Caravan in the Crosshairs

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“Caravan in the Crosshairs” is an encounter designed for a party of four level 5 characters. It presents a dynamic challenge combining aerial threats, environmental dangers, and tactical combat.



> As the snow blankets the rugged mountain pass, your caravan halts abruptly. The sharp cry of griffons pierces the cold air. Bandits, astride majestic yet fierce creatures, swoop down from the grey, cloud-choked sky. Their leaders shout commands, orchestrating the chaos with practiced precision, as you notice the ground beneath your feet, treacherous with hidden snares of ice and snow.

DM’s information: The characters face bandits mounted on griffons, presenting a two-fold challenge from land and air. To maintain the element of surprise, bandit captains employ hit-and-run tactics, retreating into the blizzard only to return moments later from a different angle. The environment is as much an adversary as the bandits; a successful DC 15 Perception check is required to spot the pitfalls before stepping on them. The tension escalates as the distant rumble of an avalanche grows louder, threatening to sweep friend and foe alike off the mountain unless they can end the conflict swiftly or find cover.

Tips for the DM:

- Use the griffons’ aerial advantage to apply pressure, picking up characters or dropping them into pitfalls.
- Bandit captains might attempt to steal supplies or kidnap a valuable NPC from the caravan.
- The threat of the avalanche should be omnipresent, prompting players to strategize quickly.

Further Ideas:

- Should the bandits be bested, a surviving member could offer information about a hidden stronghold in exchange for mercy.
- The avalanche can serve as a natural consequence of prolonged combat, or as a dramatic escape for the party or the bandits.

Tactics:

- Griffons may attempt to scatter the party, creating confusion and isolating members.
- Bandit captains target spellcasters first, aiming to disrupt the party’s magical support.

Treasure: Upon defeating the bandits, players may recover:

- Stolen caravan goods worth 100 gold pieces.
- A finely crafted griffon saddle, which could fetch a high price or be kept for future use.
- A map to the bandits’ mountain hideout, potentially leading to further adventure.

Experience Points:

- Defeating the griffon-riding bandits: 75 XP each.
- Navigating the environmental hazards without mishap: 100 XP.
- Preventing the avalanche or saving the caravan from it: 200 XP.

Total potential XP for the encounter: 700 XP, plus bonuses for creative thinking

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