

# THE FALL WITHOUT END

A “No Security” Horror Scenario



Written by CALEB STOKES

Art by EAN MOODY



A Hebanon Games Product



## The Fall Without End

### INTRODUCTION

The Fall Without End is a cosmic/survival horror scenario focused on a summit attempt on the north peak of Mount Mckinely. Set in 1931, four to six characters take on the roles of alpinists attempting to win a mountaineering prize offered by the U.S. Government. Midway through the expedition, things go horribly and inexplicably wrong. Thematically, the scenario simulates the unpredictability and despair of survival situations by burdening characters in the midst of an already dire situation with an unimaginable threat.

This adventure starts with an overall description of the setting and plot for the GM's use. Information the players can reveal through roleplaying can be found in the gameplay section.

### 1931: North Peak of Mount McKinley:

Mount McKinley—from base to peak, it is the tallest mountain on land, and 3rd highest point above sea level on the entire earth. At 20,320 feet tall, its twin peaks dominate the horizon for much of the Alaskan wilderness, prompting the natives to call it Denali, meaning “the tall one.”

In 1910, the Sourdough expedition, staffed exclusively with local alpinists, claimed the prize of First Ascent. They'd climbed the dreaded Wickersham's Wall, a sheer face of rocks and ice infamous for spewing forth avalanches without warning. They claimed to have staked a pole with their flag atop the North Summit.

An attempt to confirm the climb by looking down from the taller South Summit failed in 1912. This Parker-Browne expedition turned back mere yards away from the summit on account of an incoming storm. Remarks about Parker's cowardice were short-lived though; the very day the group arrived back in camp, an earthquake struck the area and shook tons of rock

and ice from the mountain in deadly waves. One year later, Stuck and Karstans conquered the South Peak from which Browne had been forced to retreat. They claimed to have seen the Sourdough's pole through their binoculars.

In the dozen summits of the South Peak after Stuck and Karstans, not one expedition saw the pole on the adjacent peak.

Nearly twenty years later, the Sourdough expedition is considered highly dubious amongst mountaineers. Their names have been stricken from the record books, and the 1928 Olympic Committee declared a successful climb of the North Peak grounds for medal consideration. The North Summit of the greatest mountain in America remains untamed, or at least it is convenient to think so...

The American government has seized on the opportunity. They need new "Lingburgh's" in these trying times, daring adventurers unafraid to tackle the greatest obstacles and capable of inspiring a demoralized nation. Quietly, a large sum of tax money has been funneled to the "McKinley or Bust" project. Local lodging has been reserved, a film crew has been hired, and the big newspapers stand ready to print photos of the new American heroes as soon as they descend.

The first to the top can expect fortune as well as fame. Rumors of a massive cash prize for First Ascent have been quietly circulating amongst the alpinist community for months, with a bonus offered for anyone mad enough to drag a weighty camera to the peak for a photo op. The prize is enough to last any family through the hard times, and for some desperate climbers, Wickersham's Wall might prove as much a test of financial survival as physical.

All is prepared as the climbing teams await the start of their expedition at the Denali Trading Post, enjoying a lavish send-off amongst the government handlers and journalists. The locals have never seen such decadence hauled so far into the wilderness, and their contempt for the spectacle is as palpable as their need of the government's funds.

The old frontiersmen scoff at the tourists, whispering prophecies of doom and damnation. Are they merely

trying to scare their resented American visitors, or is there some truth to the curse of Denali's North Peak? Perhaps something lurks up there, older than land's owners, older than the mountain itself...

## GM INFORMATION

### NPC List

**"Coot"** – owner of the Denali Trading Post, scornful of the climber's chances

**Yuri Clevchyanko** – old frontiersmen claiming to have been part of the Parker-Browne expedition

**Booker Hamlin** – director of the documentary film crew set to record the climber's homecoming

**Macey Sly** – put-upon newspaper reporter sent to document the attempt

**Ted Carpenter** – treasury department employee charged with monitoring the expedition and awarding the prize

**Kyle O'Shaughnessy** – local boy in charge of maintaining base camp

**The Hutchison Brothers** – three local brothers attempting to beat the players to the top

### The Monster: Vertiginous Horrors

"Vertiginous Horror" is as specific a name that can be devised for these creatures. They have no earthly corollaries and exist entirely outside our biosphere. They evolved on another planet, and their presence on our plane of existence is infrequent and little understood.

The bridge which links the human world and their own is inexplicable and intermittent (Location 10). Its opening is announced with all sorts of strange weather phenomenon—sudden fogs, violent earthquakes, blinding snow—and coincides with no known environmental cycle or star chart. The opening blinks into existence on the interior of Denali (among other places), hovering in the middle of the deep crevice scored into the side of Wickersham's Wall. The portal itself is a black pool atop a hollowed, truncated pyramid with obsidian sides whose origin is anyone's guess. The stone is so smooth and hard so

as to provide the creatures no purchase once they burst forth from the brackish water. The worm-like Horrors are left to scramble for a grip on the side of the crevice or crash into bloody heaps a kilometer below. Those that survive remain crawling atop the alien mountain, forced to find whatever sustenance they can in the arid heights until they starve or are called home by some unknown force.

The creatures themselves are roughly 9 feet in length and shaped like grubs as wide as tree trunks. They are armed on both sides with identical mouths that can distend outwards with sucking proboscis ringed with hundreds of teeth—much like a leech. The dual mouths are lined with three dexterous arms ending in bone-hard talons strong enough to anchor in stone. The things have no eyes, and the means by which they navigate the world is a mystery.

Both in their world and our own, Vertiginous Horrors exist exclusively at high elevation and on the steepest slope possible. They move exclusively by folding themselves end-over-end. One mouth will bite into the rock face, securing the creature's weight by clamping into the stone with its powerful jaws and talon-tipped appendages. Then, the creature will contract the other end of its meaty body either up or down, bite the rock face with its other jaw, and let go of the original anchor before repeating the process.

The creatures are lightning fast vertical climbers, rolling up sheer rock faces as if unconstrained by gravity. They are greatly slowed when moving horizontally, having to resort to an up/down zig-zag pattern due to limited horizontal flexibility. On less steep slopes or flat ground, Vertiginous Horrors are quite clumsy, but their yawning maws still make them dangerous.

On whatever world that harbors these nightmares, it appears there are only two directions worth going: up and down. Whatever they eat, they appear to swallow whole, dragging the prey into a meaty tube with row after row of clawing teeth. Cold and wind and scraping stone have no effect on their health. If they have gender, it is unclear what distinguishes it. If they breed, they must give birth through the same mouths they eat, defecate, and move with. In short, Vertiginous Horrors have the biological efficiency only

found in nightmares. They eat and crawl, eat and crawl, mindlessly. Perpetually.

