



# MODERN

## CRISIS ON

## CANYON ROAD



By Stan!

A Short d20 Modern Adventure for Four 17th-Level Characters

In real life, heroes are often ordinary people who find themselves in extraordinary situations, such as aiding accident victims, dealing with the aftermath of a calamity, or rescuing children in danger. When they see others in trouble or need, they step in and offer assistance with no thought of reward or gain. It is this kind of selfless action that earns them the title of hero.

This sort of heroism is sometimes forgotten in a d20 MODERN campaign, where threats often come in the form of overwhelming foes or supernatural forces. In situations such as these, heroes are by necessity adventurers—well-equipped, highly trained individuals who seek out action, mystery, and most of all danger in many exotic forms.

*Crisis on Canyon Road* allows the heroes to test their mettle in a more mundane way. It places them in a situation that any ordinary person might face—namely, happening upon the aftermath of an automobile accident on a remote road. Although they are likely to uncover one or two surprises along the way, the main question is whether or not the characters have what it takes to be real heroes.

### LEVELS

*Crisis on Canyon Road* is a short scenario for four 17th-level heroes. With slight modifications, you can make it suitable for heroes at other levels, or groups as large or small as you're comfortable adjudicating. See the Scaling the Adventure sidebar for guidelines on adapting this scenario for other groups.

You, the Game Master (GM), need a copy of the *d20 MODERN Roleplaying Game* to run this adventure. To get started, print out the adventure (including the map) and read it through. Make sure you are familiar with the rules for combat, movement, and cover from Chapter 5 of the *d20 MODERN Roleplaying Game*. You might also want to reread the various uses of the Climb skill in Chapter 2 of the same book.

The text that appears in shaded boxes should be read aloud or paraphrased for the players. Opponents' statistics are provided in abbreviated form.

## BACKGROUND

This adventure has several layers of background that the heroes can discover. On the surface, the action revolves around rescuing the victims of an auto accident, but there are deeper questions to be answered as well. Eventually, the heroes should want to discover how the van crashed, where its occupants were immediately before the crash, and what cargo they were hauling.

The answers to all these questions begin with a mysterious building perched on a lonely hilltop.

### The Building with No Name

Atop an otherwise pristine hill just outside of town sits a lonely building that seems to be made of white steel. Because of other intervening hills, the building is invisible from the city proper, though commuters driving along a major highway that runs through the valley can see it easily. Curious truckers and other frequent travelers occasionally ask waitresses and customers at nearby truck stops about the sleek, high-tech building, but none of the locals has any information about the site—although many admit to curiosity on the subject.

### Scaling the Adventure

The encounters described in this adventure are suitable for heroes of any level. To tailor *Crisis on Canyon Road* for your game, apply the following adjustments.

- **Skill Checks:** This adventure relies heavily on skill checks—particularly Climb and Spot checks. If the heroes are significantly lower than 17th level, they may not have sufficient ranks to succeed at the tasks that the adventure sets for them. Adjust each DC by  $-2$  if the heroes' average character level is between 8 and 13. Adjust each DC by  $-5$  if the heroes' average character level is lower than 8. Likewise, you may want to increase each DC by  $+2$  or more if the heroes' average character level is 19 or higher.
- **The Thieves:** The group of "information liberators" featured in this adventure should be a force equal to the heroes' party in power. Make sure the number of thieves equals the number of heroes, and that the average character level for the two sides is equal.
- **Additional Assistance:** If the heroes are significantly lower in level than the "information liberators," the GM may choose to provide some assistance in the form of police, emergency aid workers, or amateur mountaineers. Make sure these GM characters are ordinaries rather than heroes, and that all the heroes have higher character levels than their assistants. Such GM characters should enable the heroes to save the day, not undertake all the dangerous tasks in the scenario.

Over the years, a number of rumors have sprung up about this building. Some say it's a government warehouse—a place where the FBI and other agencies store captured space alien technology, the Arc of the Covenant, and other fabled treasures. Others say it is a private home that belongs to a wealthy recluse—a fortified retreat perched on a mountaintop so that the paranoid old kook can see people coming from miles away. Still others say that the building is a base for the Mafia, where members of "the family" organize drug trafficking, fence stolen goods, and imprison and torture their enemies. Even wilder rumors abound as well, but so far, none has come close to the truth—which is relatively easy to find out. Anyone who bothered to consult the regional Chamber of Commerce or did even a cursory search of land titles would discover that the building and the entire mountaintop belong to Eagle Research, Ltd.

