and send it on its way to oblivion.

It's important that you communicate with your group to decide collectively what sort of game you intend to run concerning the **Rule of Three**. Make sure all are in complete agreement to prevent conflicting expectations in the game.

Using An Environ

The following cinematic scenes or hazards are not truly monsters or even lairs. Yet it may be necessary to place the effects of the scene in some form of Initiative order. Pick a system and remain consistent: first, last or pick an average roll and apply that to each combat round. Players may have to be tactical, expending an action to remain balanced or hold on, so be aware if a character does not have a movement or action available to maintain safety.

Flavor. At the beginning of each entry, there is a small narrative section that can help set the scene. Although you may certainly read the description verbatim if you wish, it is recommended that you describe the scene in your own words

as appropriate to the encounter and the mood of your game.

Each entry may also include additional options other than those listed below, or it may omit ones that do not apply. Details on their use will be included with each specific description.

Pressure. Sometimes your players will suffer from analysis-paralysis. If they are intent on remaining locked up, refusing to move either forward into danger or around the obstacle, these ideas can help to get the story moving.

If/Then. Many scenes are dangerous to traverse. The notes here describe which specific actions could cause certain consequences. This can and should give your players pause as they weigh various actions and what that means for them moving forward. Do they run across a frozen lake or walk carefully? Both options will have merit based on the party and their mission.

Even the Odds. This is a simple way to randomly pick targets in a crowd. Each target rolls a die. An **even** number means that subject is not targeted, but an **odd** number means suffering the effects of the environment, be it falling through ice, tripping over roots or being smashed against rocks while being swept away by a raging river.

Changes. Even a blizzard can get boring after a while. This section is a prompt to wake up lethargic players. Use one or more of these events to jump start the encounter as things change... for better or worse.

Fumblecrit. During any extreme activity, whether it's combat or dealing with a natural hazard, some will fumble while others will enjoy a critical success. This table will list a few events that you can either roll for, or choose from, to add to the drama and energy of the scene.

Conclusion

Although not intended to be a book of lairs or encounters, the environs and hazards provided in this book can offer great opportunities to a creative GM, allowing you to include various monsters or non-player characters (NPCs) and introduce new and exciting adventure locations.

Definitions

Advantage

Having **Advantage** means that you roll a second d20 when you make the roll. You then use the higher of the two rolls. For example, if you have **Advantage** and roll a 17 and a 5, you use the 17.

Climbing

While climbing, each foot of movement costs 1 extra foot (2 extra feet in difficult terrain). unless a creature has a climbing or swimming speed. In extreme conditions (such as scaling a mountain), each foot of movement costs 3 extra feet.

Despair

Spending enough time under extreme conditions is enough to wear anyone down. After enduring extreme conditions for 3 days + WIS modifier, you must make a successful Wisdom save (DC 10) or loss 1 point of Wisdom. The DC increases by 1 for each level of exhaustion you have suffered.

Difficult Terrain

The characters move at half speed in difficult terrain – moving 1 foot in difficult terrain costs 2 feet of speed.

Difficulty Class

For every ability check or saving throw, the GM decides which of the six abilities is relevant and the difficulty of the task or save, represented by a **Difficulty Class**, usually called the **DC**. The more difficult a task, the higher its **DC**. The table below shows the most common **DCs**.

Task Difficulty	DC
Very Easy	5
Easy	10
Medium	15
Hard	20
Very Hard	25
Nearly Impossible	30

To make an ability check or save, roll a d20 and add the relevant ability modifier. As with other d20 rolls, apply bonuses and penalties, and compare the total to the **DC**. If the total equals or exceeds the **DC**, the ability check is a success, otherwise, it's a failure.

Disadvantage

Having **Disadvantage** means that you roll a second d20 when you make the roll. You then use the lower of the two rolls. For example, if you have **Disadvantage** and roll a 17 and a 5, you use the 5.

Exhausted

Some special abilities and environmental hazards, such as starvation and the long-term effects of freezing or scorching temperatures, can lead to a special condition called exhaustion.

Exhaustion is measured in six levels. An effect can give a creature one or more levels of exhaustion, as specified in the effect's description.

Level	Effect
1	*Disadvantage on ability checks*
2	*Speed halved*
3	*Disadvantage on attack rolls and* Saving Throws
4	*Hit point maximum halved*
5	*Speed reduced to 0*
6	*Death*

If an already exhausted creature suffers another effect that causes exhaustion, its current level of exhaustion increases by the amount specified in the effect's description.

A creature suffers the effect of its current level of exhaustion as well as all lower levels. For example, a creature suffering level 2 exhaustion has its speed halved and has **Disadvantage** on ability checks.

An effect that removes exhaustion reduces its level as specified in the effect's description, with all exhaustion effects ending if a creature's exhaustion level is reduced below 1.

Finishing a long rest reduces a creature's exhaustion level by 1, provided that the creature has also ingested some food and drink.

Hypothermia

This is a state of deep cold where the body begins to shut down, and the creature's core body temperature begins to drop.

A creature with hypothermia has **Disadvantage** on all Dexterity and Intelligence checks, and they suffer 1 level of **exhaustion** for minor hypothermia and 2 levels of **exhaustion** for severe hypothermia.

Additionally, the creature's movement rate is reduced by half.

Incapacitated

An **Incapacitated** creature can't take actions or reactions.

Paralyzed

A paralyzed creature is **Incapacitated** (see above) and can't move or speak. The creature automatically fails Strength and Dexterity **Saving Throws**. Attack rolls against the creature have **Advantage**. Any attack that hits the creature is a critical hit if the attacker is within 5 feet of the creature.

Prone

A prone creature's only movement option is to crawl, unless it stands up and thereby ends the condition.

The creature has **Disadvantage** on attack rolls. An attack roll against the creature has **Advantage** if the attacker is within 5 feet of the creature. Otherwise, the attack roll has **Disadvantage**.

Passive Perception

A passive perception check is a special kind of ability check that doesn't involve any die rolls. Such a check can be used when the GM wants to secretly determine whether the characters succeed at something without rolling dice, such as noticing a hidden threat. The character's total for a passive check is equal to 10 + all modifiers that normally apply to the check. If the character has **Advantage** on the check, add 5. For **Disadvantage**, subtract 5.

Resistance

If a creature or an object has **Resistance** to a damage type, damage of that type is halved against it.

Restrained

A **Restrained** creature's speed becomes 0, and it can't benefit from any bonus to its speed. Attack rolls against the creature have **Advantage**, and the creature's attack rolls have **Disadvantage**. The creature has **Disadvantage** on Dexterity **Saving Throws**.

Saving Throw

A **Saving Throw** — also called a **Save** — represents an attempt to resist a spell, a trap, a poison, a disease, or a similar threat.

Shaken

You are momentarily gripped by fear and doubt. You cannot use your ability score bonuses and have a **Disadvantage** to do anything related to that which has shaken you. This condition remains until you take a full round to gather yourself.

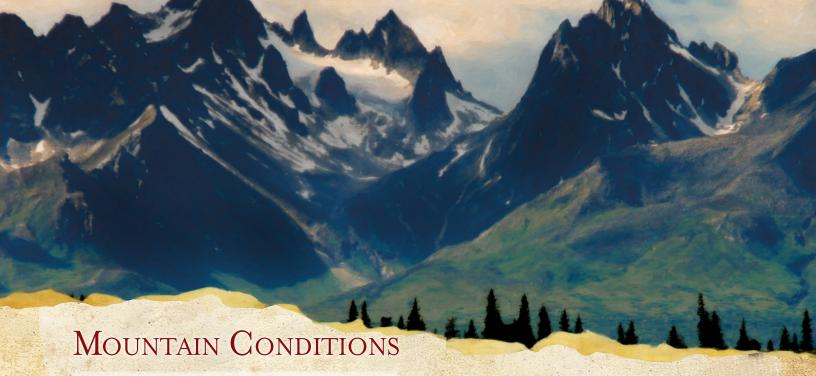Those who are immune or resistant to fear cannot be **Shaken**.

Stunned

A **Stunned** creature is **Incapacitated** (see above), can't move, and can speak only falteringly. The creature automatically fails Strength and Dexterity **Saving Throws**. Attack rolls against the creature have **Advantage**.

Unconscious

An unconscious creature is **Incapacitated** (see above), can't move or speak, and is unaware of its surroundings. The creature drops whatever it's holding and falls prone. The creature automatically fails Strength and Dexterity **Saving Throws**.

Attack rolls against the creature have **Advantage**. Any attack that hits the creature is a critical hit if the attacker is within 5 feet of the creature.

Mountain Conditions

The summit was some distance above us, shrouded in clouds, and the sun had just settled behind the peak to the west. Night would be here all too soon.

We had so far trusted our guide, but as he glanced up slope and down, it became increasingly clear that he was worried.

After a short rest he said, "I'm afraid that we're not going to reach the temple today," and with a serious look added, "It's going to be a long night."

No matter where one travels within a particular environ, there will be aspects that are common throughout the entire region. The following section outlines conditions that are likely to effect the characters no matter where they go.

Regional Pressures

The mountains are harsh and unforgiving, with a wide variety of conditions spread over very short distances. One can go from near arctic conditions at the summit to temperate forests after descending only a few miles.

More than any other natural barrier, mountains often delineate very different bio-regions on a continent, with cool rain forests on one side and burning deserts on the other.

If the party travels long enough, they will eventually have little choice but to cross a mountain range at some point, and even navigating a well-traveled pass can be treacherous.

Regional Conditions

Remember to be consistent and adjudicate your gaming table when situations arrive that hinder the party. Listed below are some possible hazards and minor setbacks that a mountainous region can offer.

Alpine Climate. Once the characters reach the higher altitudes, the temperature begins to drop sharply. They are going to encounter conditions similar to those found in arctic lands, but even more extreme due to the reduced air pressure, low oxygen and rapidity with which the weather can change.

Freezing Liquids – Most common liquids will freeze solid in higher altitudes, even in the summer. These can include healing potions, drinking water and other liquids that might be of value. The GM must decide if the liquid can still be used once melted or if it has any reduced effects. Note that most glass containers will break if the liquid inside freezes.

Frostbite – Prolonged exposure to the extreme cold found at high altitudes without sufficient protection can lead to frostbite in the extremities. Each hour spent exposed to the elements requires the character to make a successful Constitution save (DC 12) or lose 1 point of Dexterity due to numbness and pain.

If the setting is particularly brutal, the GM could have the frostbitten character lose 1d4 fingers or toes to frostbite after failing their Constitution save 5 times in a row, and 1 more for each failure thereafter.

Recovering from frostbite takes a long time, with the character recovering 1 Dexterity point per long rest.

Severe Weather – The mountains are prone to extreme weather changes that can happen in a very short time. It could be possible to go from a sunny day to complete whiteout conditions in less than an hour. When this happens, the characters will have to seek shelter as soon as possible or risk getting lost or freezing to death.

