

*Mt. Assiniboine, Cheesmond-Dick second ascent solo, and various ascents.* In July I traveled for the third time to Canada. In spite of bad conditions on the alpine faces I picked off a couple of good routes. After installing a bivy cache at Eiffel Lake I succeeded in climbing the Greenwood-Jones (V 5.8 A1, ca. 1400m, 1969) on the north face of Mt. Temple, then, after a bivouac at the cache, the Supercouloir (IV 5.8, Lowe-Jones, ca. 1200m, 1973) on Mt. Deltaform (the final pitches of which are especially brittle). Two and a half days later, when I was feeling more confident with this type of rock again, I headed to the glacier at the base of the east face of Assiniboine (the longest “20km” hike I ever did). This impressive mixed face was not in good shape either. After resting at the base I started climbing the Cheesmond-Dick (V 5.9 A2, ca. 1200m, 1982) at 2 a.m. I gained height pretty fast, but around 8:30 a.m. I got stuck just below the start of the upper, steeper sections because of intense rockfall. I searched for shelter and waited for dropping temperatures. At 4 p.m. (!) the rockfall abated and I kept going as fast as I could. In some sections, especially the steeper waterfall pitches, the snow and ice were almost gone. Therefore I was forced to climb very tricky, scary, loose, and wet mixed terrain with sketchy pro. A ramp system and a traverse to the left leads to a steep rock face which is usually the crux, but, compared to the lower sections, the rock was not too bad. Using free, aid, and dry-tool techniques I reached the easier exit slopes. A final, vertical, ice-and-soft-snow pitch through the cornice at the top made me shit my pants. The face took me 13 hours to climb (with the stop, 21 hours). Another longtime dream was fulfilled.

After some rest days and a 12-day visit to the remote Waddington Range, where I managed to solo three routes (the Flavelle-Lane route [980m, TD+ 55° 5.8] on Waddington; a possible new ca 650m, 5.9+ route left of Perseverance, on the south face of Combatant; and the Southwest Face [1,450m, TD+ 5.8] on Tiedemann), I headed farther north to the main goal of the trip: the 2,000-meter unclimbed northwest face of Devil’s Thumb, the ultimate challenge for a fast solo push. From Petersburg I flew in, highly excited to look at the face, but what a mess: there was no snow and ice at all, only very broken and chossy-looking rock (especially in the lower part). I realized that there is no way to climb this vertical quarry. I left for Canada, where I sat in my car near the river ready to start another attempt on the north face of Mt. Alberta (which I had attempted in 1994, failing below the upper rock band, which scared me too much at the time)—but I hesitated. The last weeks had hurt my knees and back painfully. The stress of being alone in a lot of scary situations had blown my mind, and I decided to not go: I was not motivated or calm enough any more. I started the car, anxious to get back to life, to my friends, to share my beloved red wine...and realizing that once again, I had been lucky to survive.

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