### Eagle Research, Ltd.

Eagle Research is a small biotech firm that does contract work for pharmaceutical companies and government agencies. Eagle's executives chose this remote site for the facility because of the company's need for secrecy and the fact that its work occasionally involves hazardous materials.

Eagle employs only about a dozen research scientists and a dozen support staff. Its impact on the local economy has never been great enough to make the company name widely known, but it is not a secret. Along the northern side of Canyon Road—the only public road that provides access to the facility—is a fence hung with signs warning against trespassing and clearly identifying the land beyond as the property of Eagle Research, Ltd.

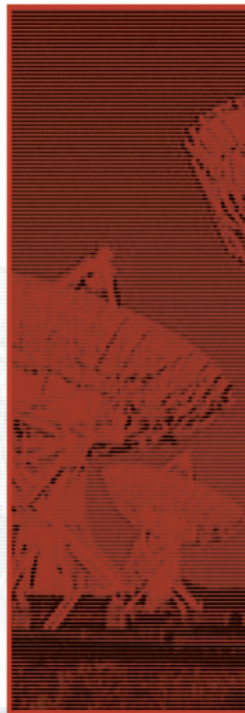
### Canyon Road

Canyon Road is a two-lane highway that runs through the mountains—one of only a few routes that trucks and other oversized vehicles can use when traveling east or west through this area. The road gets its name from the fact that it follows the meandering path of the Deertail River—in fact, only a metal guardrail separates the cars in the south lane from a precipitous drop into the gorge that the river has carved. The gorge is a beautiful sight, but over the years it has also been the site of more than a few tragic accidents.

### Corporate Espionage

While the local population may be completely unaware of Eagle Research, Ltd., its competitors know it quite well. A few, in fact, covet the plum assignments that Eagle has received from the government in recent years. The executives of one such company recently hired a team of "information liberators" to break into Eagle's facility and steal samples of its current work.

The infiltration team consists of four highly trained operatives who were given a map of the facility, guidelines on how to recognize their target, orders for its handling, and instructions for exchanging the goods for their final payment. The operatives know no other details—they don't know what it is they are taking nor for whom they are taking it. The pay was good enough that they agreed to ask no questions.





## The Heist

The information liberators struck the Eagle Research facility some 20 minutes ago. They had done an excellent job of planning the heist and were able to get in, locate and secure the target (three metal cases containing vials of an unspecified substance), and get out in less than 10 minutes. They broke two doors, scuttled the alarm system, and used knock-out gas to disable a security guard.

As they drove out of the site, they knew they had a minimum of 45 minutes before anyone would notice their handiwork. In the meantime, they intended to put as much distance as possible between themselves and the Eagle Research facility.

## The Getaway

Canyon Road was empty as the van sped downhill. Successful completion of a very lucrative contract seemed inevitable. But just as the operatives were heaving a sigh of relief, the right rear tire blew out, sending the van into an uncontrolled skid.

The driver was unable to regain control of the vehicle quickly enough to avoid disaster. The van crashed into and through the guardrail and tumbled down the side of the cliff, coming to rest on a small ledge about 100 feet down the embankment. All the members of the team were knocked unconscious by the impact. What's more, one of the stolen containers popped open, revealing a small pile of dry ice and several vials.

## SYNOPSIS

The adventure begins when the heroes come across the scene of a recent car accident. While driving along a deserted mountain road, they see some debris in the roadway and a massive gap torn through the guardrail. Further investigation reveals that a van somehow crashed through the protective barrier, fell part way down the side of the mountain, and came to rest precariously on a ledge about 100 feet below the road.

The next phase of the adventure centers around the heroes' efforts to aid those trapped in the van. To do so, the heroes must find a way to descend the cliff face safely and evacuate the victims.

Barring any unforeseen difficulties with their rescue plan, the heroes must then deal with an unexpected complication—the box in the van contains vials of a deadly virus. This virus cannot be allowed to fall into the river below because that water flows directly into the city's reservoir.