The simplest way to handle this is for the GM to have the characters make Constitution saves (DC 15) every 30 minutes or gain 1 level of exhaustion each time until they find shelter or die. If they are traveling in a specific direction, then they may also need to make skill checks to not lose their way, with the DC based on the situation (GM's discretion).

For more options concerning arctic climates, see *Cinematic Environs: Arctic Lands*, also by *Critical Hit Publishing*.

Altitude. As creatures climb to higher and higher altitudes, the air becomes increasingly thin, and this makes it difficult for creatures that are not acclimated to it. These altitude regions are broken down into 4 zones:

High Altitude *(5000 to 11,500 feet)* – As the characters move into high altitudes, they begin to feel the early stages of altitude sickness, which include fatigue, shortness of breath and a mild headache.

They immediately gain 1 level of exhaustion, and cannot have less than 1 level as long as they remain at high altitude.

Very High Altitude *(11,500 to 18,000 feet)* – At very high altitudes, the characters will begin to feel ill, as if they have a really bad hangover. The character gains 1 additional level of exhaustion, and cannot have less than 2 levels as long as they remain at very high altitude.

Extreme Altitude *(18,000 to 26,000 feet)* – At extreme altitudes, the characters begin suffering acute altitude sickness as their brains and lungs begin to collect fluid.

The symptoms include lung congestion, weakness, tremors, rapid heart beat and disorientation. This means the characters gain 1 more level of exhaustion and cannot have less than 3 levels as long as they remain at extreme altitude.

Death Zone *(Above 26,000 feet)* – Above this altitude, the air is too thin to support most living creatures, including all humanoid species. If the characters find themselves in this unfortunate position, they will begin to suffocate from a lack of oxygen.

These conditions can be reduced if the characters have some means to supply themselves with the proper amount of air pressure and oxygen.

As an option, the GM can allow the characters to resist the effects of altitude by making Constitution checks (DC 16) until they fail, after which they are effected normally.

Despair. Between the brutal physical exertion, vast distances and thin air, the mountainous terrain is enough to run anyone into the ground. If your game has a strong element of realism, you may ask for Wisdom saves (DC 10) once per day to determine how the characters are dealing with the stress. Failure means losing 1 point of Wisdom. If a character reaches 6 Wisdom or less, this despair could cause them to simply give up, sit down, and do nothing to save themselves from the elements or predators.

Difficult Terrain. While in the mountains, all characters move at half of their normal movement rate, unless otherwise stated.

Natural Barriers. When traveling through the mountains, there are any number of natural obstacles that can force the characters to risk their lives overcoming it. Otherwise they will have to backtrack, losing precious time.

Unrelenting Discomfort. Sleeping and resting is uncomfortable at best and near impossible at worst. As such, the effects of short and long rests may need to be modified depending on the specific conditions.

The GM could simply double the rest time required to gain the normal benefits (2 hours for a short rest and 16 hours for a long rest), or in a more brutal environment, the GM could make 8 hours the equivalent of a short rest and 7 days a long rest.

Unstable. Mountainous terrain often has areas of instability where loose stone can shift under foot, causing characters to fall or even trigger rock slides.

The GM may wish to include areas of broken rocks for the characters to traverse. These will tend to be steep slopes littered with shattered gray slate or similarly brittle stone. When crossing these fields of crumbling stone, the characters should make a Dexterity save every 10 minutes to avoid losing their footing. The GM should set the DC based on how hazardous he wants to make the travel. A failed roll means that the character falls prone and begins sliding down the slope towards whatever the GM has placed below. It may be a piles of crushed stone, a dense line of trees, a mountain river, or even a cliff.

When one or more characters loses their footing, there is a 10% chance per character that the disturbance will cause a significant rock slide (see Rock Slide in the section on hazards).

SUPERNATURAL OR ALIEN CONDITIONS

Whether your world is steeped in arcane magic or just happens to have planetary conditions that differ from our own, it's important to consider how these things will effect your environs. The following are a few examples that one could add to a mountain setting.

Gravitational Anomalies. These strange gravitational distortions can occur in any mountainous region, and can range from mild to severe. In these areas, gravity does not behave normally, and can be stronger, weaker, or even reversed. The cause of these anomalies can include anything from areas of unusually high mass, exotic anti-gravitational elements, or magic, depending on the setting. Regardless of the cause, they can have the following properties:

High Gravity – These areas of increased gravity cause anyone who enters them to feel up to 5 times heavier. This means that their carrying capacity is significantly reduced and they are prone to greater exhaustion when crossing this area. If they are unprepared for it, they can easily fall prone under the unexpected load of their own bodies.

Characters crossing an area of high gravity should make a Strength check (DC 15) or fall prone. Prone characters will require another Strength check to stand and continue walking. If anyone decides to crawl, they get *Advantage* on their check, but their movement is half.

Low Gravity – A low gravity area might not seem like a problem until the characters step into it unexpectedly. Finding themselves suddenly much lighter, the characters

are liable to launch themselves forward much farther than intended. This can cause them to land prone, throw themselves against a hard surface, or even hurl themselves from a cliff where the gravity might suddenly return to normal.

When a character first steps into a low gravity area, they should make a Dexterity save (DC 10) or leap forward 10 feet and land prone. If they are aware of the anomaly, they have *Advantage* on this save. If there is a hard surface in their path, the GM may choose to have them take falling damage, and of course if they are within 10 feet of a cliff, things could get much worse.

Neutral Gravity – Areas of neutral or zero gravity mean that anything in that area is perfectly buoyant, and will continue to move in the same direction unless some other force acts upon it. In terms of magic, it is as if everyone in the area has the Levitate spell cast upon them, but without any control.

When an unwitting character steps into the area, they will begin floating and continue in the same direction at the same speed until they reach a solid surface or leave the area of the effect. Since they likely stepped into it, they will also likely be traveling slightly upward, which can be rather unfortunate when they reach an area of normal gravity.

The GM should use common sense hear to determine specific effects on the characters, though whatever happens, they will have very little control without something to hold onto. Clever spell casters or those familiar with the ethereal plane could use physics to their advantage by either throwing an object in the opposite direction from the one they wish to travel, or using a spell to propel them.

Areas that have a gravitational anomaly may or may not have clues to indicate their presence. For example, an area of neutral gravity might have bits of stone floating above the ground, while an area of high gravity might be littered with the remains of dead birds who inadvertently flew over them.

The GM will need to decide the size and shape of any gravitational anomaly, as well as anything in its vicinity that might have an effect on the characters. Keep in mind that local creatures would know about these anomalies and could use them as traps to put unfortunate adventurers at a *Disadvantage*.

Lightning Stone. These rather unusual crystal deposits build up and store electrical charges over time, discharging random bolts of electricity that arc between them. When entering the vicinity of these crystals, creatures will begin to feel the electricity as it causes their hair to stand up and their skin to tingle. Birds are particularly sensitive and will avoid areas of Lightning Stone.

When the characters enter an area with Lightning Stone, they will immediately be aware of the static in the air, though will not be able to pinpoint any particular source. The GM can have anyone familiar with geology make a successful Intelligence check (DC 15) to see if they are aware of the strange crystal deposits in the area.

Passing through an area of Lightning Stone is rarely lethal to medium sized creatures, though it can be extremely painful. Every 10 + 1d6 minutes, there will be a static discharge near the characters. Each character must make a successful Dexterity save (DC 15) to avoid the bolt. Any that fail are stunned for 3 rounds, knocked prone and gain 1 level of temporary exhaustion that goes away after an hour or so.

Although these exhaustion levels are not permanent, they are added to any levels the character may already have, and so can still kill a creature that suffers a total of 6 levels of exhaustion.

Fortunately, areas with deposits of Lightning Stone tend to be rather small and can be crossed in less than an hour by a motivated, swift moving party of seasoned adventurers.

Ability Score Loss

Unless otherwise stated, any ability score points that are lost as a result of environmental conditions are restored at a rate of 1 point per hour once those conditions have been rectified.

For example, if one is suffering from the cold, then time spend in a warm, dry place will allow the creature to recover.

Falling

Although many fantasy role playing games have rules in place to deal with falling, most of them tend to use the same hit points as those used in combat. This doesn't really make sense though, since hit points are intended to represent a kind of combat stress. Otherwise, it would make no sense to increase hit points with an increase in level.

The fact is that no amount of martial art training is going to prepare a character to better survive an 800 foot fall onto solid stone.

For this reason, we are offering an alternative to the standard falling damage. Some may feel that this is unnecessary or too brutal, and so the GM should feel free to disregard these falling rules if they wish. It will not affect any other features of this environ either way.

Please note that these rules are not meant to provide a precise simulation, but to better approximate the lethality of falling.

Free Fall. When a creature falls through the air without anything to get in their way or slow them down, this is free fall. Assuming the setting has normal Earth gravity, a falling creature or object will reach terminal velocity (the fastest rate at which they can fall) in about 3 rounds (18 seconds).

The following chart should be used to determine injuries to the creature. As always, the GM should take any extenuating circumstances into account.

Seconds	Distance	Damage
1	0-30 feet	1 CON and Stunned for 10 minutes.
3	30-60 feet	1d4 CON and a Broken Bone
6	60-90 feet	2d4 CON and 1d4 Broken Bones
12	90-120 feet	3d4 CON and 2d4 Broken Bones
18+	120+ feet	Death is Almost Certain (see below)

The GM should roll randomly to determine which bones are broken, and determine if they want to limit breaks to limbs and ribs, or if there is a chance of head or spinal injury. These latter breaks can result in conditions like paralysis or brain damage, and so should be considered carefully before going that route.

Any creature that falls over 120 feet has a very slight chance of survival. They can roll percentile dice + their current Constitution modifier, and if they get a modified 100, they miraculously survive, though they are critically injured. Inspiration can be used to get an *Advantage* on this roll.

If they manage to survive, they are left with countless broken bones and will be in a coma for 3d4 days. Additionally, there may be long term lingering effects, such as a permanent limp, reduced dexterity, memory loss and so on.

The GM can discuss any lasting damage with the player, and any lingering effects should be reflected in their ability scores. For example, it might be that they have a permanent loss of Dexterity points or their movement rate might be reduced by 5 feet.

The GM must also decide what effect any magical healing would have on the injuries. It is recommended that, at a bare minimum, the bones would have to be set with multiple Medicine checks. It could also take many consecutive healing sessions over several days to get the creature's body in order.

Unfortunately, no amount of magic will bring them out of their coma. When they finally do wake, they will be at a *Disadvantage* on all actions for 8 hours afterwards.

If a character has any means of mitigating the damage from a fall, the GM can decide to apply other modifiers as they see fit. For example, a monk of 4th level or higher might be able to reduce their damage level by 1 distance category or perhaps add their level to their roll to survive a fall over 120 feet.

