Stranded — Inexperience

Canada, Alberta, Jasper National Park, CR5A Peak

A stranded pair of climbers (red circle) on Hallway to Heaven as viewed from the rescue helicopter. The 5.9 crux roof is above the stranded climbers. Incapable of climbing to the top and too inexperienced to rappel on gear anchors, this pair elected for a long-line rescue the next morning after spending an uncomfortable night at the sixth-pitch belay. Photo: Parks Canada

On August 25, two climbers set out to climb Hallway to Heaven (7 pitches, 5.9) on CR5A Peak, also known as Rabbit Ears. Hallway to Heaven is a trad route that follows a corner system beside a large slab and has gear anchors. The first six pitches are up to 5.6; a 5.9 pitch passing a roof follows.

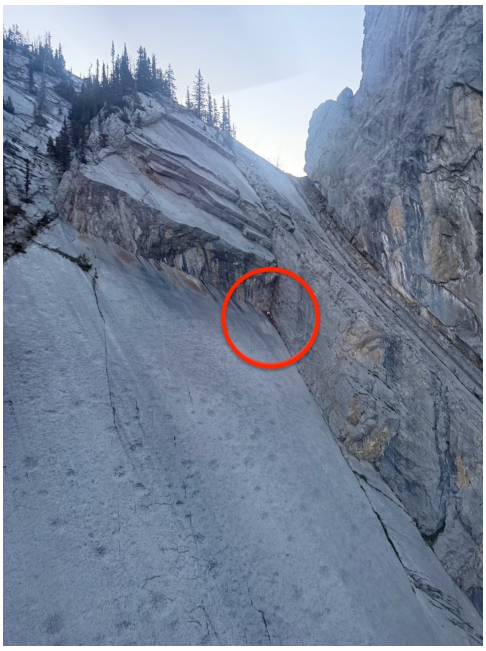
The climbers ran out of daylight below the 5.9 pitch, stopping there to call Parks Canada for assistance. They were given two options: spend the night and be extracted by helicopter the following morning, or attempt the 5.9 pitch above. Lacking the experience to continue, they bivouacked in place.

The following morning, Parks Canada conducted a long-line helicopter rescue and extracted both climbers.

ANALYSIS

This accident represents a growing trend of climbers getting stranded due to inexperience or lack of preparedness. The climbers had chosen a route above their abilities. Retreat was theoretically possible—rappelling the six pitches already completed—but without bolted anchors, this would have required leaving most of their gear and likely exceeded their technical capabilities. Spending the night was the safer choice. They had no bivouac gear but were fortunate the night was warm. (Sources: Parks Canada and the Editors.)

Images



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