Finally, the heroes discover that the people in the van are criminals, and the accident occurred while they were fleeing the scene of their latest heist—the building on the hilltop where the deadly virus came from. Once pulled to safety, the accident victims seize any opportunity to turn on their benefactors in order to protect both their loot and their anonymity.

## Character Hooks

As GM, you know best how to involve your players and their characters in an adventure. The heroes must happen upon the accident at a time when very few people are on the road, and only the security guards are working at Eagle Research,

Ltd. Thus, the only question that really needs to be answered in the setup portion is why the heroes are driving along this particular stretch of road at this time. The answer should be weighty enough to put all the heroes in the vehicle together, carrying at least their basic adventuring supplies. On the other hand, they must not be in such a hurry that they cannot spare time to help the victims of a seemingly random accident.

If you can think of no obvious ways to get the heroes into position, you can use one of the following adventure hooks, modifying the details to fit your heroes.

- The heroes are traveling along Canyon Road on their way to meet a potential employer in another city. If the interview goes well, they expect to embark on the new assignment immediately. They have taken care to leave quite early so they are well ahead of schedule.
- The heroes are on their way to the Eagle Research facility for a reason of their own. Perhaps they are investigating one of the rumors about the site, or perhaps they are planning to break into the lab themselves pursuant to a mission involving a secret other than the virus.
- The heroes are returning to the city after a successful assignment. Earlier in the day, they received commendations from another town's mayor or city council—commendations citing them as “heroes extraordinaire” and “protectors of the people.”

## BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

*Crisis on Canyon Road* is a site-based adventure that takes place along a stretch of Canyon Road running along a mostly deserted hilltop. The adventure should take place either late at night or on a weekend or holiday—some time when there is very little activity on the road, and only the security guards are present at the Eagle Research facility. The heroes are the first people to come upon the scene of the accident, approximately 10 minutes after it occurs.

Begin the adventure when the heroes' vehicle approaches the point where the van crashed through the guardrail.

## A. CANYON ROAD

Read or paraphrase the following aloud when the heroes move into position.

Many naturalists consider Canyon Road one of the most scenic routes in the region. The south face of the two-lane highway looks down on the Deertail River Gorge, while the mountainside on the north is covered with lush copses of fir trees.

The road itself rises steeply in elevation, then twists along the mountainside as it follows the river's snaking path. Canyon Road's many blind curves and serpentine stretches make it a favorite among driving aficionados, although the fact that it is a major thoroughfare for semi-trucks makes it unwise to drive too recklessly.

At this point, each hero may attempt a DC 15 Spot check. The driver gets a +7 bonus on this check, as does any other hero sitting in the front seat. Go to encounter A1 if anyone succeeds on the Spot check; otherwise go to A2.

### A1. The Guardrail

Read or paraphrase the following aloud if anyone succeeds on the Spot check.

The thick, iron guardrail along the southern edge of Canyon Road was obviously meant to prevent unwary drivers from steering their vehicles off the ledge and into the yawning chasm below. Just ahead, however, is a gap in that guardrail. The jagged, wrenched metal on either end of the hole gives mute evidence of the violence with which this section of the railing was torn out.

If the heroes stop to investigate, go to encounter B. Otherwise, go to encounter A2.

### A2. The Explosion

If all of the heroes failed the Spot check, or if the heroes notice the broken rail but decide not to stop, read or paraphrase the following aloud.

A loud explosion reverberates from somewhere behind you, and your vehicle jostles violently.

The driver of the heroes' vehicle has inadvertently run over a piece of debris from the earlier accident. The right rear tire has blown out, sending the vehicle into an uncontrolled skid.

Everyone in the vehicle must make a DC 15 Reflex saving throw or take 3d4 points of damage. Any character who is not seated and wearing a safety belt takes a -10 penalty on the save.

In addition to the save, the driver of the heroes' vehicle must make a DC 20 Drive check. Success on the Reflex save grants the driver a +10 luck bonus on this check. If the check is successful, the driver manages to pull the vehicle to a stop with no further incident. If it fails, everyone in the vehicle takes an additional 3d4 points of damage.