## “Gotcha” Gaming

The horror in *The Fall Without End* depends on the idea that, despite the fact each character is knowingly entering a survival situation, they are completely unprepared for what terrors they are about to face. There are two ways to get players in the proper mindset for this type of play.

### **Option 1 : Lie**

When asked why the film *From Dusk til Dawn* shifted so suddenly from a noir thriller to a goofy monster movie, Quentin Tarantino famously quipped that the characters didn't expect the vampires to show up either. Braver GM's might try to adopt this philosophy. If not playing with a rules set blatantly known for horror, sneakier GM's might claim they want to try a mountain climbing scenario because watching *Touching the Void* or reading *Into Thin Air* inspired them. The bafflement of the players will inform their role-playing when giant, extra-dimensional creatures try to eat them. Of course, this tactic requires a lot of trust between the gaming group, and a lot of exploitation of that trust by the GM. If it is even remotely possible some players might get pissed to come back from the bathroom and suddenly find their characters in a different genre, do not lie about the horrific nature of the scenario.

### **Option 2: Focus on Character Motivations**

This is a sound idea for any gaming group, regardless of whether or not the GM decides to be truthful. A safer option for getting players invested in mundane competition before all hell breaks loose is to make sure their characters have a serious desire to win. Spend some time talking with each player before beginning. Why does your character want to be the first to the top? Do they need the money from the prize? Does it fulfill a lifelong dream of Olympic gold? Do they want to stick it to their former climbing partner on another team? If characters have an explicit motivation for winning the prize of First Ascent, the contrast with the cosmic horror portion of the scenario will be all the more dramatically interesting.

## Playing in Pairs:

Advanced mountaineering is almost always done in pairs. Groups of three or more are sometimes used, but that typically just means there are merely people to hold the rope beneath the lead climber. Until they were discontinued around WWII, Olympic medals in mountain climbing were often awarded in groups of two rather than to individuals, and the history of the sport's greats is one of successful partnerships.

As a result of this, no player can attempt *The Fall Without End* solo. A climber attempting to summit Mount McKinley alone would be considered suicidal by the governmental backers, and other climbers would likely view the madman as a dangerous liability placing everyone's lives in danger. If one of the players insists on soloing to the top, allow it only if that player knows that a single failed climb check means plummeting to certain death (and that's before anything truly horrific happens).

So players need to find a partner(s) before playing and decide how their characters came to climb together. The bond of trust between climbing partners is said to be deeper than that of family; at multiple points throughout any climb, the life of one is literally in the hands of the other. In terms of gameplay, this also leads to an interesting dynamic; each pair starts the game in perfect cooperation, but their goal is to beat all the other players to the top.

## Standard Climbing Procedure

Once players have partnered up, it would be a good idea to inform them of the basic structure of team climbing. Essentially, one is going to have to climb Lead and the other Belay, or they are going to have to take turns.

Lead climbers pave the way. They largely determine the route of ascent and are the first to encounter any new obstacles. It is their job to hammer in anchor points and cut holds into the ice. They have no rope to assist their ascent, but they are kept somewhat safe from falls by the rope attached to their belay partner and the anchor points below. Even with this limited insurance,

## Optional Rule: NPC Belay

In games that the GM plans to make especially deadly or in groups that do not cooperate well, NPC belay climbers are an option.

In this instance, each player would be essentially controlling two characters: the lead climber of the team, and the belay climber of the player to his or her right. The belay climber need not be given stats yet, but each should have a fleshed out backstory detailing why he is partnered with the other character and what their motivation for the climb is.

This way, each player gets to compete individually for the prize and boss his belay NPC around, but the player doesn't have to talk to himself when speaking to his partner because the NPC is controlled by the person next to him. The player also doesn't lose the chance for some interesting roleplaying with his partner as they attempt the climb. The GM gets a helpless NPC to use as cannon fodder for the monsters, and players have a spare to take over in case their first character goes plummeting into an abyss or down a monster's gullet.

The downside of this rule is that when combat comes around, certain players might try to exploit their second half into becoming a mind-controlled kamikaze. Belay's can also find themselves in the position to "cut the rope:" letting a climber in an unrecoverable fall to his doom in order to save the partner. Considering the competition between teams, is this a decision the person in charge of an NPC belay can be trusted to make in character? If the group is sophisticated enough to avoid this type of meta-gaming, the optional NPC belay rule can help create a more brutal, uncompromising horror game while generously providing players with an "extra life." If the temptation will prove too great, leave it out and have players climb in two's or three's.

any fall could be potentially disastrous. A “Lead Fall” means that the top climber will fall the distance to his last anchor point—plus whatever slack is left in the rope—before the line goes taut. If too much momentum is built up, the anchor points could give way, even up to the point where the Belay climber is pulled off the mountain as well. As a Lead, one missed handhold can mean the death of the whole team.

The Belay climber (or “belay slave,” as they are sometimes called), climbs beneath the Lead. Going is easier for a belay climber: they have a taut rope for support, pre-cut handholds, and a tested route upwards. However, Belay climbers are far from freeloaders. Their instructions can be vital for the survival of their partner, as they are sometimes afforded a much more strategic view of the rock face than the man above them. Belays are in charge of spooling up spent line so the pair doesn’t run out of rope midway through an ascent, and the easier nature of their climb means they

are typically given the responsibility of carrying supplies. This is made all the more difficult by the constant falling rock and ice caused by the Lead’s scrambling for footholds. Most importantly, the Belay’s duty is to operate as a counterweight preventing a falling Lead from plummeting into the void. The ability of a Belay to hold on for a few more seconds has saved many an expedition.

## GAMEPLAY INFORMATION

### Character Creation

Since all the PC’s in *The Fall Without End* are experienced alpinists, their character sheets will be very similar regardless of the system used. Every PC needs to be capable in all mountaineering skills if they’re to have any hope of surviving even the early stages of the

### Climber Terminology

**Adze:** a thin blade perpendicular to the handle on an ice axe that can be used for chopping footholds.

**Anchor:** An arrangement of one or (usually) more pieces of gear set up to support the weight of a belay or top rope.

**Belay:** to protect a roped climber from falling by passing the rope through, or around, any type of friction enhancing belay device. In the 30’s, the device was most often the belayer’s hips.

**“Belay off”:** called by a climber to confirm that a belay has been removed from the climbing rope. Essentially, “don’t fall, because the rope isn’t attached.”

**“Belay on”:** called by the climber to confirm belay has been (re)applied to climbing rope. Essentially, “rope is back on, but please don’t fall anyway.”