Unless the spell states otherwise, casting or maintaining a spell while falling requires a *Concentration* check (DC 15).

Inclined Fall. Not all falls will be as simple as falling straight down. In some ways, falling down a steep, or even gradual slope can be almost as deadly. For the purposes of this section, a gradual slope will be defined as being between 35 and 45 degrees, while a steep slope will be 45 to 80 degrees.

When a creature begins to fall, they must make a Dexterity saving throw each round. The save DC is 10 for a gradual slope and 15 for a steep slope.

A failed save means that they continue to fall and suffer 1 point of Constitution damage. A successful save means that they manage to slow and stop their fall at the beginning of the next round.

The distance they tumble down the incline each round is erratic, ranging from 10-40 feet (1d4 x 10) on a gradual slope and 20-80 feet (2d4 x 10) on a steep slope.

In addition to Constitution damage, they can suffer more serious injuries the longer they fall. After losing half of their Constitution, they break a bone. If they get below a Constitution of 4, they are unconscious and tumble like a rag doll until something stops them.

If the character has any sort of acrobatics or monk training, then they can have *Advantage* on their rolls.

Except for reaction spells like Feather Fall, casting under these conditions is nearly impossible.

Unintended Consequences. With any sort of falling, a lot can happen that the characters do not intend. For example, a character might reach out in desperation to grab a friend to stop their fall, but risk taking their companion with them instead.

If there are companions below them, they could collide with them, potentially taking the whole party with them.

If the cliff is crumbling or littered with loose stone, the character's unfortunate fall could trigger falling rocks or even a full blown rock slide.

The GM should consider all these possibilities, and go with whatever would be logical, interesting, and above all cinematic.
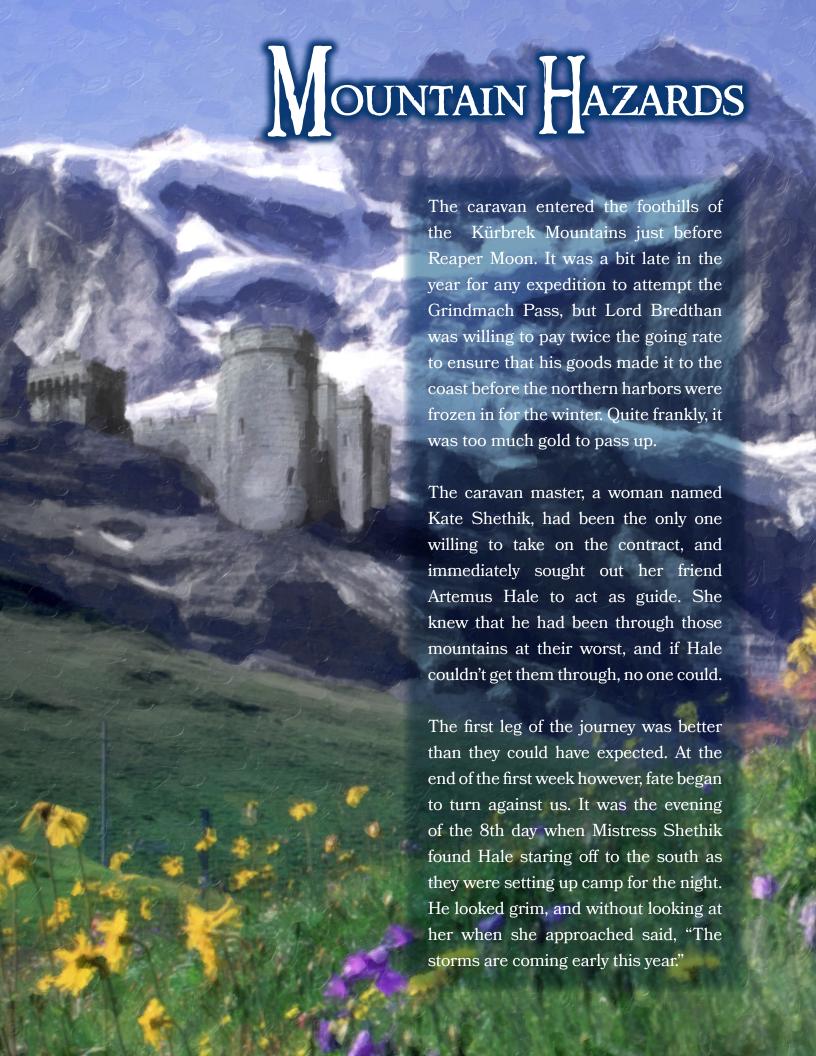
An excerpt from the Journal of Artemus Hale

Ülfane is gone. He was within arm's reach when the rope broke. No one noticed that it had frayed against the rock as each of us in turn ascended the gargantuan sheet of stone.
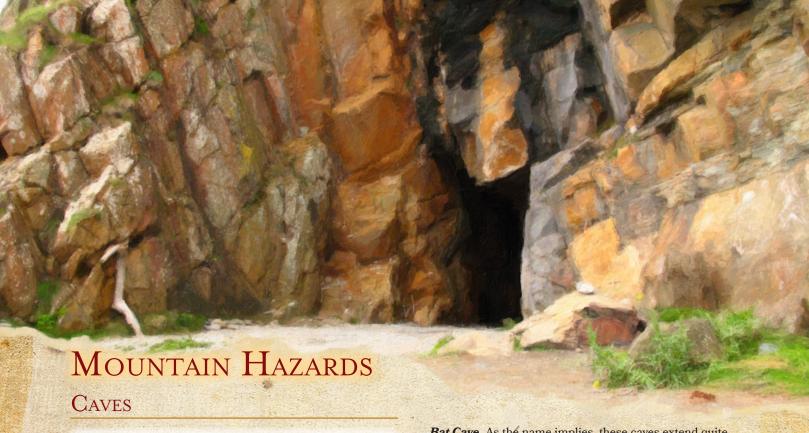
Our eyes met for the briefest of moments as we both realized that there was nothing that could be done. I stared in utter horror as poor Ülfane dropped helplessly into the mist below. He never screamed, but I shall never forget the sound as he struck the ground far below.

We have debated the wisdom of going down to retrieve his body, but with only half of our rope, it would be foolhardy. We settled for offering a prayer to whomever was listening. Ülfane had never spoken of his faith.

Although I am ashamed to admit it, I am grateful that the growing dark has hidden his remains from sight. We can travel no further this day, and must set camp for the night. Even as we now sit around the campfire pretending not to hear the coyotes below, our eyes keep wandering to the empty space that has been left in our circle.

I must now write a letter to Ülfane's family and explain why their loved one is dead. I am normally fair with words, but I am at a loss here. His death is as senseless as any I can imagine. The best we can do to honor him is to learn from this lesson that has come at so high a cost.

Mountain Hazards

The caravan entered the foothills of the Kürbrek Mountains just before Reaper Moon. It was a bit late in the year for any expedition to attempt the Grindmach Pass, but Lord Bredthan was willing to pay twice the going rate to ensure that his goods made it to the coast before the northern harbors were frozen in for the winter. Quite frankly, it was too much gold to pass up.

The caravan master, a woman named Kate Shethik, had been the only one willing to take on the contract, and immediately sought out her friend Artemus Hale to act as guide. She knew that he had been through those mountains at their worst, and if Hale couldn't get them through, no one could.

The first leg of the journey was better than they could have expected. At the end of the first week however, fate began to turn against us. It was the evening of the 8th day when Mistress Shethik found Hale staring off to the south as they were setting up camp for the night. He looked grim, and without looking at her when she approached said, "The storms are coming early this year."

Mountain Hazards

Caves

The thunderstorm that had threatened us for days has finally struck with incredible ferocity. We managed to reach the cave that Ülfane discovered just off the trail, and it turned out to be much larger than it first appeared from the exterior.

Since we are low on water, several of our number have gone deeper into the cave, following the sound of what could be an underground spring. That was an hour ago however, and I am becoming quite concerned. My research into these mountains suggests that they are riddled with caves and labyrinthine tunnels, which may even connect to the Netherdark.

Even as I write this, I hear foot steps coming this way. The footfalls sound rather heavy, so perhaps they found water after all.

Pressure

The characters can be compelled to seek out the shelter of a cave for many reasons, including severe weather, a secure overnight campsite, or to avoid unfriendly eyes.

Once inside the cave, they may discover new threats which can put them in the position of choosing the lesser evil.

If/Then

If your players decide to explore the cave, the GM will have to decide the nature of the place. Is it a shallow cave that provides minor protection, a larger cave, or the beginning of a cave system that stretches throughout the mountain.

Bat Cave. As the name implies, these caves extend quite far into the rock, and often have high ceilings housing huge colonies of bats. Such creatures are not necessarily harmful in and of themselves, but the deep guano that covers the floor is often rife with parasites, diseases and noxious fumes.

The nasty smell is usually enough to dissuade most parties from spending too much time in a bat cave, but should they decide to endure the discomfort for longer than 1 hour, the characters will have to make a successful Constitution saves (DC 10) each hour or become nauseous, dizzy and have trouble breathing. This will give them the poisoned condition until they are able to breath fresh air for at least 30 minutes.

If attempting to rest within the cave, there is a very good chance of infection from parasites and/or disease. After spending more than 4 consecutive hours in a bat cave, the characters must make a Constitution save (DC 15). Failure means that the character contacts a disease or is infected by a parasite.

> **1 Bat Plague.** Within 2 days after becoming infected, the victim will develop a fever, chills, sore muscles and massive swelling around the neck and groin. They will develop purplish-black sores all over their body, but mainly in the extremities. The infected character suffers 1 level of exhaustion, and regains only half the normal number of hit points from spending Hit Dice, and no hit points from finishing a long rest.
>
> At the end of each long rest, an infected character must make a Constitution saving throw (DC 12) or gain 1 level of exhaustion. On a successful save, the character's exhaustion level decreases by 1 level. If a successful saving throw reduces the infected creature's level of exhaustion below 1, the character recovers from the disease.

2 Rot Grubs. These parasites can be found in almost any pile of rotting organic waste matter or dead flesh, but are particularly common in bat caves. They will viciously burrow into any living flesh with which they come into contact, inflicting 1d4 hit points of piercing damage. If fire or electricity is applied to the wound within the first 2 rounds, the Rot Grubs can be driven out, though the victim will take damage from whatever method is used. For example, if a torch is applied to the wound, the victim will suffer 1d6 hit points of fire damage. Another option is to use a spell, such as lesser restoration, within 10 minutes after first contact.

If these parasites are not purged somehow, they will burrow painfully through the victim's flesh and into their heart, killing them within 15 minutes.

Note that after the first 2 rounds, the intense pain will incapacitate the victim, preventing them from taking any actions or reactions.