**Development:** Describe a harrowing few seconds during which the vehicle smashes into the guardrail and nearly topples over into the gorge. Eventually, though, it comes to rest safely on the edge of the cliff, and the heroes can emerge to assess the damage. The tire is completely destroyed and must be replaced. The cause of the explosion was a large, sharp piece of metal that seems to have once been part of the guardrail.

When the heroes move to investigate the hole in the guardrail, continue with encounter B, below.

## B. CRASH SCENE

When the heroes move to examine the torn guardrail, read or paraphrase the following aloud.

The guardrail is made of thick metal and securely anchored to the cliffside by wooden support posts. At the point where the gap begins, both the rail and the support posts have been ripped away as if by a tremendous impact. The ground around the ledge is covered with oil and other automotive lubricants, and small bits of metal, fiberglass, and plastic are scattered on the roadway. Clearly a vehicle of some sort crashed through the railing at high speed.

Any hero wishing to examine the debris or railing can attempt a DC 25 Investigate, Knowledge (technology), or Repair check. Success reveals that the vehicle involved in the crash was a white van, SUV, or truck that struck the guardrail at approximately 60 mph after skidding uncontrollably for less than 50 yards. Some of this information, however, can more easily be gathered merely by peering over the ledge. Go to encounter B1 when anyone decides to look into the ravine.

### B1. The Wreck

Read aloud or paraphrase the following if anyone looks over the edge of the road by the broken guardrail.

Beyond the shattered guardrail, the mountain simply falls away in a nearly sheer cliff that drops almost 1,000 feet down to the waters of the Deertail River. About 100 feet below the road, a spit of rock juts out from the cliff. Resting on that outcropping are the shattered remains of a white van.

The wrecked vehicle lies upside down. Its side panels are dented and bowed out, and all its windows are shattered. The van's axles are bent at wicked angles, causing the tires to stick out in odd positions. The wreck looks disturbingly like a human body lying on the ground with its arms and legs splayed.

Each hero who views this tableau may attempt a Spot check. Compare the result to the table below. The hero gains all the information for check results equal to or lower than her own.