**Belay Slave:** someone continually placed into belay duty rather than climbing Lead.

**Bivouac:** camping overnight in the midst of an ascent, sometimes in nothing more than a hammock made of rope.

**Carabiner:** metal rings with screw-shut gates, used with anchors. Usually oval or roughly D shaped.

**Crampons:** metal spikes attached to boots for increased traction on snow and ice.

**Deck:** the bottom of the mountain

**First Ascent:** the term for the first successful, confirmed summit of a mountain.

**Free Climb:** climbing without rope or other protective assistance.

**Harness:** a canvas webbing device worn around the waist and thighs designed to allow a person to safely hang suspended in the air

**Haul bag:** a larger, unwieldy bag in which supplies and equipment are stored

**Hold:** any place to temporarily cling, grip, jam, press, or stand in the process of climbing.

**Ice Axe:** an ice climber’s primary tool. This hardened pick can be used to cut holds out of ice and rock or as a short walking stick. In desperate situations, it can sometimes arrest slides and falls down icy slopes.

**Lead Climbing:** a form of climbing in which the climber places anchors and attaches the belay rope as they climb.

**Lead Fall:** a fall while lead climbing, meaning the climber will fall at least the distance back to his last anchor, plus any slack and rope stretch.

**Pendulum:** Swinging on a taut rope to reach the next hold in a traverse.

scenario. However, the basic premise is that of a mountain climbing contest, so the race to the top won't be all that interesting if all the characters have the exact same stats and skills.

When making characters, GM's should give players a list of skills organized into the following three categories. The exact skills listed will vary depending on the system used. Alternately, the GM can abstract the various techniques of each set into a single skill of the same name. For the purposes of suggesting skill checks at specific locations, this scenario will use the abstraction strategy.

### **Instinct:**

Spotting the hold, predicting a change in the weather, planning an efficient route, packing enough supplies, hearing the creak of an impending avalanche—this skill set entails all aspects of situational awareness and preparedness that help a mountaineer get up and down alive.

### **Ascension:**

These skills determine how good the player is at doing the physical work of climbing. How fast are they? How far can they jump? How far can they stretch to reach that next hold? How strong are their limbs?

### **Endurance:**

No climber can survive ascending one of the largest peaks in the world without a hefty amount of Endurance. Skills in this category determine a character's resistance to cold, exhaustion, and despair as the climb progresses.

It is up to GM's to decide which skills will fit into each category or if abstraction is the better option. Furthermore, the GM has to decide at what level all the skills in that category will operate. Obviously, much of this is dependant upon the system used. It is suggested the all the skills within each group be set at one of three levels: Exceptional, Proficient, and Adequate. GM's might think of these levels as an 80%, 70%, and 60% chance to succeed on tests, respectively. Alter ratings as seen fit.

### **Example Character Creation:**

Frank and Doug want to role up "The Dynamic Ducoti Brothers", a pair of circus acrobats with mountaineering experience seeking to cash in on the government bounty being offered for summiting McKinley. The players come up with backstories and buy a few skills to flesh out each character's personality, but now it is time to purchase climbing skills.

Doug decides that his character, Giuseppe, is the younger and smaller of the two. He's a bit of a show off and decides he wants to climb Lead. To maximize his chances, Doug takes the Ascension category as his Exceptional skill set. This gives him roughly an 80% chance to succeed on any skill check the GM listed in that category. Doug also wants to make sure Giuseppe can stand whatever the mountain has to throw at him, so Endurance is taken at the Proficient level. Finally, his player figures Giuseppe is a bit too hot-headed for the Instincts skills, meaning it is left as the Adequate set. Chances to succeed in that category are better than the average non-climber, but not by much

Frank, wanting to compliment his climbing partner's abilities, makes his character the stable, older brother type. Iago Ducati is a much more cautious climber than his sibling, so he takes Instincts at Exceptional level in the hopes he can warn of any danger. As he will be climbing Belay and might need to hold onto the mountain for both men in an emergency, he takes Endurance as his Proficient set. Finally, Frank gives Iago Ascension skills at Adequate because he figures the character would rely on his younger brother's trailblazing to ease the way.

This "yahtzee'd" version of character creation will allow characters some personalization options while still ensuring a chance of survival (however slim that chance may be). Furthermore, the prioritization of skill sets will make the competitive portion of the game more interesting and allow for more dynamic team builds.

## Plot Hooks (Getting Character's Together)

Characters should start at the Denali Trading Post the night before heading up to establish base camp. This gives characters a chance to interact with each other in a casual setting, dream about the prize money, question government sponsors, and pose for a few pictures. Locals can also provide a bit of the mountain's history and current events.

After reaching base camp, it is generally assumed that players are going to split up in an attempt to gain the lead. This is fine. Once they discover what lurks near the summit, they'll be eager to get back together soon enough.

## LOCATIONS AND NPC'S

### GM Map versus Handout

The flowchart on page 20 is a map for GM use. This page provides a helpful reference as to the mountain's geographic features, the difficulty of traversing them, what threats might be found there, and other locations accessible from that position. Though players can be informed of this information through play once they arrive at a location, they should not be allowed to see the GM version of the map until after the scenario is complete.

The handout for players is located on page 19 and is meant to represent a hand-drawn map torn from an alpinist's journal. Players are encouraged to look at this handout whenever they please so as to plan the fastest route to the top. However, they should be aware that their information about the route up Wickersham's Wall is possibly inaccurate due to a lack of proper survey, untested navigational routes, local supposition confused as fact, decreased visibility above the cloud line, and a number of other factors (like the extra-dimensional portals and hellish nightmare creatures, for instance).

When setting up scenes, the GM should describe each portion of the mountain in such a way that highlights the differences between the reality of the situation and the map.

## 1. Denali Trading Post

The Denali Trading Post is shoulder to shoulder with people. Local loggers and trappers have come from miles around to see the spectacle of a Hollywood movie crew, journalists, and the brave explorers. The tiny log cabin is crammed to bursting with the send off party Ted Carpenter insisted on throwing at great expense. The booze and food is more for the press than the athletes, as Ted is keen to remind his climbers between the forced smiles of countless photo ops. The government has paid handsomely for this little adventure, and it will not be pleased unless a noble American hero that can restore consumer confidence walks off that mountain.

“Coot” couldn't be less pleased with the affair, despite the money he's making off the spectacle. He hates all these outsiders traipsing about his store, and any time one of the locals scoffs at the outsiders' chances, he can't help but snicker and righteously spit tobacco juice in agreement. Curmudgeon that he is, “Coot” will begrudgingly respect any character he deems sufficiently tough. He might be persuaded to sell some last minute crampons and provisions to such men. A really persuasive tough guy can coax the old man into revealing a secret that only the locals know: the Hutchison brothers, three local boys who have climbed on Denali their whole lives, are damned if they're going to let some government pets take away the honor of First Ascent from Alaskan men. They mean to beat the government's men to the top, and they have a one-day head start. It's already night; any hope of catching up will have to wait until daybreak.