3 Blood Fever. This is a rather unsettling disease that particularly affects the brain. Within two hours of contracting it, the victim will develop a high fever and begin profusely sweating and trembling. The character must make a Constitution save (DC 15) or lose 1d4 points of Intelligence. This save is repeated each hour.

Once they begin to lose Intelligence, affected characters begin hallucinating badly and becoming excessively paranoid. They will "see and hear" their companions planning to murder them, and will likely seek immediate escape. If cornered, they will fight for their life, even to the point of killing their companions.

The nature of the disease means that casters will not be able to draw upon their magic, but they will attack by whatever means they have available, whether it is a dagger, a rock or their bare hands.

The fever can be cured with a Lesser Restoration spell, or it will go away on its own after 24 hours.

4 Gut Worms. Although not lethal, these parasites are subtle enough to go unnoticed and can wear a character down over time. The first symptoms manifest about a day after infection, and include cramps and diarrhea. Whenever the infected victim attempts to spend Hit Dice or take a long rest to regain hit points, they must make a Constitution save (DC 10). Failure means that they only regain half the normal number of hit points.

This parasite can be purged with an herbal tincture (available at most herbal or alchemy shops) or with a spell like Lesser Restoration. Anyone with proficiency in herbalism or alchemy can probably make the tincture if they spend at least 2 hours working on it.

Labyrinth. Whether these cave systems were formed by countless centuries of erosion or ancient volcanic vents, they stretch throughout this part of the mountain in all directions. The tunnels themselves can be anywhere in size from 2 foot crawl spaces to massive vaulted halls.

These passages can extend in any direction including up and down at varying angles. With the nearly unlimited possible directions, it is very easy to become lost, unless the characters take precautions, such as marking with chalk or using a rope to find their way back. Both of these options have their limitations. Chalk will not work well on wet stone and or may be nearly invisible on lighter rock. A rope can only go so far, and can be cut if dragged across a sharp piece of stone.

When entering a labyrinth, the GM can roll a d12 on the following table or come up with their own prepared map:

1 Narrow Tunnel. The tunnel is low and narrow, averaging around 2 feet wide and 5 feet high. There are countless spurs of sharp stone that must be squeezed past, and anyone taller than 5 feet will have to duck their head. When passing through, medium-sized creatures must make a Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to avoid getting stuck. Getting unstuck requires a Strength check (DC 12) to get loose. A roll of 1 means that they remain stuck, and increases the DC by 1. It is not possible to get through here with heavy armor or while wearing a backpack. Wearing medium armor will give the character a *Disadvantage* on their check to avoid becoming stuck.

2 Wet Cave. This cave is just large enough for a medium humanoid to stand up, and is roughly 8 to 10 feet in diameter. The walls and floor are slick with algae from constantly trickling water. The water is drinkable, though it has a rather slimy texture. There are 1d2 additional exits, with one descending rather sharply. If the characters take the descending passage, they will have to make a Dexterity save (DC 15) to avoid slipping on the heavy coating of slime that is running down the tunnel. Failure means sliding down through the tunnel. Their options at this point depends on the size and nature of the passage.

3 Crawl Tunnel. This passage is little more than a crawl space, only about 2 to 3 feet in diameter. It is lined with crumbling rock, and due to its twisting turns, it is impossible to see more than 10 feet at a time. Crawling through here is very difficult, and for those prone to claustrophobia, rather alarming. When crawling in this tunnel, there is a 1 in 20 chance that some of the tunnel will collapse, trapping the character. Freeing themselves requires a Strength (Athletics) check (DC 15). They have *Advantage* on the check if they are aided by another. The GM may also want to consider a Wisdom save (DC 12) to avoid panicking when the roof collapses, particularly if it makes sense for the character. It is impossible to crawl through the passage while wearing any armor, carrying a pack, or with any larger weapons (like a great sword).

4 Crystal Cave. This cave is somewhat spacious, but very irregular. It has a high ceiling around 18 to 20 feet above, and many nooks and alcoves that make estimating it's actual size difficult, though it is likely somewhere between 15 and 30 feet across. The area is clogged with calcium deposits, stalagmites, stalactites, and clusters of quarts crystals that amplify any light within the cave. There are between 1 and 6 additional exits, with most of them moving deeper into the mountain. There are many pools of stagnant water throughout, each with dozens of pale, blind fish. The fish and water are safe to consume, though the fish are quite sour. While not poisonous, eating them requires a Constitution save (DC 10) to avoid vomiting them out within an hour.

5 Tall and Narrow Tunnel. This tunnel is narrow but tall. It twists and turns through the mountain, making it impossible to see anything

more than 15 feet away. It is somewhat dry and crumbling, with loose limestone littering the floor. Traveling through here is easy enough, though wearing a backpack is impossible. The constant sound of falling dust and debris can be alarming, since it feels as if the ceiling could collapse at any moment, though this is not the case.

6 Deep Chasm. This cave is somewhat larger at nearly 40 feet across. Taking up most of the floor is a deep chasm that descends into pitch darkness. Dropping a stone or some light source will reveal that it goes farther than 200 feet before a faint splash can be heard. There is a passage on the far side which is possible to reach by climbing around the chasm to the left or right. This is a dangerous prospect since the rock is very loose. Climbing along the edge of the chasm requires a Strength (Athletics) check (DC 15) to avoid slipping. If a character slips, and is not secured by other means, they can make a Dexterity save to grab hold of a more secure rock. Should they plunge into the chasm, there could be other opportunities to grab hold of something at the GM's discretion. Falling into the water far below will have them taking 5d6 hit points of bludgeoning damage. Note that the GM may want to consider having the remains of other hapless adventurers in the water with some of their gear and treasure intact. A healing potion would be appropriate.

7 Vertical Chimney. This tunnel climbs steeply up through the rock. It twists and turns, even leveling off for brief periods. It emerges in an almost vertical shaft with an opening to the sky about 100 feet above. This shaft can be climbed, but it is very narrow, prohibiting the wearing of any armor or carrying anything like a pack, though these could be packaged and pulled up behind. Climbing to top requires 3 consecutive Strength (Athletics) checks (DC 12) to succeed. Any failures result in slipping a short distance and suffering 1d4 hit points of bludgeoning damage. If a character has 3 consecutive failures, they gain a level of exhaustion.

8 Wide Tunnel. This isn't so much a cave as it is a widening of the tunnel, forming a long, winding gallery of stalagmites, stalactites and pillars of various minerals. The width varies between 20 and 30 feet, with the ceiling nearly 60 feet overhead. Despite the space, moving is difficult as there isn't anything like a flat surface to walk upon. The only exit is roughly 100 to 150 feet somewhere ahead, though the nature of the cave makes it difficult to tell for sure. Crossing this chamber is a challenge requiring a Dexterity (Acrobatics) check (DC 10) to avoid falling prone. Normally such a fall would only be annoying, but with this broken and jagged floor, the unhappy character will suffer hard bruises amounting to 1d4 hit points of bludgeoning damage. The GM should note that if there is going to be some sort of predator awaiting the party, this would be a perfect ambush point. Due to the difficult terrain, any attacks by the characters would be at a *Disadvantage*.

9 Dead End. At first glance, this appears to be a dead end, but closer examination might reveal a small, difficult-to-find exit. There is a 1 in 10 chance that there is such an exit, which can be located with a successful Perception check (DC 18).

10 Fork in the Tunnel. There is a fork in the passage that goes left and right, with both tunnels of sufficient size to allow average-sized humanoids to pass.

11 Deep Pool. The entrance to this cave is between 10 and 40 feet above the floor which is filled with water of unknown depth. There are 3d4 additional exits to this chamber scattered throughout, all above the water line. The water is very deep in the middle, but much shallower at the edges. Should a character be foolish enough to leap into the water, there is a 1 in 20 chance that they will hit a shallow rock, suffering 3d6 hit points of bludgeoning damage. The water is clean enough to drink, and even has a number of white, eyeless eels that are edible, if a bit sour.

12 Wildcard! The GM should come up with something unusual, whether it's the remains of a previous party, a long forgotten shrine, cave art, strange mineral formations, or a vein of precious metal. If the GM has planned some sort of encounter for these caves, this would be the place to put it. On the other hand, if the GM is feeling uninspired, then simply roll again.

Naturally not all potential cave configurations can be listed here, and so it is important that the GM embellish each of these options, changing them up as the characters go along.

The important thing is to impart to the players the feelings of confusion and claustrophobia while within these cave systems. For example, when describing the twisting tunnels, stress the fact that, even as they turn a corner, they are not turning a perfect right angle, and that the passage might even turn back upon itself. Occasionally mentioning that a tunnel or cave "looks very familiar," even if they haven't been there before, will help to heighten the sense of being lost.

Let's say that the characters have entered a cave with 6 exits. If there is no indication of which one they entered, they would be hard pressed to pick the right one to go back unless they have taken precautions to note it, since all of them look more or less the same. Some clever players may have their characters use chalk or rocks to mark the way, but of course using chalk on calcium deposits or sandstone is nearly invisible. Rope can be used to leave a trail, but these can get snagged or even cut on sharp rocks.

The confusion is compounded by the fact that any light they have will only reach so far, and in most caves, there will be overlapping and confusing shadows.

Imparting the sense of claustrophobia is also critical to the success of this hazard. Describe how their shoulders rub against the passage walls, how they are hunched over because of the low ceiling, and the sense of feeling the weight of an entire mountain above them pressing down.

Mineshaft. Burrowed into the side of the mountain is an abandoned mineshaft. There is fairly obvious at a distance due to the obviously carved opening and debris scattered around the entrance. The tunnel goes in for some distance, and is shored up every 10 feet by stout wooden beams. Near the entrance are several boxes of old mining gear, including lanterns, half empty oil flasks, old (and questionable) rope, a few rusted pickaxes, and perhaps even a mining hat.

The GM will have to decide the extent of the mine. For example, it could be collapsed a short distance inside, or it

could be literally miles of tunnels. In this latter case, just keep in mind that the tunnels will likely be fairly well organized and perhaps even labeled with crude signs. The mine could potentially connect with a natural cave system (see *Labyrinth*).

The entrance to the mine should make a suitable location for a long rest, as going further in could be less stable. This will be quite obvious due to the fallen beams and sections of collapsed wall.

Of course many creatures could have made their lairs within the mine (see *Predator!*). It's also possible that those who operated the mine delved too deep and uncovered something... unspeakable.

On the bright side, there is a 1 in 20 chance that, if the party takes some time to search around, they can find an amount of valuable ore near the entrance that was not taken by the miners. This will weigh roughly 50 lbs. with a value of 4d10 gp. This ore could contain raw minerals, precious metals or gemstones (GM's discretion).

Overhang. This is only a cave in the loosest sense of the word. It consists of a massive sheet of stone that extends out of the side of the mountain, creating a sheltered area anywhere between 100 to 1000 square feet. These are rarely inhabited since they provide little protection from wind and cold.