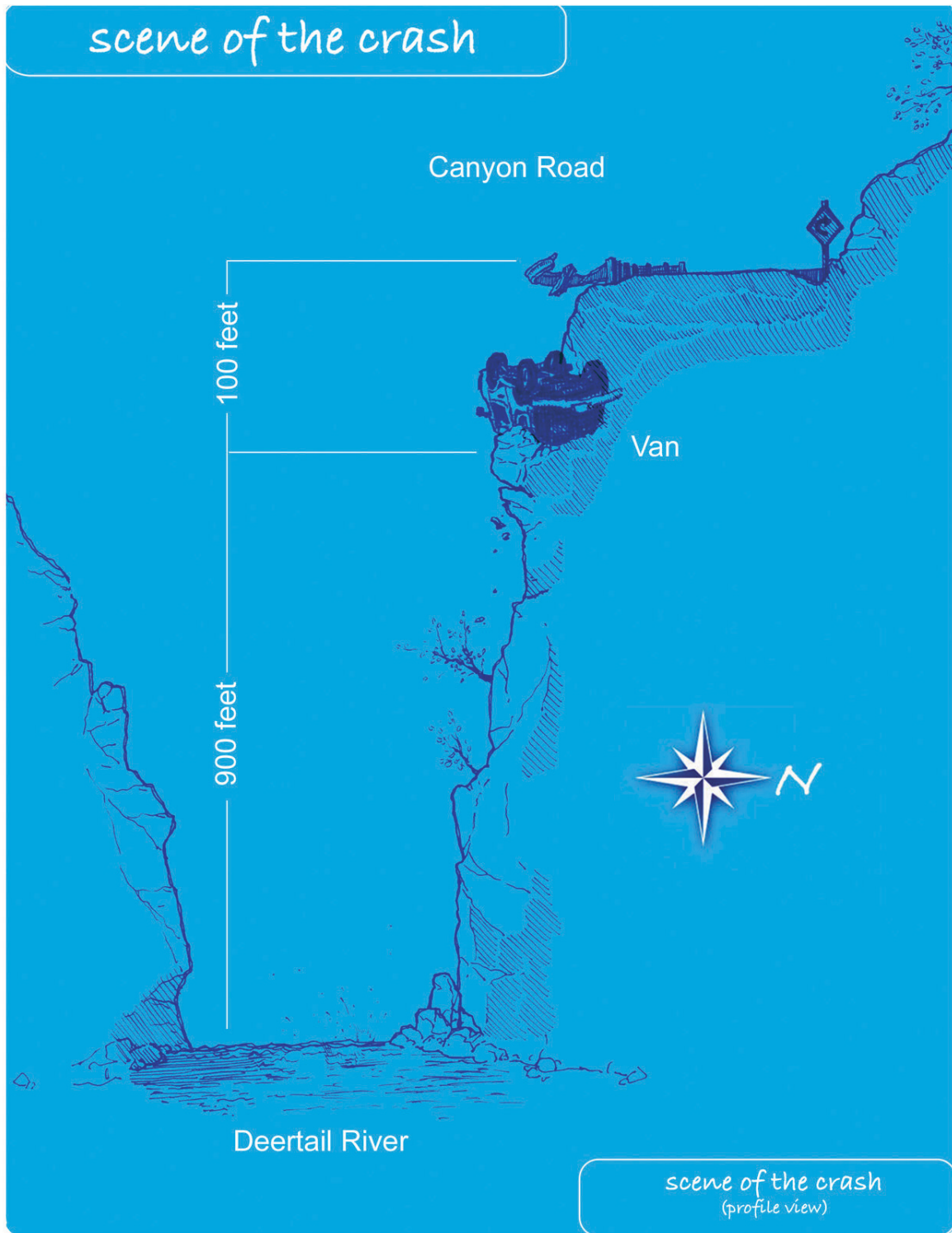
SPOT DC	INFORMATION GAINED
25	The right rear tire on the van is blown out.
26	An arm hangs limply out the driver's side window. The hand is bloody, but it does appear to be moving slightly, as though the person to whom it is attached is either unconscious or groggy.
27	A second bloody hand hangs from the passenger-side window. It too appears to be moving slightly.
28	The van has no license plate, even though the rear end seems relatively unharmed.

The license plate was purposely removed and placed inside the van to ensure that the Eagle Research security cameras could capture no evidence that might aid in identifying the vehicle. The thieves had planned to pull into a rest stop near the bottom of Canyon Road and reattach it before driving into more populated areas.





## scene of the crash



**Development:** If the heroes have access to cell phones, they can call 911 for assistance. The operator takes their information but says that help may be some time in arriving. The dispatcher has asked for a rescue squad, but because of a multi-car accident on the freeway and a four-alarm fire in an apartment complex, all units are already out in the field. Thus, for the time being, the heroes are on their own.

From this vantage point, the heroes cannot determine how much time has passed since the van crashed through the guardrail. Anyone with medical or first aid training, however,

realizes that the victims could easily bleed to death before help arrives.

If the heroes want to go down the embankment and help the crash victims, continue with encounter B3, below. If they seem content to sit back and wait for emergency services personnel to arrive, go to encounter B2.

### B2. Waiting For Help

If the heroes do not seem interested in undertaking a rescue effort, or are taking too long to plan their strategy, read or paraphrase the following aloud.

A loud crack suddenly resounds from below, and the noise echoes off the far canyon wall. A piece of the ledge on which the van rests has crumbled and fallen away. The small boulders bounce a few times off the cliff before splashing into the river below.

The heroes have no way to determine what this small rockslide means, and you as GM should reinforce that point. On the one hand, the incident may be completely unrelated to the current situation. On the other hand, it might be a sign that the van's impact has destabilized the ledge, and that the entire outcropping could collapse at any time.

**Development:** If the heroes remain uninterested in descending the slope, another rockslide occurs. This second incident should provide further evidence that the ledge is indeed unstable and give the heroes a very plain choice—do nothing but watch while the van and its passengers fall into the river, or try any sort of rescue plan to save them from that fate.