**Yuri Clevchynko** would be at the trading post regardless of the proceedings taking place around him; it is, after all, the place where supply trucks drop off the booze. The leathery drunk is the closest thing Coot has to a friend and regular. Those curious enough to make small talk with the old Russian find that he claims to have climbed Denali many times in his youth, once with Russian army buddies and many more times after he went native. He even claims to have been a guide on the Parker-Browne expedition's failed attempt up the South Summit. Clevchynko warns anyone who will listen that Parker, fearing criticism, left Yuri off the expedition's records because he refused to lie about



what happened. The Russian claims that more than a storm contributed to the team's decision to turn back. The group said weather had been acting strangely for weeks, baffling all almanac predictions. They'd found strange droppings far above the death line from no animal anyone could identify, as well as bloodstains on the stone and carvings made by no human tool. A mist of "otherworldly" persistence obscured their view throughout the entire trip, and each night at camp the men swore they could hear a sound like crunching gravel in the dark. The men near hysterics, Parker turned only a few kilometers away from the summit. The man found himself vindicated by the freak earthquake that struck upon the expedition's return and immediately set about swearing his men to secrecy about the fear that really caused their return down the mountain.

If prompted, Yuri claims to know nothing about the Hutichison brothers and denies any attempt to scare the climbers away from their attempt. Clevchynko will not tolerate accusations of dishonesty; he's had his fill of that over the years, and quietly returns to his drink rather than argue with fools.

**Macey Sly** disinterestedly goes about the tiny party, gathering quotations and asking the minimum number of questions. Her annoyance at being dragged out to the wilderness to cover a silly publicity stunt is palpable. If any climbers point out her unprofessionalism, she'll be keen to defend herself; she does recognize the men are legitimately risking their lives due to her long-term interest (romantic?) in alpinists. She thinks the Sourdough expedition's claim for First Ascent is legitimate and that this whole thing is a ridiculous spectacle meant to distract the public from corruption on Wall Street and Capitol Hill. Climbers who are honest about their motivations for the climb, be it the prize money or the glory, can earn her respect, and perhaps even a date when they get back down the mountain.

### **Objective versus Subjective Danger**

Mountain climbing is an insanely dangerous sport. Mount McKinley alone has a documented kill count of over 100 climbers as of 2012. Alpinists are aware of this danger, even drawn to it, but they think of it in different terms.

Mountaineering is divided into objective and subjective danger. Objective dangers are threats presented by the mountain itself: avalanche, rock fall, temperature. Subjective dangers rest on the individual climber: fatigue, equipment failure, unpredictable weather. In short, objective dangers are considered when plotting a route, but the only defense against subjective danger is training and luck. Estimations of objective dangers for each area are listed on the player map, and the actual danger level of each is on the GM map.

In game terms, any failed climbing check should have negative, possibly even deadly, consequences. Failed checks in areas of heightened objective dangers will have more extreme consequences. For instance, missing a handhold on a gentle snow slope is less severe than missing one while trying to mount the overhang over a bottomless chasm.

Areas with higher levels of objective danger might also require more frequent skill checks or checks with a higher difficulty rating. The differences between extreme, high, medium, and low danger zones are up to the GM and largely dependent upon the dice mechanic used. Regardless of how difficult the climb is made, GM's should exercise discretion when doling out consequences. *The Fall Without End* is designed to be an a short scenario where death lurks around every ledge, but dashing a character's brains out on the rocks with two hours left to play might not make a very fun experience for that player. Failed checks could mean slowed ascent, lost equipment, increased exposure, or dramatic near misses. Save death for a climactic moment or a series of unfortunate rolls.

Conversely, if climbers risk a dangerous route and succeed, feel free to reward their bravery with speedier times or bonuses on future rolls. These characters are adrenaline junkies, after all.

**Booker Hamlin** pesters PC's throughout the entire event, lining up imaginary shots and snapping flash bulbs. He's convinced his choice for shooting the documentary footage is based on his artistic vision, not the fact that he comes cheap and is dumb enough to drag his equipment into the Alaskan wilderness. Any discussion inevitably leads to romanticizing the climber's struggle against the mountain, the motif of man against nature, the refusal of the American character to submit to blah blah blah...

The scene ends when characters have had their fill of the conversation and head to bed. The march towards basecamp starts in the morning.

## 2. Base Camp

Base Camp is to be set up the following morning. As it is merely a hike to a basin where the camp is set up, GM's should treat this scene solely as a roleplaying opportunity. Players can get to know each other on the trek, or they can use the opportunity to intimidate their competition.

**Kyle O'Shaughnessy** is the local teen hired to maintain the base camp in the absence of the climbers and the only NPC accompanying them. Perceptive characters might notice that O'Shaughnessy is feigning his loyalty to the expedition and actually quite resentful of the characters. The boy is a friend of the Hutchison brothers, and he's decided to do whatever he can to sabotage the expedition to ensure their success. Those aware of the Hutchison brothers and suspicious of O'Shaughnessy's demeanor can try to intimidate him into telling the truth.

If O'Shaughnessy is undetected, he'll try to do one of two things: sabotage equipment or dismantle camp. His first priority will be gaining access to the climbers' haul bags. The original plan is to set up base camp, relax for the remainder of the evening, and head out at first light. Once players sleep, O'Shaughnessy plans to remove non-essential equipment from as many backpacks as he can, stealing sleeping bags, extra rope, and food. His intent is not to kill, merely to force the more experienced climbers to turn back so that the Hutchison's cannot be overcome.

If the players already know about the Hutchisons already, O'Shaughnessy improvises in his panic to aide his friends' chances. He suggests the expedition let him set up camp by himself so that the mountaineers can immediately start their ascent. It will mean bivouacking (camping) on the side of the mountain midway through the climb once darkness falls, but it's the only chance to catch up to the locals. If players agree to this, Kyle will wait until they are out of sight before leaving with their stored equipment. Though just a mild inconvenience if the climb goes successfully, injured or exhausted climbers returning to find their tents gone might not survive a march all the way back to the Denali Trading Post.

If O'Shaughnessy is caught in either plan, he'll admit his deceit and retreat back to the trading post without much fight. Whether characters decide to forge ahead or stay the night, the mountaineering skill checks begin after characters depart from Base Camp.

## 3A."Knife's Ridge" (Low Objective)

Approach to Wickersham's Wall is from the Peters Glacier, but the valley surrounding the ice field can be traversed as well. The western edge of the glacier is known as "Knife's Ridge" and constitutes a massive shale cliff that steeply rises above the crevices of the glacier. Crossing the ridge requires walking across the narrow spine of the shale pile. The loose, jagged shale and narrow ridge prevent icing, so this is typically considered the safest, fastest path to the wall. However, it is rarely travelled; the massive overhanging rock face directly above this approach is considered impassible and requires a lot of extra vertical climbing to navigate around. "Knife's Ridge" is not without its dangers. Rogue winds can strike from the West and blow climbers from their narrow perch, and the loose shale covering the rock face makes falls damaging and difficult to arrest.