The drawback to taking refuge under the overhang is that it is usually quite visible at a distance, and if a fire is built inside, it will act like a lantern, making the party visible for many miles.

Enemies will have *Advantage* to spot the party's camp at a distance.

Predator! The cave itself is quite mundane, and seems like a good location for setting up camp for the night. Sure, there are a few old bones laying about, but nothing fresh.

Unfortunately, near the back of the cave is an opening to another chamber that is very difficult to see. If the party takes 15 minutes to search the cave, the opening can be found with a successful Perception check (DC 10).

Within the chamber is a large predator appropriate to the region. It could be a large mountain lion, a grizzly bear, or some animal unique to that world, but it will not appreciate being disturbed. If their lair is discovered, they will attack immediately. Otherwise they will awake sometime in the night and surprise the party by attempting to savage the one closest to the back of the cave.

If the GM wants to make it more challenging, it can certainly be turned into a full blown encounter by making the creature a troll, ogre, or even a small clan of orc bandits.

Changes

There are many areas within a cave system or mine that can collapse with little or no warning. If a character makes any significant disruption to a tunnel or cave (such as a concussive spell or violently striking the stone), there is a 1 in 20 chance that there will be a cave in. This chance increases by 1 for each consecutive disruption in the same area.

When there is a collapse, everyone in the area must make a Dexterity save (DC 15) to avoid being caught in the rubble. A success means that they have avoided the collapse, but are still prone on the ground. The GM should decide randomly on which side of the collapse the characters ended up.

A failed save means suffering 3d6 hit points of bludgeoning damage and becoming pinned by the rocks. Getting free will require a Strength (Athletics) check (DC 12). If aided by someone who is not trapped, they have an *Advantage* to get free. Each attempt to dig free takes 10 minutes.

Clearing a collapsed passage will take a minimum of 1 hour of hard labor. The GM can decide if things such as limited air will be a factor for anyone trapped.

Even the Odds

An odd roll means that the party discovers the remains of a previous group of travelers. The corpses are little more than bones held together by clothing, but may have a few bits of useful gear (GM's discretion). The GM could use this opportunity to insert a plot hook, clue, or bit of local lore to enrich the story.

Fumblecrit

1 Victim inadvertently triggers a local collapse, trapping them beneath a pile of rocks and rubble. One of their legs is crushed (roll randomly) and they are unconscious. The leg is broken and useless until set and healed. Once set with a successful Medicine check (DC 12), the bone will mend on its own in a month or so, or can be mended during a short rest by imparting at least 20 hit points worth of magical healing. Note that this 20 points is required, even if the character is at full hit points.

2 The Victim managed to horribly strike their head on a low rock, stunning them for 1d4 rounds. They will gain 1 level of exhaustion until they take a short rest to allow their addled brain to recover from the blow.

3 Victim is struck by a falling rock and is knocked unconscious for 1d4 hours.

4 The victim experiences an extreme reaction to being inside the cave, causing them to feel extremely claustrophobic and suffer a severe panic attack. This is a short-term madness that persists as long as they are in the cave, and for an additional 1d10 minutes once they are out. The panic attack will start with an increasing sense of dread, followed by mental paralysis that will make them unable to move from the spot, resisting all attempts to move them. Finally, they will attempt to flee the cave at all costs. Anything that would give them some resistance to fear will give them a Wisdom save (DC 15) to resist the panic attack.

Chasms

On our twenty-third day we came upon a great fissure in the stone as if a mighty blow from a crazed god and split the very mountain in twain.

At first glance it seems nearly bottomless, but Thanik assures me that it's not. It's a small matter since death would surely be the result for any poor soul unfortunate enough to plunge into that abyss.

Pressure

The chasm is perhaps one of the more frustrating natural barriers in that it can utterly stop a party's progress, while at the same time allowing them to see the path on the far side. Like a cliff, this hazard can force a party to backtrack, losing precious time and resources.

If/Then

A chasm can be anywhere from a few feet to hundreds of yards across, but one challenge is common to all of them; finding a way across without falling to death.

If the characters contrive a way to attempt to get across, the GM will need to consider many factors.

Unstable Edge. A chasm can have loose and broken rocks near its edge, and so even getting close enough to take a good look can be dangerous. Other edges appear stable, but actually hang out over the abyss, just waiting for the opportunity to crumble when some hapless adventurer gets too close.

Any character than gets within 10 feet of an unstable edge must make a Perception check (DC 15) to notice the dangerous places to step. Failure means that they step on a loose rock, sending them careening off the edge. They will get at least one Dexterity saving throw (DC 15) to stop themselves. It is recommended that they get an additional check with a DC of 20 to give them one last chance to grab the edge. If their companions may intervene, then the GM will have to gauge the chances of success based on the situation.

Updrafts. Mountain winds can be very unpredictable, especially when channeled into narrow spaces. These winds can cause violent updrafts from the depths of the chasm, causing great problems for anyone hanging suspended over the chasm. The GM should consider giving the characters a *Disadvantage* on their checks when an updraft occurs.

Changes

The terrain can change quite rapidly in the mountains, particularly in the early spring when melting ice breaks rock loose from cliffs, overhangs and slopes. Occasionally, a larger section of mountain can reach a point where a massive section of rock breaks open, leaving a deep chasm.

The GM could consider having one of these chasms open up when the characters are present. Are they separated from their goal? Are they now unable to backtrack? Is the party split by this new obstacle? Were they unlucky enough to be on top of a chasm as it opens?

Rope Bridge. One of the more permanent means of crossing a chasm is the classic rope bridge. These can be very primitive, like one made from vines and bones, or more sophisticated, made with chains and ironwood.

These bridges can offer great cinematic opportunities for GMs to spice up the game. Is it in disrepair and ready to collapse? Is it trapped to break at the wrong time? Are their enemies watching and just waiting for the party to reach the middle of the bridge before loosing a cloud of arrows.

The fight on the rope bridge is a trope for a reason. Make the most of this exciting opportunity for your player characters to be awesome.

Even the Odds

If a new chasm opens up in the midst of the party, Even the Odds to determine which characters are on which side. The odd rolls will end up on the least advantageous side based on the current situation.

Fumblecrit

1. Victim tumbles into the chasm, falling 10 to 40 feet before getting horribly wedged between two massive rocks and taking any appropriate falling damage. They are unable to extract themselves, but may be extracted with the help of others. Doing so requires a combined Strength (Athletics) check (DC 25). Unfortunately, the act of forcibly dragging a character from such a position will inflict 2d6 hit points worth of bludgeoning damage.

2. The victim just manages to grab a hold of someone or something before plummeting into the chasm, but ends up losing a personal or valuable item in the process. The GM can give the player the option to save the item and allow themselves to fall.

3. The victim gets tangled in a rope, root, or bit of clothing and ends up tripping into the chasm. Whatever tripped them stops their fall, but it wrenches their leg and leaves them hanging over the edge upside down. Assuming they are rescued, they will have a limp, reducing their movement by half until the end of their next long rest.

4. The hapless victim plunges into the unseen depths below. The rest of the party might well assume that the character is dead, but in fact they are still alive. There is a massive web suspended between the walls of the chasm, and they are in fact unharmed but trapped. The GM can decide whether this web is abandoned or inhabited, and if it is still in use, by whom.

An excerpt from the Journal of Greth of Kenwall

I was horribly disoriented by the fall and my unexpected stop left me with my heart racing and my head, which was pointing awkwardly towards the ground, throbbing painfully.

It took me several moments to piece together what had just happened. I had been standing on the edge of the chasm attempting to judge the distance across, when a gust of wind caught me off guard. I lost my balance and pitched head first into the darkness below.

I only vaguely remember hearing the gasps from my companions, who must have surely thought me dead. The edge from which I had fallen was nothing but a bright gash of light above me. A shower of grit and small stones continued to rain down upon me.

Taking a breath to collect myself, I started to relax. Then I felt one of the sticky threads tremble, like the string of an instrument. Then it did it again. Twisting my head around I saw a large opening in the chasm wall, and in the darkness was the faint reflection of eight, shiny black eyes. A three foot long stick-like leg had reached out and was gently plucking at the threads of the web.

CLIFFS

As we rounded one last bend in the trail, we were confronted by a sheer plain of stone that seemed to stretch to the very sky itself. The land fell away to both sides, leaving us only two choices: retrace our steps for a week and take the southern pass, or find a way to ascend the vast wall of stone before us.

Ürfane went to examine the cliff, and reported that there are sufficient hand-holds for one of us to make an unassisted climb to the top. Once there, anchors and ropes could be established to bring up the remainder of the expedition, including gear and beasts.

Since this will mean at least a full day of backbreaking work, we have decided to set up camp for the night and start fresh in the morning. Measuring out the rope, it seems as if we will have enough, if nothing goes wrong.

PRESSURE

These unexpected obstacles can come up at any time in a mountain setting. Encountering one of these imposing barriers – even a small one – can mean hours or even days of lost time if the characters decide to backtrack and find a new route. Traversing the cliff can save time, but will add a significant amount of risk to the journey, especially for those without the proper equipment or training. If the party has pack animals, this can compound the challenge even more.

The pressure can be heightened if they are being pursued by an enemy or if they themselves are chasing down quarry. They could also be pressed for time. For example, they might need to acquire a relic before darkness covers the land.

IF/THEN

There are a number of ways that the characters can climb the cliff, depending on whether they are going up or down and the nature of the cliff. For example, some cliffs are smooth granite with few hand-holds while others can be rough and crumbling.

Other factors that can effect the ease or difficulty of climbing include the character's level or training, the presence of proper equipment, the characters' endurance, and no small amount of luck.

Crumbling Face. The major difference between this type of cliff and the others is that the surface is very unstable, though it may not appear so at first glance. A passive Perception check (DC 12) will alert a character to the dangers of climbing such a cliff.

The climb rolls are the same as the smooth face cliff. The difference comes when the character barely succeeds or miserably fails.

When a character only just succeeds on their climb check they do not fall, but they do knock several rocks loose which plummet to the ground below. Anyone within 10 feet of the space directly beneath them must make a Dexterity save (DC 12) of suffer 2d4 bludgeoning damage from the falling debris. For example, if are climbing and get a modified roll of exactly 15, the rocks fall.

If a climber rolls a natural 1, then in addition to falling, they bring a rock slide down with them (see the section on Rock Slides).

If the climbing character is unaware of the unstable nature of the cliff, they will trigger falling rocks when rolling

within 2 of what they need to succeed. For example, if they are ascending the cliff, a modified roll of 15 or 16 will trigger the falling rocks. The unaware character will trigger a full rock slide on a natural roll of 1 or 2.

Overhanging Face. The overhanging cliff, as the name implies, is a face of rock that is greater than 90 degrees. In other words, the top extends out farther than the bottom. This makes ascending and descending a lot more challenging in that there is little to no contact with the actual cliff.