If the heroes decide to help, continue with encounter B3. If they refuse to get personally involved, the ledge eventually crumbles, dropping the van, the thieves, and (perhaps most significantly) the stolen virus into the river. At that point, the adventure is over, and the heroes can go about their business. You as GM, on the other hand, must determine the consequences of the heroes' inaction. See the What's In The Box? sidebar for a discussion of the possible repercussions.

### B3. Mounting A Rescue (CL 10)

The biggest problem in providing help to those trapped in the van is finding a way down the cliff. The most effective way short of magic or specialized equipment is to climb down.

**Development:** The rough rocks provide plenty of handholds, so a hero can simply hop over the edge and try to climb down. Doing so requires a DC 15 Climb check for every 50 feet moved up or down. Using a rope provides a +5 equipment bonus on this check, and using climbing gear provides a +7 equipment bonus.

Success on the Climb check indicates that the hero has safely moved a distance up to 50 feet. Failure means that an unexpected event occurs, such as a hand- or foothold crumbling. In such a case, the climber must immediately make a DC 15 Reflex saving throw. If the save is successful, the climber managed to secure himself before anything disastrous happened. If it fails, the climber begins to fall down the cliff. A character who falls in this manner is not intentionally jumping and so cannot use the Jump skill to reduce the damage.

Proper use of a rope or climbing gear limits the length of the fall to 10 feet, after which the hero may attempt to climb the rest of the way down. However, even a climber who is not using rope or climbing gear does not automatically plummet to his death because he is directly over the van and the ledge supporting it. Thus, he takes the normal damage associated with a fall from either 50 or 100 feet (depending on whether the fall began during the first or second required Climb check) and comes to rest somewhere on the ledge. For a detailed discussion of the effects of falling, see Chapter 7 of the *d20 MODERN Roleplaying Game*.

Once at least one hero reaches the ledge safely, continue with Encounter C.

## C. CRIME SCENE (EL 20)

A hero standing on (or suspended by a rope near) the ledge automatically notices a few other details regarding the van. Read or paraphrase the following aloud.

Although the van has taken a good deal of cosmetic damage—severely scratched paint, smashed glass, and even a few gashes in the side panel of the cargo area—it seems to be in relatively good shape. Even the slight bowing of the sides is not enough to interfere with opening any of the doors.

A thin, spiderweb pattern of cracks in the ledge leads out from beneath the van. There's no telling how deeply the fissures have split the rock, but it seems certain that they will deepen over time, and eventually this ledge will crumble away completely.

Each hero on or near the ledge may attempt a Spot and a Listen check. Compare the results to the tables below. The hero gains all the information for check results equal to or lower than her own.

SPOT DC	INFORMATION GAINED
10	The van is an industrial model that is generally sold only to corporations and is not available in ordinary showrooms. Its heavy-duty body is probably the reason it survived the crash with relatively little damage.
15	The van has no license plate. It was not torn off; there was obviously no license on it at the time of the accident.
20	The arm that was previously hanging out of the driver's-side window is no longer visible.
25	Small wisps of mist drift through the smashed window. A glance inside reveals a small pile of dry ice and a handful of vials lying near a partially opened metal case.

LISTEN DC	INFORMATION GAINED
10	Small to Medium-size rocks can be heard falling from below the ledge. Each bounces off the cliff face several times before landing in the river below.
15	One or more people are groaning and mumbling incoherently inside the van.
20	The voices belong to two or more people, who are speaking in hushed voices. It is impossible to tell what they are saying.
25	The conversation inside the van indicates that the survivors are aware of the heroes' presence and are trying to decide what to do. They realize they are in a precarious position and need to be rescued, but they don't want their rescuers to find out about their recent activities.

All but one of the thieves is awake—the one in the front passenger seat fell victim to massive damage during the crash





and is currently unconscious at -1 hit point. Although slightly injured, the rest are ready to act if the heroes become aggressive. They have recovered and concealed their handguns (see Chapter 4 of the *d20 MODERN Roleplaying Game* for rules on weapon concealment) and covered most of their other equipment under a tarp. The hidden equipment consists of two shotguns, two closed metal cases containing vials and dry ice, and a bag containing a lockpick set, a basic electrical toolkit, night vision goggles, and a stun gun. The third metal case has fallen open, and its contents lie scattered.