Climbers travelling along the Ridge will see a figure approaching from further ahead. Upon closer inspection, it appears to be a climber in extreme distress. The man is horribly frostbitten and blood-soaked from lacerations across his chest and face. Coat in tatters, he hunches and mumbles to himself, feeling his way forward with an ice axe. Climbers with good Instincts will recognize a man suffering from snow blindness.

The man doesn't respond to any greetings, merely blindly continuing his desperate stumble down the mountain. When he comes within a few feet of the climbers, they become visible as blurry shapes and the man enters a blind, feral panic. This is a combat: the hysterical climber is armed with an ice axe, and the narrow path prevents players from ganging up on him. However, he is severely injured and nearly blind, so even inexperienced fighters should have a chance to best him.

If players can grapple him to the ground without falling down the shale pile, the crazed man can be knocked unconscious. This, of course, complicates matters for the players; dragging the man back to base camp will eat an entire day's worth of time. Taken back to base camp, the man can be revived enough to rave madly about "worms eating the mountain" and ask, "Where's Josh? Did they get Josh?" Beyond that, the man's mind is irreparably broken.

If players can't knock him out, the climber will keep attacking until killed or the players flee. Successful attacks against the assailant will either gut him with an ice axe or send him on a fatal tumble down the shale embankment. Victory should be damaging to the attacking character's psyche; this outdoor adventure has turned into a brutal murder in a matter of seconds. Whether subdued or killed, the climber drops a nearly empty haul bag monogrammed with "P. Hutchison." It

### **Isolation**

As soon as players pick separate paths, they can no longer communicate with each other. Separate routes are too far away for any communication to be heard; even shouts are snatched away by the mountain winds. Climbing partners and groups along the same route can speak to each other, but only if no one is significantly ahead of the other. Even visual communication between routes is ineffective. If other climbing teams are even in sight, they remain no more than indistinct shapes on the horizon. Giving up the competition and regrouping for safety is a major dramatic choice later in the scenario, and the isolation of a separate route should be apparent to other players at that point in the adventure.

is streaked with frozen blood.

### **3B. Peter's Glacier**

The glacier is cross-hatched with deep crevasses in the ice that could break men's legs or necks. Getting across means winding around atop the ice slabs and avoiding unstable snow bridges. Failing to tell the difference between ice and a snow bridge can mean plummeting straight down as the packed powder gives way, possibly even dragging the flat-footed Belay in afterwards.

Good Instinct is necessary to tell when a snow bridge is safe. For heightened suspense, GM's might roll these checks in secret and tell players whether a bridge seems safe depending on the result. Recovering from a snow bridge fall requires an Ascension check from the falling climber and an Endurance check from the Belay. This recovery takes time and slows a team down. Especially reckless teams can try to shave time off their glacier trek by making an Ascension check to leap across a crevasse rather than finding a bridge. Failing this kind of check would be a very bad idea; a missed leap would mean not only a fall, but a hard slam into both crevice walls.

### **3C. Snow Slope**

The other side of Peters Glacier is dominated by a snow slope. While much easier going than the glacier itself and free from the falling danger of the shale embankment, this slope is where the Wickersham's Wall approach gains its infamy for avalanche danger.

Players foolhardy enough to try this approach must deal with an avalanche sweeping down from the peak of the slope and towards the glacier itself. As a snow avalanche and not one composed of ice and rock, there is little chance of the collapse killing anyone outright, but the event can still be potentially deadly. Instinct checks can recognize the tell-tale creak of snow about to give way and allow climbers a chance to prepare. Climbers that anchor themselves can weather the tide and make Endurance or Ascension check to dig themselves out. Failed checks mean the buried climbers take damage from suffocation and cold.

If climbers are caught unaware, they will be swept down the slope towards the glacier. They must make an Endurance check to arrest their slide with an ice axe. If successful, they stop and must make the checks to dig out listed above. If failed, the momentum of one climber drags the other down too, even if that climber already braced or stopped his personal slide. Both climbers must then make Endurance checks for one last chance to arrest their momentum. Anyone failing this check reaches the bottom of the snow slope and slides into a crevasse, taking serious falling damage. In addition, they must make the same checks to dig out of the snow listed above lest more damage be accrued. Finally, any climbers in a crevasse must rescue themselves by picking holds into the ice and climbing out, severely delaying the ascent.

## 4A. Skirting the Overhang

Due to its elevation, the Knife's Ridge meets Wickersham's Wall mid-way up, saving alpinists a few hundred feet of vertical climb. However, directly above is a huge overhang at least 10 meters long. It would require a Lead climber to travel that distance hand-over-hand across ice-glazed rock before pulling themselves up to the vertical face. Then, the Belay would have to perform the same impressive feat, or the Lead would have to plant an anchor of sufficient strength to allow the belay to swing out into the void and climb the rope. The route is rumored to be impassible, and the hundreds of yards worth of horizontal shimmying required to skirt the overhang negates any benefits of taking the Knife's Ridge.

With a successful Instinct check, climbers under the overhang recognize that if a climber could mount it, the time saved would be immense. Climbing teams must decide if gaining such a lead is worth the risk. Either way, the lead must make at least one Ascension check to get them to their destination.

## 4B. Mantling the Wall

Wickersham's Wall presents a stark end to both Peters Glacier and its parallel snow slope. The climb doesn't initially seem too daunting, but reports say that the avalanche danger and truly difficult climbing doesn't start until nearer the cloud line.

A mountaineer with good Instinct recognizes two things before mantling onto the wall. Firstly, there seems to be a section of oddly colored rocks near the base of the cliff to the East. Secondly, the beginnings of a fissure are visible high up the rock face, just below the cloud line. This fissure isn't listed in any surveys of the mountain, and there is no telling how far up it runs past the mist.

Investigating the oddly covered rocks reveals them to be painted in a splatter of frozen blood. Nearby is the shockingly mutilated corpse of a fellow climber. Those that can keep their head after seeing such a sight can make an Instinct check to discover that the state of the body can't be blamed on a fall alone. One entire arm is missing, and the head is connected by no more than a string of tissue. It looks like the poor bastard was passed through a meat grinder before being dropped off the mountain. Anyone with a stomach strong enough to search through the pockets finds a few spare crampons and some mittens monogrammed with "C. Hutchison."

## 5A. The Overhang

Mounting the overhang requires a series of three increasingly difficult tests for a lead climber. Firstly, the character must make an Ascension check to gain purchase on the icy ceiling. Next, the climber must make an Endurance test to keep their grip, then another Ascension check. Finally, the Lead must succeed in Instinct, Ascension, and Endurance to find a safe hold across the lip of the overhang and muscle over it. The Belay climber can make the Instinct check at the last minute if the lead fails; the lower perspective provides a better view of what lies beyond the Lead's vision. If any of these checks fail, a Lead fall occurs. At that point, both climbers better pray the Belay set good anchors (Instinct) and can hold on (Endurance). Even if disaster is averted, the prevention of a deadly fall only means that the lead climber gets to smack against the rock face...hard.