Climbing down means anchoring a stout rope and the characters lowering themselves slowly by either sheer strength or by using some tool for slowing their descent. This requires climbers to make Strength (Athletics) checks (DC 15) every 20 feet to maintain their grip on the rope. The DC lowers to 10 if they are using proper climbing gear with which they have been trained.

Climbing up (assuming the use of a rope) is much more physically demanding, requiring the climber to make a Strength (Athletics) check (DC 20) every 10 feet. Proper equipment and training does not reduce the DC, but it can save their life if they fail their check.

A failed save while climbing a bare rope means falling to the ground. If they are properly using climbing gear, then they will fall only 10 feet before jerking to a stop and gaining 1 level of exhaustion.

Regardless of the equipment, a climber must also make a Constitution save (DC 10) every 30 feet or gain a level of exhaustion. Of course this means that future checks will be made at *Disadvantage*, making the prospect of reaching the top far less likely.

Rough Face. These cliffs tend to have more outcroppings and holds to make climbing easier. They also tend to have intermittent plant growth that takes hold in the various nooks and crannies, depending on the climate.

Climbing is similar to the smooth faced cliff, except that each DC is reduced by 5.

These sorts of cliffs can provide shelter for many creatures, from nesting eagles to climbing primates. The GM can decide if any such creatures inhabit the cliff, and what might happen if the characters stumble across one. Are they startled? Is the beast dangerous? Is it something more dangerous than a a normal beast?

Smooth Face. These cliffs are usually comprise of a hard stone like granite, and are usually quite tall. Climbing up is close to impossible without training, unless the party can somehow get a rope anchored at the top. A character can climb without equipment, making a Strength (Athletics) check (DC 15) every 10 feet until they reach the top or fall (see page 8 for falling rules). The character has *Advantage* on their check if they have anything in their background related to climbing.

If a character manages to reach the top and anchor a strong rope, the rest of the party can ascend with successful Strength (Athletics) checks (DC 10) every 20 feet, with *Advantage* if they have climbing experience.

Descending is easier, though certainly not without risk. The characters can secure a rope and rappel down, making Strength (Athletics) checks (DC 10) every 30 feet (1 check minimum).

The last character will either have to abandon the rope, or if they have twice the distance required, they can loop the rope around a secure object (like a sturdy tree, piton, or smooth rock) and use both ropes to climb down. This allows them to pull one end and recover the rope when they reach the bottom.

Waterfall. Many cliffs in the mountains are created by waterfalls fed by icy runoff coming down from the summit.

Between the constantly thundering water, mist and slime making every surface slick, and the risk of hypothermia, these cliffs are particularly dangerous and best avoided if at all possible.

If it is unavoidable, then climbing is an option. Climbing down is easier since a rope can be anchored at the top, allowing for a controlled descent. On the other hand, if the water seems deep enough, the more bold adventurer might decide to dive into the water below and hope for the best.

The rules for climbing up or down can be used from any of the previous cliff types, but all checks are made at a *Disadvantage*.

Diving into the water requires the character to make a Perception or Nature check (DC 15) to determine if the water below is deep enough, and a Strength (Athletics) check (DC 20) to make the dive safely. If the water is not deep enough or they fail of their dive check, then treat the dive as a fall, except that the damage halved (round up).

If anyone becomes immersed in the water, they must make a Constitution save (DC 10) to avoid hypothermia. They must re-roll the save every minute until they are warm and dry. This save is at a *Disadvantage* if the air temperature is below 50 degrees fahrenheit.

Changes

Due to the nature of cliffs, there are always rocks falling, even from the most stable cliff face. These can happen randomly, but are more common in the later evening or morning when the temperature changes cause the stone to expand or contract. If the characters decide to camp near a cliff, there is a chance that rocks can simply fall, and potentially causing serious injuries.

During the 2 or 3 hours after sunset, there is a 1 in 20 chance that some rocks will fall. If the party camps close to the cliff, they will hear the crack as the rock comes loose and have 1 round to react. Each character should make a Dexterity save (DC 15) to avoid being struck by debris.

Anyone stuck by the rocks will suffer 2d6 hit points of bludgeoning damage. If anyone is asleep, give them a 1 in 4 chance of avoiding the rocks just by dumb luck.

If it is a crumbling or rough cliff, then there is the chance of a full rock slide. If some rocks fall, roll another d20, and if the result is 1 again, a huge section of the cliff gives way (see the Rock Slide section for details).

The falling rocks will alert the characters to the coming rock slide, and so they will have 1d4 rounds to react before the cliff comes down upon them.

Fumblecrit

1   An unknown flaw in the victim's gear fails, whether it's an inherent weakness in the rope, a fracture in the piton, or the seam of a glove tearing. They plummet to the ground, suffering critical injuries. They will die in 1 minute without a successful Medicine check (DC 20) or magical healing.

2   Victim slips and gets snagged in the rope or wedged in a rock. The good news is that they haven't fallen. The bad news is that they lose 1 point of Constitution, their leg is badly broken, and someone will have to rescue them.

3   Victim suffers a massive head injury in addition to any other damage. The brain damage is irreversible, causing a permanent loss of 1d4 Intelligence points. Nothing short of Greater Restoration will help, restoring half of their Intelligence loss.

4   Victim discovers a new fear of heights and has a panic attack at even the thought of being on the cliff. This has the effect of leaving the character frightened when thinking about the cliff. They may be able to climb after some coaxing or with enough motivation, but their terror will make everything harder, and it will take twice as long. Anything that alleviates fear can remove this penalty. Any character immune to fear is not affected, but will talk about the dangers obsessively, which will pass their fear onto another (choose randomly).

LEDGES

It seems that the gods have blessed our travels today. After many arduous days of climbing broken rocks and cliffs, we have finally come to a ledge that seems to run along the mountainside, and it happens to be going in the direction we wish to go.

Whether the result of natural erosion or by the hands of some long forgotten hands, we will not look a gift horse in the mouth.

Greth is concerned that the ledge may be narrowing ahead, and that the outer edge seems unstable, but I refuse to give in to the despair that seems to have gripped poor Greth recently.

I must go. We just heard some sort of cracking sound.

PRESSURE

Although ledges can allow travelers to move more quickly and easily in the mountains, they are not without their downsides. The characters will essentially be limited to moving forward or back, unless they are prepared to do some rather dangerous climbing. The GM can consider having such a ledge as the only access to the party's destination, or it can make an excellent place for an ambush.

IF / THEN

The nature of ledges allow for few options if things go badly, since they are often narrow with a wall to one side and a cliff to the other. If there is a rock slide, there will be nowhere to run. If the ledge comes to a dead end, there will be no option but to go back. If the ledge is unstable and begins to crumble, the characters will have to think quickly if are to survive.

Walking along a ledge requires the characters to pay particular attention to where they put their feet. Certain areas may seem stable, but will break loose with a single wrong step.

If the players state that their characters are paying attention, then they should make a Perception check (DC 10) every 30 minutes. Failure means that they either get a little too close to the edge or step on a bit of rock that seemed safe, but was not.

The character can then make a Dexterity save (DC 15) to save themselves, or those nearby can make a grab for them with a successful Dexterity (Acrobatics) check (DC 10).

If they fall, the results will depend on the ledge and what is below it (see *Falling* on page 8).

If the party has any pack animals, they are more likely to misstep, and so it will be up to their handler to stay on the ledge. This will require a Animal Handling check (DC 10) every 30 minutes in areas that are extremely narrow and/or unstable.

CHANGES

Depending on the nature of the surrounding stone, rock slides are a serious risk when walking on a ledge. These can happen randomly, but are more likely cause by significant disturbances such as combat and thunder-based spells.

All saves to avoid the rock slide are at a *Disadvantage*. If any character is pushed beyond the ledge, then they will likely take some sort of falling damage. Basically, they will have a very bad day.

Rock Slide

We learned an expensive lesson today about becoming too complacent in the mountains. Shortly after breaking camp, we were feeling quite ambitious and decided to push on directly up the slope through to the tree line.

After the first hour however, our optimism gave way to pragmatism, and when we came upon a trail that wove more gradually up the mountain, we decided to take advantage of it.

Grateful for the chance to take the easier path, we foolishly relaxed our guard, and we paid the price. Rounding a bend in the trail, a deep crack that was felt more than heard caused us all to stop in our tracks.

My gaze followed the sound to a massive boulder over our heads, and even as my eyes fell upon it, the rock gave way, bringing the cliff down on us.

Pressure

The characters must decide to go back or forward when the slide begins. Otherwise the party will be slammed by falling rocks, boulders and other debris. Depending on the size of the slide, this event can dramatically hinder travel by blocking trails and filling narrow ravines.

If / Then

If your players do not chose an action quickly, then all checks or saves related to the rock slide are attempted at a *Disadvantage*. If a GM wants to ramp up the tension, consider using some sort of timer. The instant the rock slide is announced, give the players 30 seconds to describe what their characters do.

Changes

A rock slide can affect an area between 10 square feet to 100 square feet. The GM can determine the size of the slide or roll 1d10 x 10 feet to determine the area of effect.

The characters will have 1 round to react before any saves are necessary. If the area is equal to or larger than a character's movement, they will have to make a saving throw to avoid it. For example, if the area affected is 30 feet and a character has a movement of 30, they will be in danger.

Rocks and dirt will slam into every creature in the area, requiring them to make a Dexterity save (DC 20) to avoid the worst of the slide. A failed save means that the creature is pushed in the direction of the slide by a number of feet equal to 10 x the amount they failed the DC. For example, if the player ends up with a save roll of 12, that is 8 less than required, and so the character will be swept 80 feet. Additionally, the victims of the rock slide will suffer 4d6 hit points of bludgeoning damage and become stunned for 2d4 rounds.

A successful save means that they take only half damage and are not stunned.

Due to the sudden violence of the event, everyone in the slide area loses whatever they were holding. It will take at least 30 minutes to recover any lost objects. The GM may also want to note any fragile items carried by the characters which may have been broken in the event.

Even the Odds

An odd roll means that they are trapped by the slide. It might be a pile of smaller rocks or they might be pinned by a large boulder. In either case, it will require a combined Strength (Athletics) check (DC 15) to free the trapped creature.

Fumblecrit

1. Victim has one of their limbs crushed by a boulder (roll randomly). It is broken and useless until set and healed. Once set with a successful Medicine check (DC 12), the bone will mend on its own in a month or so, or can be mended during a short rest by imparting at least 20 hit points worth of magical healing. Note that this 20 points is required, even if the character is at full hit points.

2. Victim loses 1 to 4 items in the slide. It will require a Wisdom (Perception) check (DC 20) to find any one item.

3. Victim is knocked unconscious for 1d4 hours.

4. Victim has sustained an internal injury that is not immediately apparent. Over the course of the next few hours, the character will begin to feel weaker, losing 1 point of Constitution per hour as they bleed internally. A Medicine check (DC 10) will reveal the problem. Using a Healer's Kit can stop the bleeding within the first 3 hours, with a successful Medicine check (DC 15) and a long rest. Magic that imparts a minimum of 15 hit points of healing will also reverse the effects, if also followed by a long rest.