**Development:** The next phase of the adventure depends entirely on how the heroes decide to proceed. When the heroes approach the van, go to encounter C1.

## C1. The Rescue

Read or paraphrase the following aloud if the heroes approach the van without weapons in evidence.

The inside of the van is as chaotic as might be expected from the situation. Tiny bits of broken glass are scattered everywhere, pieces of metal protrude here and there at odd angles, and everything is upside down. On what used to be the ceiling of the cab, a small pile of dry ice and a half dozen vials filled with yellowish liquid lie next to a partially opened metal case.

An unconscious man is still strapped into the front passenger seat. He has minor lacerations on his face and hands, but otherwise appears unharmed. He is dressed all in black—turtleneck sweater, cargo pants, shoes, and even a knit cap.

In the cargo area are three more people—a woman and two men—wearing clothes identical to those of the man in the passenger seat. Behind them is a plastic tarp bulging up in the center, as if concealing a small pile of items.

“Thank God you came along,” one of the men says. “We thought we were going to die on this ledge!”

One way or another, combat ensues between the heroes and the thieves. If the heroes do not press their advantage upon reaching the van, the thieves make sure that the fight happens at a time most advantageous to them.

**GM Characters:** The van contains four information liberators, one of whom is currently unconscious.

**Information Liberator (Fast Hero 5/Infiltrator 7/Gunslinger 5):** CR 17; Medium-size human; HD 5d8+10 plus 7d8+14 plus 5d10+10; hp 115; Mas 14; Init +5; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 28, touch 28, flat-footed 28 (+5 Dex, +13 class); BAB +9; Grap +11; Atk +11 melee (1d6+2 nonlethal, sap) or +15 ranged (2d6, Glock 17) or +14 ranged (2d8, Beretta M3P); Full Atk +11/+6 melee (1d6+2 nonlethal, sap) or +15/+10 ranged (2d6, Glock 17) or +14/+9 (2d8, Beretta M3P); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Close combat shot, defensive position, improved evasion, improvised implements, improvised weapon damage, lightning shot, skill mastery (Hide, Move Silently, Sleight of Hand), sweep, weapon focus (Glock 17 or Beretta M3P); AL none; SV Fort +6, Ref +16, Will +7; AP 8; Rep: +5; Str 14, Dex 20, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 12.

**Talents (Fast Hero):** Evasion, uncanny dodge 1, uncanny dodge 2.

**Occupation:** Criminal (bonus class skills: Hide, Sleight of Hand; bonus feat: Personal Firearms Proficiency).

**Skills:** Disable Device +1, Escape Artist +18, Hide +23, Intimidate +11, Listen +10, Move Silently +28, Sleight of Hand +27, Spot +13, Tumble +20.

**Feats:** Advanced Firearms Proficiency, Alertness, Dodge, Heroic Surge, Mobility, Nimble, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Quick Draw, Quick Reload, Shot on the Run, Simple Weapons Proficiency, Stealthy.

**Equipment:** Ammunition (5 extra clips for whatever firearm the character uses), duct tape, fake ID, flashlight (penlight), handcuffs (zip tie, 10), Glock 17 (or Beretta M3P), lockpick set, multipurpose tool, night vision goggles, sap.

**Tactics:** The villains’ top priority is to get safely back to the road. If the heroes appear to suspect nothing, the thieves play along with them until they have reached safety, figuring that a fight on the unstable ledge might end in tragedy for them. If the heroes question them about how they came to be here, the thieves claim to be house painters who lost control of their van while on their way to or from a job. Despite the lack of painting equipment in the van and the absence of spatters on their clothing, they stick to their story. If asked about the dry ice and vials, or even the shotguns and other equipment, the thieves feign ignorance, looking at one another and saying, “How did that get there?” (They believe that ignorance, even if played to a ridiculous extreme, is a viable strategy.) Once back up on the road, the villains attempt to overpower the heroes, throw their bodies into the river below, recover the cases and vials, and continue on their way in the heroes’ vehicle.

Under no circumstances do the thieves allow the heroes to handcuff them or search either their persons or the van. If the heroes insist on either course of action, the thieves simply pull out their guns and hope they are better shots than the heroes are.