If a Lead manages those three checks, they are considered safely perched on a ledge above the overhang. If they don't want the Belay climber to have to go through the same process, they can make an Instinct check to secure an anchor strong enough to support the partner's full weight on the rope.

While waiting for the Belay to catch up, the Lead hears a strange crunching sound from above and feels the tinkle of gravel. Looking up, the first Vertiginous Horror comes thrashing out of the cloud line, barrelling down at the Lead climber like some gigantic hookworm. The creature's goal is simple: consume the climber in its free jaw.

If the climber manages to stay sane at the sight of the thing, the GM can present them with options. The climber can try and fight the thing off with an ice axe, risking consumption for every round the Horror survives. If a hit is scored with the axe, the climber can leap from the wall, dragging the wiggling thing into the void before letting go of the handle. At this point, the anchors set by the Belay would be the only thing keeping the humans from a certain death as well.

Finally, the Lead could attempt to climb back down the overhang, essentially reversing the checks made to get up there in the first place (this matter could be further complicated by a very confused Belay climber trying to head up at the same time). Though flexible, the Vertiginous Horror has trouble bending itself into the complete circle required to get a grip on the overhang's "ceiling." In its zealous pursuit of prey, it may lose its grip and fall to the jagged rocks below.

Particularly evil GM's could say that as its jaw is ripped from the mountain side, the Vertiginous Horror slices the anchor rope amidst its thrashing.

Surviving climbers might choose to head back at this point, but doing so would require difficult climbing checks to get off the cliff face, or extremely difficult checks to get under the overhang. For those that skipped setting up base camp, night is falling as well. Even if they could get off the mountain, it would just mean sacrificing the other climbers to whatever that "thing" was without so much as a warning.

From this stage, a mountaineer can either ascend to Parker's Rebuff, an ice slope within view of the South Summit that has never been climbed, or move sideways towards a massive fissure. An Instinct role will reveal that weather is going to come in from the South, buffeting Parker's Rebuff with a storm. Crossing the fissure, while dangerous, would provide shelter from the winds to come.

### **Bivouacking**

If players decided to rush through setting up base camp and get straight to the climbing, it should be getting too dark to continue around the time they reach locations 5A and 5B. Night climbing is nearly impossible, making it necessary to bivouac. This involves securing oneself to the side of the mountain via a harness and trying to get some sleep while perched on whatever narrow ledge is available.

Getting through the night requires Endurance checks against exhaustion and cold. Each failed check costs a climber health. If Kyle O'Shaughnessy stole supplies, three Endurance checks are required for each climber. If players have had nothing stolen or lost but both fail an Instinct check, two Endurance checks are required. If someone succeeds an Instinct test, the climbers are well-prepared and only make one Endurance check for the night.

Bivouacking is made all the more uncomfortable by the odd sound of crunching gravel echoing up and down the mountainside. Climbers unfortunate enough to have already encountered the Vertiginous Horrors will recognize this as the sound of freakish jaws biting into stone. The creatures are patrolling up and down the rock face, blindly searching for prey in the dark. At any moment, one could roll itself onto the camp and devour a climber, or bite through a rope and send a sleeping mountaineer tumbling to his death. Even those lucky enough to avoid such a grisly fate risk going mad with fear. It's gonna be a long night.

As it is a means to build tension, night should fall at a dramatically convenient time for the GM. After a group at 5A has faced a Vertiginous Horror, but before the teams at 5B run into a horde of them would be an opportune time, for instance.

## 5B. Wickersham's Wall

Wickersham's Wall is dangerous due to the length of its sheer vertical ascent and the risk of avalanche. Ascension checks are dangerous and frequent. Belay climbers don't have to make these checks due to the stabilizing rope, but they have the added danger of rock fall sparked by the Lead's movements. Every so often, large stones come pouring down from the weak footholds of the Lead. The Belay climber must either make an Ascension check to dodge out of the way or take damage.

Midway up the wall, an odd sound like the crunch of gravel can be heard. Tiny pebbles start drizzling down from somewhere above in the mist. Rock fall might even threaten the Lead climber, dislodged by some unknown source.

Instincts can lead climbers to an odd gleam in the rock. Nearby, strange circular impressions can be found on the cliff face, concentric rings made from hundreds of triangular cuts. The gleam is from an ice axe still embedded in the stone, a hand still clinging to it, dangling an arm. The etching in the handle reads "C. Hutchison."

As climbers approach the mists of the cloud line, the first Vertiginous Horror slinks into view. Followed by a second. Third...

If climbers can suppress their revulsion long enough to maintain a level-head, they can make an Instincts roll. Success recognizes the descending doom. The things are huge and headed towards them almost as fast as men fall. Since they have the high ground, there is no way to out-climb or outfight the things. Traversing sideways is the only hope.

The way to the right leads to a sharp corner and the void. Left towards the fissure is the only option, but as long as the climbers make a simple Ascension check they can outpace the creatures. The things don't seem well-adapted to moving sideways, only able to do so by stagger-stepping with their mouths in a movement reminiscent of parallel parking.

Once reaching the fissure, team's can finally get a look at the massive scar inexplicably running up

the mountains side. Black, sharp obsidian stone marks the inside of the crack as if it had been burned there. Crawling inside it would cut ropes and hands to pieces, and it's a good 25 yards to the other side. Players are faced with a choice: face certain death in the jaws of the monsters, attempt a risky maneuver called a Pendulum Traverse, or cut their ropes and try free-climbing up and away from the Horrors.

Free-climbing is insanely dangerous—one missed hold means death—but it greatly speeds up the laborious process of anchor and belay climbing. It is the only chance for characters to stay on Wickersham's Wall and outpace the monsters, hopefully finding respite on the ice slope of Sourdough's Deceit

Players choosing to use the fissure as a stop-gap for the beasts should look to location 6 for a description of that process.

## 6. Pendulum Traverse

A Pendulum Traverse is a difficult maneuver at the best of times, not to mention when being pursued by carnivorous monsters. Whether players are approaching from the Overhang or Wickersham's Wall, the process is the same.

A Lead climbs high up on the fissure and plants the securest anchor possible (Instinct check). He then puts his full weight on the rope and prays the point holds. The Belay then puts their full weight on the rope, using the Lead as a counter-weight. The lower climber begins running back and forth across the rock face, building momentum. The Belay then leaps into the void, hoping to reach the other side.

Swinging across the fissure is an Ascension check. Failing the check means the jumper slams against the rock face on the return, taking damage. The climber above will also have to make an Endurance check to hold on. Once the leap is successful, the Belay then climbs up the other side of the fissure to the same altitude as the Lead and inserts an anchor of their own. The Lead then removes the anchor, respools the rope, climbs down to alleviate strain on the line, and makes the swing.