5. Victim suffers a massive head injury, causing them to lose consciousness for an hour. Upon waking, they are unable to remember anything about their life, including their own name. Their memory will return gradually over the course of the next day or so. During that time, they will lose the ability to perform any skills that require thought, so the GM will have to use their discretion when determining which abilities will suffer as a result of the amnesia.

6. Victim twists their leg badly, reducing their movement by 10 feet until they have had a long rest.

An excerpt from the Journal of Artemus Hale

I'm not sure that I would say we were lucky today, but it could certainly have been far worse. It has been an hour since the mountainside crashed down upon us for no apparent reason. The beasts with all of our supplies are on the far side of the rock slide and, for the moment, we are helpless to reach them.

Baleroth suffered a terrible blow to the head, and although the healer claims that his wound has been mended, he has still not awakened. The rest of us have suffered a plethora of cuts and bruises, but no significant injuries.

A few minutes ago, the mules seemed to be in distress, and we fear that there may be predators nearby. Ülfane is attempting to uncover a path to the other side of the rock slide, but it could take hours to clear enough stone to allow for safe passage.

In the meantime, we can only wait as night begins to set in and Ülfane continues his labors. As I sit here and think about the rock slide, the timing does seem rather suspicious, as if it had been deliberately triggered so as to separate the party from our supplies.

I suppose that this notion could just as easily be the product of my own imagination as the darkness closes around us and I listen to the sound of rocks being moved about.

Speaking of which, Ülfane has just informed us that he hears rocks moving above, and that it's likely due to his activities. This is of course the most reasonable answer, but I cannot help but feel as if we are now being watched by some one or some thing as yet unseen on the cliffs above us.

WIND & WEATHER

Another close call today when we were nearly blown off the mountain by a sudden gale. We suspected nothing since the sky was perfectly clear, and the only warning was a kind of howl that seemed to be moving along the valley far below us like a banshee.

Then the wind hit us with such force that we were all knocked off our feet. I barely managed to hold on to Lilly, as the violent gust threatened to hurl the halfling into the air.

Then, just as suddenly, the wind ceased, leaving us with bruises and a lot of gear to collect, but none the worse for wear.

Had this happened when we were scaling the cliff however, this might not have been such a happy ending.

PRESSURE

A sudden change in the weather can force a party to seek shelter, move more quickly, or turn a previously safe terrain into a nightmare. Depending on the altitude, the party could encounter sudden gale force winds, thunderstorms, whiteouts, or dense fog.

IF/THEN

There are quite a few options for weather of varying intensities. Here are only a few. The GM should feel free to adjust them to suit the setting and tone of the adventure.

Fog. Of all the extreme weather conditions in the mountains, fog is probably the most common (though specific regions can vary). When the mountain is wreathed in clouds, visibility varies between 10 and 40 feet. This can make navigation very difficult and cause one to lose direction very quickly.

Every 30 minutes in the fog, the characters should make Perception checks (DC 15) to maintain their heading. Failure means drifting to one side or another by many degrees. The GM should roll randomly to determine how far off course.

Any creatures beyond 40 feet are considered invisible.

Freezing Rain and Fog. Freezing rain is simply rain that falls through a shallow layer of cold temperatures (at or below freezing) near the surface. Ice will collect quickly on all surfaces from rocks to trees to outer clothing.

Freezing fog is not as common, and happens when a bank of fog moves into an area of freezing temperatures.

The ice can be up to an inch thick, and so anything left outside unattended is likely to be encased.

The icy surfaces cause all creatures in the area to suffer a *Disadvantage* on all movement related checks and saves.

If moving faster than half of their normal movement, a creature must make a successful Dexterity saving throw (DC 10) every 10 minutes, or slip and fall prone, sliding 5 feet in a random direction.

Gust of Wind. These sudden bursts of wind can occur on the most pleasant of days. They are caused by many things, from wind being funneled through a mountain pass to strong updrafts. Whatever the cause, the characters will have very little time to react.

The characters can make a Perception check (DC 10) to notice the sound of the approaching wind, and if they are not familiar with such things, an Intelligence (Survival) check (DC 15) to know what's coming.

When the wind hits, the characters will need to make Dexterity saving throws (DC 15) or get knocked prone. Those who knew it was coming have *Advantage* of this save. Obviously if a character is climbing or near a cliff, this could spell serious trouble for them.

Heavy Rain. Normally a heavy rain is a simple inconvenience, but in the mountains, it can cause many dangers to become worse.

Within moments after the rain starts, all stone surfaces become slick and more difficult to hold onto, and rope becomes

a lot more difficult to grip. Any checks related to keeping one's feet, climbing, using rope, and so on, are at a *Disadvantage*.

The rain also reduces visibility significantly, especially at night. During the day, normal vision is reduced to 60 feet, and at night it is reduced to 0 feet without a water and wind-proof light source. The effectiveness of the light source is reduced to half of what it would normally be.

Thunderstorm. Few things are as spectacular as a thunderstorm in the mountains. Along with their awesome beauty comes great power and danger.

During a thunderstorm, the characters will not only experience heavy rain and wind (see above), but also deadly lightning.

There is only a 1% chance of a direct lightning strike, but even a nearby strike can cause injury or death. Every minute that the characters remain exposed during a thunderstorm, the GM should roll a percentile. If they roll a 95-99, then there is a nearby strike. Each character within 60 feet must make a Constitution saving throw (DC 15) or suffer 1 point of Constitution damage. They are also knocked prone and deafened for 1 minute.

If the roll is 100, then the lightning strikes a character. Roll randomly to determine which one, or pick the one with the most metal armor. They must make a Constitution save (DC 20) or suffer 3d6 points of Constitution damage, and if they are still alive, fall unconscious for 1d4 hours. If the save is successful they take only half damage and are unconscious for 10 minutes. Everyone within 30 feet of the character is effected by the nearby strike.

Constitution points lost as a result of a lightning strike return at a rate of 1d4 points during a short rest and 2d4 points during a long rest. Any magical healing will restore 1d4 Constitution points in addition to any other healing imparted by the spell.

Whiteout. When a snowstorm moves through the mountains, it can turn a previously clear day into blinding whiteout. When this happens, the driving snow and accompanying wind reduce all visibility and hearing to 5 feet, making everyone effectively blind and deaf beyond that range.

Range attacks and many spells are rendered useless, and all enemies more than 5 feet away are treated as invisible.

Normally, one would only encounter a snowstorm in the winter, but in the mountains they can come much later in the season at higher altitudes.

Changes

Regardless of the specific conditions, extreme weather can trigger all sorts of events, from falling to seeking shelter in a cave. If the players are taking their time or are suffering from analysis paralysis, pointing out that bad weather is closing in can give them the kick they need to get things moving.

Alternately, weather can be used to interrupt an undesirable situation. For example, maybe the party is being set upon by dozens of mountain orcs, and they are losing. Having a thunderstorm move in can provide them the cover and or distraction necessary to make their escape or strategically reposition themselves.

Keep in mind that one weather condition can lead into another. So the party might begin experiencing more wind gusts as a precursor to a major thunderstorm. Allow those who are familiar with weather in general or the mountain climate specifically to make an Intelligence check to realize what is coming.

Even the Odds

In the mountains, it only takes a moment to make a deadly mistake. If the characters become sufficiently distracted (GM's discretion), then have them roll a die. An odd roll means that the character makes a misstep that sends them falling 5 feet in a random direction, leaving them prone on the ground. This could be quite bad if they are close to a cliff or some other nearby hazard.

APPENDIX

NEW BACKGROUND

MOUNTAINEER

Whether you were born to a people native to the mountains or whether you were trained by a mentor to navigate them, you are most comfortable in those high, rocky places, where the climate can change by the hour and a wrong step can send you careening into a chasm or bury you under tons of stone. You are a mountaineer, and you are as hard and indomitable as the land that forged you.

Skill Proficiencies: Athletics, Survival

Tool Proficiencies: Climbing Gear

Languages: One of your choice.

Equipment: Climbing Gear, a heavy hunting knife, mountain cloak, leather clothing, and a belt pouch containing 4d4 gem stones worth 1gp each.

FEATURE: NATURAL CLIMBER

You have the ability to ascend and descend vertical surfaces that would be impossible for the average person. Your training has taught you to take advantage of smallest hand holds and maximize the efficient use of your muscles when climbing.

This allows you to add your Wisdom modifier to any Strength (Athletics) checks related to climbing. For example, if your Strength (Athletics) bonus is 6 (Proficiency 2 + Strength modifier 4), and your Intelligence modifier is 2, your total climb modifier would be 8.

You are able to climb without any gear as if you were using it, except under the most extreme cases. If you are using climbing gear, then no climb check is necessary, unless there are extenuating circumstances.

If you are assisting others while using climbing gear, you can impart an inspiration die (d4) once to each person you are guiding, after a sort or long rest.

Finally, if you or someone within 5 feet of you falls, you can make a last ditch effort arrest their fall by making a Dexterity save (DC 20). Success means that you have grabbed a nearby hand hold or just managed to snatch your companion's jacket. Unfortunately, this desperate act inflicts 1 level of exhaustion upon you, but at least you're still alive.

SUGGESTED CHARACTERISTICS

As a mountaineer, you have learned that, although brutal and unyielding, even the mightiest stone can be shaped with time and patience. As such, you don't rush into any situation without thoughtful consideration, nor do you jump to conclusions before hearing all sides of an issue.

d8	Personality Trait
1	The sky is my temple. When I am in the mountains, I am in the presence of the gods.
2	I prefer solitude or the company of a few to large groups of people.
3	I am solid and reliable like the stone that forged me. I often find myself being the foundation of my party.
4	I am sure and decisive. Hesitation or second guessing will get you killed.
5	Anything can be accomplished with enough determination and patience. These are things that I have in abundance.
6	Survival in the mountains depends on teamwork, and so I feel that all solid relationships must be founded on trust.
7	I believe in moving ever forward, whether on a mountain, achieving a goal, or improving one's self.
8	In the mountains, there is something new around every corner. I am nothing if not adaptable.

d6	Ideal
1	**Cooperation.** Only by working together can we move forward and achieve our goals. (Good)
2	**Self-Improvement.** Every day, in every way, I'm getting better and better. (Any)
3	**Change.** Everything changes, even the mountains. We just have to accept it. (Chaos)
4	**Unyielding.** Once I have set my path, you'd better stay out of my way. (Evil)
5	**Solid.** A stable foundation is the basis for any culture, and so its laws must be immutable. (Lawful)
6	**Acceptance.** We cannot move the mountain, and so we must accept that and change ourselves. (Neutral)

d6	Bond
1	I know every cave and crag in the mountains. I always have a place to shelter or hide.
2	I have guided many people through the mountains over the years, and more than a few owe me their lives.
3	I have close ties with the mountain dwarves, and they will aid me in times of need.
4	I was banished to the mountains by a corrupt lord who sought my family's land. Once day I will reclaim it.
5	My sister is a mountain guide like myself, but she disappeared several years ago. I must find her.
6	Only I know the location of a particular shrine in the mountains, and there are some who would do anything (including murder) to find it.

d6	Flaw
1	I am terrified of being underground or in enclosed stone buildings. I'll go... but only after all other options have been exhausted.
2	I am as stubborn as stone. Once I have set my mind, good luck changing it.
3	I don't like being around people and often say inappropriate things in social situations.
4	I once almost died due to faulty climbing gear. I have since become obsessive that no one touch my stuff.
5	I have developed an odd sense of humor, often playing practical jokes at the wrong moment.
6	Personal hygiene was not a priority in the mountains and is still not that important to me.