**Development:** Any hero who picks up and examines a vial can tell that the liquid inside is slightly more viscous than water. Each vial is marked with a label that reads “Property of Eagle Research, Ltd., Lot 42-C,” plus a biohazard emblem and a handwritten time signature that designates when it was stoppered.

Each hero who sees the Eagle Research label may attempt a Knowledge (current events) check. Compare the results to the table below.

KNOWLEDGE (CURRENT EVENTS) DC	INFORMATION GAINED
Up to 15	The hero has never heard of either Eagle Research or the building atop the mountain.
15–20	The hero knows one of the rumors about the building on the mountaintop (see Background, above).
21+	The hero knows all about Eagle and its research.

There is no way for the heroes to get more information about the vials and their contents here on the roadside, and the information does not affect the rest of this adventure. If you

want to make the contents of these vials more important to the plot, consult the What's In The Box sidebar for ideas.

## REWARDS

The heroes gain the standard experience and wealth awards associated with these encounters. In addition, you might wish to award bonus experience if the characters came up with quick, inventive ways to rescue the people trapped in the van. After all, they didn't know that there were going to be complications, and it's a good idea to reward the players for innovative thinking.

The Eagle Research robbery is a big story in the upcoming news cycle, particularly because hazardous materials were involved. Depending on how much credit the heroes take for their actions, this publicity could result in celebrity status for one or more of them, an increase in the amount of work (or rate of pay) that they receive, or—if the situation ended badly—in public vilification.

### What's In The Box?

The exact nature of the virus that the information liberators stole is immaterial to this adventure. The point of *Crisis on Canyon Road* is for the heroes to intercede on behalf of apparently innocent people whom they have no reason to protect, and then find out that the crash victims are not so innocent after all. The virus is a McGuffin—an element of the story whose only purpose is to motivate the heroes to action. In all but the direst of circumstances, the actual effects of the virus should not come into play.

Since the details are unimportant, you can replace the virus with some other dangerous item or element if you wish. For example, instead of stealing a virus, the “liberation” team might be after a batch of uranium, a computer program, or a case of rare jewels. Whatever change you make, however, must also be reflected in the background information about Eagle Research, Ltd.

### Consequences of Inaction

The virus can serve as a consequence of the characters' inaction if they fail to offer aid to apparently ordinary people in trouble. If the heroes completely ignored the van, or refused to scale the cliff to assist the accident victims, the ledge eventually crumbles, sending the van, thieves, and vials of virus into the river. The waters of that river eventually feed into the city's reservoir. If you want to provide some negative reinforcement for the heroes, the virus can bloom in the water supply. Soon the city is in the grip of an epidemic, and the heroes are as likely to become victims as anyone else (unless they never drink tap water).

The details of the illness are left for you as GM to determine. The easiest solution is to give the illness an effect identical to that of a particular poison (see Table 2–5 in the *d20 MODERN Roleplaying Game*). But rather than a single Fortitude saving throw, a victim must attempt a save once every 12 hours until 10 saves have been successful.

## CONTINUING THE ADVENTURE

Once the encounter with the information liberators is over, so is *Crisis on Canyon Road*. However, you may wish to build future adventures from these events, particularly if the heroes allowed large quantities of the virus to reach the Deertail River. Future adventures may stem from the answers you as GM provide to the following questions.

**Why is Eagle Research working on such a deadly virus?** Is the company trying to make an antidote for a deadly toxin? Is it instead developing an agent that its client can use as a biological weapon? Do the managers at Eagle know the truth about the experiments they are performing, or has their employer duped them somehow? Are they working for the U.S. government, a private company, or a mysterious individual?

**Who hired the thieves?** Was the theft really a case of industrial espionage, or was it actually international terrorism? Might the U.S. government have hired the thieves through a series of agents to crack the veil of secrecy around Eagle Research's activities? Regardless of who hired the thieves, what does that person or organization want with such a deadly virus?

**Was the van's crash really an accident?** Was it just abominably bad luck? Or did the thieves' employer booby-trap the van so that the wheel would blow out? If so, why? Did the employer want the thieves to get caught, or was the situation an elaborate plan to get the virus released into the city's water supply?

### Credits

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