A second jumper in a rush (say...because he is about to be eaten?) can cut the rope to the original anchor, falling until the remaining line snaps taut and sends him hurtling to the other side. If the secured partner can hold on (Endurance) and the anchor holds (Instinct) AND the crazy man can grab on after smacking face first into a cliff (Ascension), it just might work. If this risky maneuver fails or the monsters grab hold of one of the climbers, the dead weight of the suspended/eaten climber will inevitably break the anchor and pull both men to their doom. In this instance, both men will certainly die unless the top climber makes the hard choice and cuts the rope. If players take this option, the GM should allow enough time for the characters to make an appropriately cool final exchange. Needless to say, a climber pragmatic enough to kill his best friend to survive is not going to be mentally healthy anytime soon thereafter.

### 7A. Parker's Rebuff

Parker's Rebuff is actually comparatively safe from both climbing hazards and otherworldly nightmares. The slope is gradual and snowy, making it difficult for the Vertiginous Horrors to maneuver. Still, moving around the area is no less dangerous. There are dozens of the creatures laboriously trying to reach their prey by wrenching themselves upright, wavering like a hollow, tentacled tower of meat, then crashing forward and repeating the process. It is a horrific sight, as if the mountain sprouted a fleshy forest with a need to eat.

So long as characters can keep moving, the real danger is the incoming storm front. The abrasive, whiteout gales—combined with the high altitude and panicked fear—creates a murderous environment. At this point, it takes successful Endurance checks just to incur minor health damage. Failed checks cause serious damage such as fingers, noses, and eyelashes lost to frostbite. Anyone losing all their health points due to these checks falls from exhaustion, unable to continue. Unless their partner is willing to take risk more damage in an attempt to drag them to shelter, they'll have to be left to the Vertiginous Horrors.

The only respite from the storm is a strange blue glow in the distance (location 8). The summit lies above that point, offering little solace in lieu of the monstrosities around it.

### 7B. Sourdough's Deceit

Sourdough's Deceit is far steeper than its parallel path, Parker's Rebuff. As such, the Horrors have a much easier going than climbers. Mountaineers unfortunate enough to be in this position will find themselves trapped on both sides with monsters ascending Wickersham's Wall below and rolling down the ice slope above. The only glimmer of hope is a strange blue glow near the summit (Location 8) that appears free of the creatures, but there a lot of teeth between here and there.

An Instinct check reveals a slim hope of survival. The ice slope faces the sun, causing a cycle of melting and refreezing that makes the Wickersham route so dangerous in the first place. A climber mad enough to rush at the descending Vertiginous Horrors and go chopping with his ice axe might trigger a hard slab avalanche.

Hard slab avalanches occur when entire sheets of jagged ice break free of the mountainside and begin sliding. The friction of the moving sheets and the sudden absence of decades old ice causes even more sheets to fall until a cascade of gigantic ice sheets rumbles downwards. In many ways, this event is a climber's worst nightmare. The sheets are so massive and move so quickly they can easily cut a man in half...but the same could be said of a horrific monstrosity.

Players should be given an opportunity to survive such a desperate maneuver. How this is done is up to the GM's discretion. Perhaps it is as simple as coming up with the idea in the first place, or maybe an Ascension check is required to maneuver out of the way in time. Games focusing on the true desperation of a survival scenario might use some mechanic approximating blind luck to see whether or not house-sized sheets of ice pulverize the characters.

If the tactic succeeds, all the Vertiginous Horrors on Sourdough's Deceit go sliding off the peak of Wickersham's Wall. Though some Horrors still climbing the sheer face below likely survived the icy collapse, they are too delayed to catch up. Shielded by the

mountain from the incoming storm, climbers are left to hobble towards the strange blue glow above at whatever pace they can manage.

## 8. Strange Crevice

Scorched and surrounded by melted stone, the cave cut into the side of the summit appears to have been recently blasted there by lightening or some sort of inexplicable volcanic activity. The stone is still slightly warm to the touch despite the icy maelstrom, and it is unclear whether the blue glow from the cave is reflecting off of the glassy, blackened stones or coming from the rocks themselves.

In the narrow confines of the cavern, GM's can throw a single Vertiginous Horror at the climbers. The relatively flat ground and the narrow confines should give characters a chance to slay one of the things with ice axes. If the climbers are already barely alive, feel free to leave the cave hauntingly vacant.

At the end of the hallway of melted stone, a narrow chimney descends into the heart of the mountain. The climb down is easy (especially if a rope is sacrificed to tie off up top), and a glimmer of light can be seen emanating from the bottom of the shaft.

## 9. Summit

Those with the determination (or insanity) to persevere despite being attacked by monstrosities from another dimension can reach the summit. There, they will find a blazing snowstorm obscuring any scenic vista that may have rewarded them. The last Hutchison brother is there, frozen in a pool of blood from his own raggedly-sliced wrists and staring blankly to the West. In his lap rests a wooden pole with the tatters of a flag frozen to it, a final insult from the North Summit actually conquered twenty years previously. The Sourdough expedition told the truth; the whole venture was for nothing.

Buffeted by the storm, climbers face a choice: they can descend their original route and try to seek refuge from the creatures in the oddly glowing cave, or they can risk the winter winds by descending the opposite face. Doing the latter should require a

number of Endurance checks with health lost to frostbite, hunger, and exhaustion. If the players succeed, they make it to a place suitable for bivouac and can descend the rest of the way without incident the following morning.

## 10. Portal Chamber

The strange crevasse empties down into a bizarre, inexplicable chamber. The same jagged stone surrounds an obsidian obelisk in the shape of a truncated pyramid, topped with a lapping pool of what appears to be motor oil. The thing appears to be resting atop some sort of pillar, but climbing downwards reveals that it is hovering in midair. The fourth wall of the chamber is open to the air; this is the top of the fissure that makes up the Pendulum Traverse (Location 6).

The three walls surrounding the pyramid teem with Vertiginous Horrors. The creatures fight for position on the walls, stabbing each other with their claws, ripping junks from rivals with their distended jaws. The wet thumping of the falling worms punctuates the constant gravel-crunch as the things cling to the walls. Some find escape by shuffling out of the fissure and to Denali's exterior. Others try to crawl blindly across the ceiling where the characters hang. These unlucky creatures break off stalactites with their weight and go crashing into the slick obsidian sides of the pyramid before sliding into the abyss.

Upon entering, the origin of the creatures becomes clear. One of the giant worm things comes crashing out of the black pool, arching into the air like a leaping whale before smacking into the glassy obsidian sides. If it's lucky, the thing will grab a clear spot on the fissure's sides and arrest itself. If it's not, it goes falling into the black to be dashed on the rocks far below.

