



## AAC Publications

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### **Fall on Rock, Inexperience, Weather**

Nevada, Red Rock, Pine Creek Canyon, Cat in the Hat

On April 5, a young woman (early 20s, I think) fell about 20 feet (though no one knows for sure because there were no witnesses) while being lowered by her husband off the first pitch of Cat in the Hat (6 pitches, 5.6). She sustained a head injury. She was conscious and lucid throughout her evacuation.

Two climbers not associated with the couple arrived at the scene right after the accident and administered first aid, and one of them went to the parking area to get a cell phone and call for help. Shortly after that, my friends and I rappelled off the route and into the scene, and first learned of the accident. We hiked out partway to help SAR and the EMTs get to the accident victim, who was still being tended to by her husband and another climber. At this point it was dark.

The SAR crew, the EMTs, and four of us bystanding climbers then carried the victim to a location where a helicopter could get to her. The EMTs got the call around 6:30 p.m., and she was airlifted around 9 or 9:30 p.m. (Source: Edited from a post on Mountainproject.com by "kBobby.")

The winds were extremely high that afternoon, with gusts to 60 mph in the area. (I estimate the gusts on Cat in the Hat were around 40 mph.) This is probably a contributing factor in their decision to lower instead of rappel during some of their descent. The winds abated around 9 p.m., which allowed the helicopter to come in.

My three friends and I had crossed paths with this couple about two hours earlier, at the top of the third pitch (where all the slings are around the block), while we were still going up and they were going down. Ominously, as she was rappelling from the top of the third pitch, the victim said to my friend, "I'm glad you are here so that if we get stuck you can rescue us." My friend told me this as we were rappelling down the first pitch, moments before we got to the bottom and found out that the girl was injured. My friend also told me this climb was the couple's first multi-pitch climb and their second trad climb.

Earlier, before we had caught up to them at the third-pitch belay, another party told us that one of the two had dropped a belay device and that they were both having an unhappy time.

One of the climbers who arrived on the scene first said that he thought she was being lowered, then stopped on a ledge while slack was still being paid out, then fell.

From another posting on Mountain Project by "Rockwood:" I am one of kBobby's friends and was climbing with him the day of the accident; I'm the one the injured climber talked to at the belay near the top when she asked about being rescued. I'm also the one almost hit by her falling ATC while sitting at the second belay. To clarify some of his details, she did get her ATC back. It landed near me at the tree on the top of the second pitch. We found it and my partner brought it up to her as we climbed up. At the slings (top of the third pitch) she was rappelling, not being lowered, so don't worry about the rings. It wasn't until the last pitch that the lowering happened, and at that point they were on bolt anchors. It was very windy and she was very cold and extremely sketched out and panicky. I was doing my best to calm her down with chitchat as my partner climbed, and that's when I discovered how inexperienced they were.

The ability to remain calm is critical in preventing accidents. The

foreshadowing of this event was unbelievable, but I was glad we were there to help direct the rescue workers and hope she's doing better. I'm considering a WFR class as well after this.

## Images

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