New Equipment & Weapons

Altimeter. This small, brass device is about 4 inches in diameter, and has a glass face, much like a compass. Inside is a series of gears and cylinders of fluid that cause the needle on the face to point to the current altitude above sea level.

It is accurate to within 100 feet unless there is a storm approaching, at which point, the air pressure drops, giving a false reading. The obvious benefit to this "flaw" is that the perceptive user can possibly predict an approaching storm.

When such a storm is approaching, the character using the altimeter can make a Perception check (DC 10) to notice the drop. If they are familiar with the device, they will know what it means, but anyone else might have to make an Intelligence check (DC 15) to understand the implications.

There is a dial on the side to adjust for the inaccuracy if the user wishes. *[Cost 120 gp; Weight 6 oz.]*

Climbing Gear. Often carried in its own pack, this gear consists of silk rope, pitons, spring cams, body harness, locking carabiners, belay mechanism, rock hammer, grappling hook, chalk pouch, climbing shoes and reinforced leather gloves.

Each pack contains enough gear to equip one person, though it can be shared if taking turns. The rope is sufficient to climb distances of up to 200 feet, though this can be extended if addition rope is available.

When properly trained, this gear allows the character to climb a normal surface under normal conditions without the need for a Strength (Athletics) check. These could include a cliff face, castle wall, or almost any vertical surface.

Under adverse conditions, they will need to make a Strength (Athletics) check verses the appropriate DC, but will do so at *Advantage*.

An untrained character will gain *Advantage* using this equipment climbing normal conditions. Under adverse conditions where the character would not be able to climb at all, the gear will allow them to do so with *Disadvantage*.

If there is a trained climber assisting them, the untrained climbers will gain the full benefits of the equipment, but it will take twice as long. *[Cost 50 gp; Weight 30 lbs.]*

Mountain Bed. This is a bed in that it allows one to sleep on the side of a mountain, but that is where the similarity ends. The mountain bed is a quilted rectangular bag with grommets that allow it to be anchored to a surface with pitons. This allows the climber to secure the bed in place, and so eliminate the possibility of rolling of a cliff in the night.

The mountain bed can even be anchored to a vertical surface, though only the most experienced climbers will use it under those conditions.

The fabric is heavily oiled on the outside, making it waterproof, and there is a hood at the top that can be pulled up to cover the head. This provides protection from the elements, and can allow comfortable sleep in rain, snow, wind, and temperatures as low as 0 degrees fahrenheit.

The drawback to the mountain bed is its weight, which adds 10 pounds to the climber's gear. A not insignificant burden when climbing a mountain. *[Cost 20 gp; Weight 10 lbs.]*

Mountain Staff. This 8-foot long staff is used by seasoned mountaineers to aid them in their travels. The shaft is most often made from high plains ironwood. It has a sturdy steel claw on the bottom and a six to eight-inch hooked spiked hammer at the top. Since one of the primary goals of this staff is to assist with walking, the bottom claw is designed to dig into a surface to avoid slipping. The spike on top is used to give a climber extra reach when needed.

Additionally, the mountain staff can be used as a pole arm to deal with many of the threats that one might encounter in the mountains, from mountain lions to trolls to giants. *[Use the statistics for the Pike, except that it is not a Heavy weapon.]*

This staff provides reach and stability for the climber, and could provide an *Advantage* where appropriate (GM's discretion). For example, if a Dexterity saving throw were required to walk across a wet stone surface, then it would likely provide *Advantage* on that save. Another example would be a climber traversing a cliff face whose path was blocked by a crack in the rock that was wider than his reach. The staff could be then used to get a hold on the far side and facilitate crossing the gap. *[Cost 8 gp; Weight 8 lbs.]*

Red Root. The plant from which this root is harvested is called a Maiden's Blush due to the pale pink flowers it has in the late summer. It is a low, ground cover with small round leaves that thrives at high altitudes, and is found growing in cracks on rocky ground, often in the company of other mosses and lichens. Like most plants, the Maiden's Blush "breathes" in carbon dioxide and produces oxygen. Unlike other plants however, it stores some of this oxygen in its roots.

As the name suggests, the root is a deep red color, and it is much sought after by mountaineers. That is because chewing the root releases a mixture of nitrogen and oxygen that eases the effects of altitude sickness, as well as providing some carbohydrates and vitamins.

The root must be used within 12 hours after being harvested, and each plant can provide 6 oz. (6 doses) of usable root. Chewing 1 oz. of red root will last 1 hour, and will reduce the effects of altitude by 1 category. For example, if the user is at *Very High Altitude*, chewing the root will mean that they only suffer the effects of being at *High Altitude*.

Searching for Maiden's Blush will require a Wisdom (Survival) check (DC 20). Success means finding 1d4 plants. This check will require an hour of searching in a rocky area above 10,000 feet. This could be done during a short rest, though the person searching will obviously not receive the benefits of the rest.

A tincture can be made from the root that will produce the same effect, though it is extremely expensive due to the fact that the benefits fade so quickly after harvest.

A liquid dose (1 vial) will cost around 50 gold pieces, but will last for twice as long as chewing the root (2 hours).

Sun Whiskey. Brewed from the roots of several high altitude plants (including red root), Sun Whiskey is a much sought after spirit. Its most distinctive visual characteristics are its faint bioluminescent glow and the constant bubbling.

The deep golden glow of Sun Whiskey illuminates many of the more upscale taverns' shelves, and is believed (incorrectly) to provide an aphrodisiac effect on the drinker. Although not enough to read by, a bottle can provide a pool of faint light in pitch darkness.

The bubbling causes the whiskey to look very much as if it's boiling, though it produces no heat. In fact, the bubbles are an alchemical reaction within the liquid that produces bubbles at the bottom and reabsorbing them at the top.

The Sun Whiskey is one of the stronger spirits, rivaling even the most hardy dwarven distillations (about 180 proof). As such, it is highly flammable, and can substitute for lamp oil in a pinch.

Although it does not increase libido, it does have one extraordinary effect. One drink will allow the creature to hold their breath for up to 15 minutes with no ill effects.

The drawback is that they must make a Constitution save (DC 10) or be at a *Disadvantage* to all skill checks for at least 30 minutes due to intoxication.

Mountain Staff

Mountain Bed

Altimeter

Red Root

Climbing Gear

Sun Whiskey

New Magic Items

Grappling Arrow
Weapon (arrow), common

This is a masterwork arrow with a head designed to open up and grapple onto a surface. Often used in conjunction with the Spider Silk Rope, this arrow can be shot at about half the distance of a normal arrow with light twine attached. When the arrow lands, the grappling claws open and hook on whatever it can.

The head of the arrow has minor spells placed upon it. One of them reduces the weight of the grappling mechanism, allowing for longer and more accurate shots. The other allows the claws to open and close at a command word. Be warned that anyone can say the word, so the user should be careful to share the word only with those they trust.

Ring of Floating
Wondrous item, uncommon

This functions very much like a *Ring of Feather Falling* except that instead of falling slowly, the wearer is just stopped. The ring can be activated as a reaction, causing the falling character to stop and float in the air for up to 30 minutes. This should give the wearer time to rescue themselves or to have someone else rescue them.

This ring makes the wearer neutrally buoyant, and so if pushed or pulled, they will simply float in that direction.

The wearer can choose to stop floating at any time. The ring only effects the wearer, and so anyone holding them will pull them down. This power can be used once after each dawn.

Spider Silk Rope
Wondrous item, common

This is an alchemical rope that utilizes great lengths of a thin, web-like strands extruded from exotic blend of spider glands. Due to the extremely rare nature of the required components, spider silk rope is quite expensive.

The rope itself is soft, only about a quarter inch thick and weighs next to nothing, and yet it is twice as strong as any other rope. It has a test strength of over 2000 lbs., and stretches about 10% under a heavy load.

The most extraordinary property of the spider silk rope is its ability to become sticky or frictionless at the user's will. If more than one person is using it, the property applies in that area of the rope. This feature provides an *Advantage* to any skill check utilizing the rope.

Spider silk rope is extremely difficult to damage with 14 hit points, resistance to normal weapons, and a DC 22 Strength check to break it. Unfortunately, it is vulnerable to fire.

Weather Stone
Wondrous item, uncommon

These stones are often set into sturdy bit of jewelry or embedded at the top of a traveler's walking stick.

When the weather is pleasant, the stone is a deep, sky blue color, but when the weather is about to change in the region (25 mile radius), the stone changes color as follows:

Deep Sky Blue – Pleasant Weather, Seasonal

Dusty Grey – Overcast and Rainy

Dark Grey – Heavy Rain

Black – Severe Weather (Thunderstorms, Hurricanes, Blizzards, and so on.)

Orange – Extreme Heat, Unseasonal

Silvery Blue – Extreme Cold, Unseasonal

Pale Grey – Snow, Light

White – Snow, Heavy

Clear – Ice (Freezing Rain or Fog)

The color of the stone changes between 2 and 12 hours prior to the weather changing. This can be determined randomly or the time can be chosen for the greatest cinematic effect.

Spider Silk Rope

Grappling Arrow

Weather Stone

Ring of Floating

LEGAL INFORMATION

The Story of Davae Breon Jaxon

Davae Breon Jaxon, a master wizard and collector of exotic lore, was apprenticed to the infamous Mordenkane in the great city of Tal'Navashar in the east.

As soon as he was able, Jaxon set out into the world in search of adventure, spending more than three decades traveling the roads and wild lands of Andün and greater Arda. During his wanderings, he managed to amass a vast amount of magical knowledge and an extraordinary number of books. In his latter years, Jaxon established the largest and most respected library dedicated to the arcane arts the world had ever seen.

Davae Breon Jaxon has recently turned his attention to the instruction of adventurers in the fine art of survival in extreme environments, and this book has benefited greatly from his experience.