There is no way to climb on the fissure's walls without getting eaten by the Vertiginous Horrors. The only chance to descend this route is the strange obelisk itself. By tying on another rope to one secured atop the chimney, climbers can descend and perch atop the lip of the black pool. Any rope used this way will have to be sacrificed. To determine if the climbers have enough rope descend from the floating obelisk after giving up so much line, have players roll an Instinct check to



determine how well they packed. Characters can still proceed even if they don't have the line; they just have to save the rope by leaping into inky waters of the pool (Location 11).

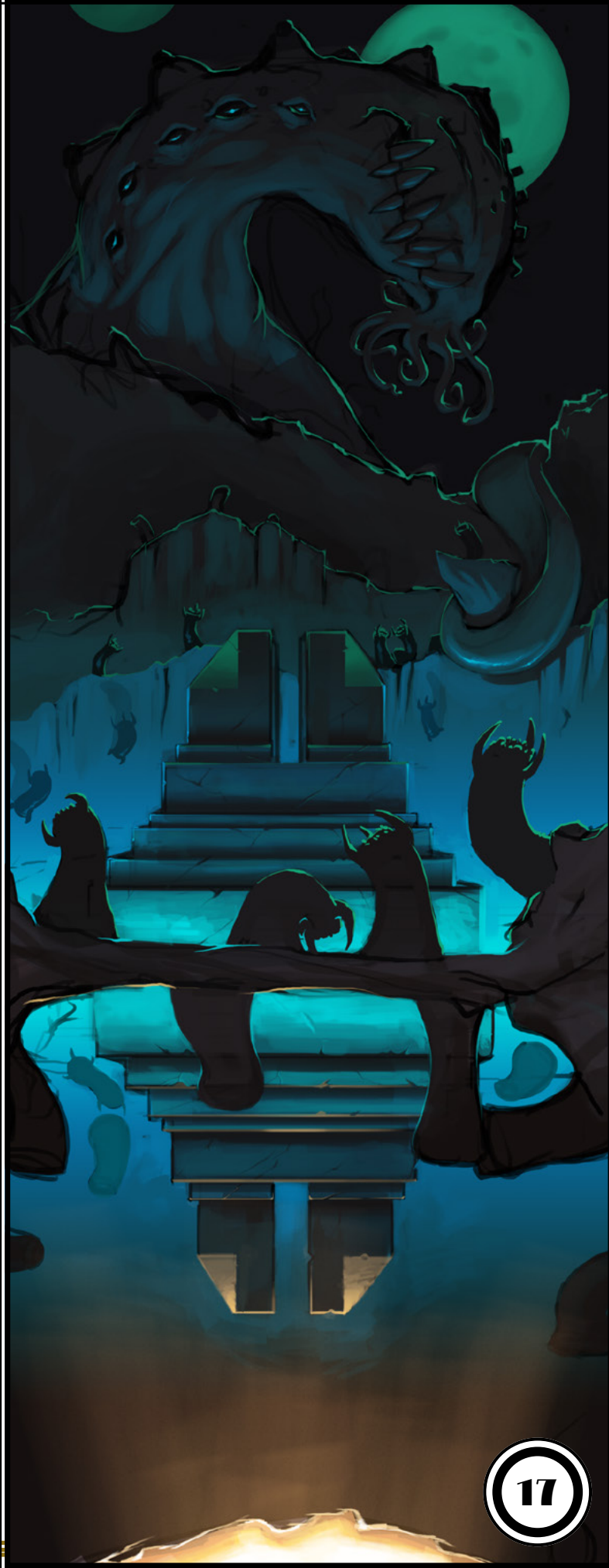
Once balanced on the pool's edge, climbers will find that there is nowhere to tie off. In order to descend without touching the ravenous walls, one character will have to sacrifice himself by staying behind as a counter-weight. Alternately, they could swim to the bottom of the pool and see if there is anything to secure the rope to under the water...(Location 11).

Once a rope is secured, characters can safely descend the shaft (though the Vertiginous Horrors snapping at them from all sides is certainly disconcerting). Near the bottom, the fissure narrows to the point where the things cannot maneuver. To reach fresh air, climbers need only scale the mounds of still twitching Horrors killed in the fall from the portal. Getting outside means a safe descent from the mountain starting from Wickersham's Wall (location 5B), though at this point death would likely be a mercy.

### 11. ??????

Entering the pool instantly causes characters to sink, drifting through a disorienting, bottomless void. Just as their breath is about to fail, they burst through a new surface rather than settling to the floor. After reorienting, a hellish new world on the other side insinuates itself.

Another truncated pyramid of black obsidian hovers beneath them, holding the inky pool that spans two realities. Above, a canyon of unimaginable heights rises. Out-of-place stars and too many moons shine through a narrow slit as the immense canyon walls assault the sky.



The entire gorge is completely obscured by a blanket of Vertiginous Horrors fastened to the canyon walls in crowded, fleshy braids. They writhe on every side, biting at each other for purchase. One creature falls off just so another can vomit out wriggling spawn in its place. In both directions, the cliffs are lined with the monsters, so much so that there is a constant rain of gigantic, screaming worms plummeting into the abyss. Those that land in the pool find themselves on Denali. Those that don't, fall...seemingly forever.

Witnessing the origin of the Horrors is enough to flay most men's minds. Those strong enough to hold themselves together for a few moments longer notice crude carvings of the creatures at the four corners of the pool. A rope can be tied to these and strung across the inexplicable nexus between worlds, thus saving an otherwise stranded Belay climber.

Whether or not anyone wants to be saved after seeing the hell that waits on the bottom of the pool is another question entirely.

## ENDGAME

After characters reach the summit or make their escape via the Portal Chamber, GM's should handwave much of the descent. Though climbing down is often one of the more dangerous aspects of mountaineering, it will reek of anti-climax after fighting otherworldly demons atop a wintery peak. Furthermore, even for the most sadistic of gamers, killing the players for a single failed climb check after they've conquered a mountain and murdered hell beasts with their bare hands is just a bullshit move. If dice must be rolled, make the checks fast and quickly transition from scene to scene.

That said, *The Fall Without End* stays pure to its roots in cosmic horror: survivors' lives should be very nearly shattered in the aftermath. There is no hope of ever discovering exactly what the hell just happened. Incur health penalties for failed checks on the descent until the characters are barely alive, especially if O'Shaughnessy made off with the supplies at Base Camp (Location 2).

Surviving characters should stumble back to the Denali Trading Post broken men, covered in blood and sweat, faces horribly mutilated by frostbite, raving insane stories about impossible worms that no one will ever see again. Those characters that somehow manage the whole ordeal unscathed are just up for criminal charges; who would ever believe the Hutchison's were eaten by monsters?

A GM that manages to get a lone survivor back to camp—barely alive and completely crazy—will be truly aligned with the scenario's themes of survival and cosmic horror. Ideally, *The Fall Without End* finishes up like many other horror scenarios begin: a crazy, scarred old man rants and raves exposition disguised as madness in a bar, warning a new set of doomed protagonists about the monsters....

