

from the spires, and immediately scoped a new line.

Taking advantage of 75° weather, our team succeeded on a seven-pitch line during the first three days. *The Lair of the White Worm* (V 5.11 A2+) ascends an obvious, continuous crack system on the east face of the 1,200-foot Vampire, 150 feet to the right of the 1995 route, *The Infusion*. The climbing involved everything from face to thin nailing to offwidth and chimney, with one bivy on a good ledge at the top of the fifth pitch. *The Lair of the White Worm* will go all free at around 5.12c; however, it took five days of perfect weather to completely dry some crucial sections.

After regrouping for one day and still in the midst of unbelievably stable weather, we began work on another great-looking line conveniently on the same spire. *Sanguin Solution* (V 5.11 A2+) added 500 feet of new climbing to *The Infusion*, and the three of us again summited after three days. We finished just as the weather deteriorated into an exciting electrical storm.

Both the Vampire Spire and its towering neighbor, the Fortress, still have potential for new lines, especially hard nailing. Located three miles south is the Phoenix, an interesting, steep, 2,500-foot formation with only one existing route and potential for several hard nailing routes. Golden Wing Buttress, a steep, clean-looking 800-foot wall, stands two miles to the east of the Phoenix and is also relatively untapped.

BRAD JACKSON, *unaffiliated*

BUGABOOS

North Howser Tower, Armageddon. “That shifty, nibbling sonova...!” The sun wakes us instead of the watch we had set for our alpine start. A nearby pika must have had a midnight snack of my salty watch wristband. A full-moon approach brought us here to Applebee Campground in the heart of the Bugaboos, the Hounds Tooth erupting from the glacier, purple shadows dancing.

The morning opens clear, August 25. Snowpatch Spire lights up with alpenglow, its golden snow-cup precariously perched. We decide the pika was right and continue our leisurely morning. Coffee jump starts and we make our way across the glaciers, over crevasses, through notches and up and down drainages. The toe of the mammoth tower finally comes into view in early afternoon: the west face of the North Howser Tower. We climb 1,000 feet of granite to a fine bivy perch. Then night moves in, windless. An endless horizon of purple peaks poke into the pink, gliding clouds. Mike and I wake with staring smiles. The headwall looms above. Our path continues up a soaring right-facing dihedral with a few roofs splitting it, the first dihedral to the right of the *All Along the Watchtower* corner. The yet-unascended terrain bounces back thoughts of impossibility. The idea of climbing it is hellishly evocative, the other options creating only a pale when compared to the *Armageddon* (our name for the route). We figured we packed just enough in our one backpack to keep us alive through the worst, through an *Armageddon* event.

We look up. Finger locks—it’s gotta be, all the way, until that roof anyhow. And, oh yeah, that shellfish, scalloppini-looking pitch. Oh, and, can you see... Ahhh! Let’s go, whose lead?

It’s going. It’s going. Fingies, flares, arm bars, your lead, my lead.... Arghh! A pecker and

The Southeast face of Vampire Spire, showing 1. The Undead (Childress-Howard, 1999). 2. Sanguin Solution (Darkis-Goodman-Jackson, 1999). 3. The Infusion (Benge-Epperson-Hollenbaugh, 1994). 4. Lair of the White Worm (Darkis-Goodman-Jackson, 1999). BRAD JACKSON

a blade; damn, we have to aid climb ten feet of the thousands that we've freed. No problem though. Our goal is to go up, so we do.

The sun's angle lowers with the route's. Mike's final block of pitches leads us to a devilish horn of rock protruding from the wall. It's dark. The moon is silenced by the advancing army of clouds. As the wind picks up, the bivy sacks and sardines come out, no sleeping bags of course (just enough to survive Armageddon, remember). Lashed to the horn, we sit inside our sacs.

"Sacremen!" we yell, trying to communicate over the wind's howl. French-Canadian blasphemy comes in handy when trying to laugh through a sleepless night. Armageddon has come.

Morning arrives all too slowly. Hail is now surfing the currents of wind. The bivy sacks are hard to leave, but sitting on our numb butts doesn't entice either. We go! Snow falls; fingers numb. We continue up dihedrals, around corners and over some ice. A bit of gendarme navigation and some ridge-work finally takes us to the summit. It clears, and we get the views. Good God! *Armageddon* (VI 5.11+ A2) has ended. The feeling that comes to mind is flight. Great! Now we have to get off this thing.

JONATHAN COPP, *unaffiliated*

Snowpatch Spire, South Face, First Free Ascent. With true and conscious minds, Micah Jessup and I entered into the realm of the mighty Bugaboos, bent on exploring new pathways in the vertical world. After brewing in the rain for several days, attending Kain Hut yoga classes and developing bad symptoms of cabin and wet-tent fever, blue finally chased away the white. Several masterpiece routes were climbed following standard early- to mid-afternoon starts, but then ambition reared its dominating head.

"We must challenge ourselves. We must explore. We must go where no one has gone before. We must try the complete South Face of Snowpatch Spire!" Assuming white rock is of the best quality (not so true in the Bugs), and after being blessed by a mountain goat on the approach, Micah drew the first pitch. We could not see an obvious line past the first pitch on the lower half of the face, but... there appeared to be potential.

Micah struggled for a full 55 meters on the first pitch, ignoring the rope drag, runout and little bit of moss. The second pitch had me searching three different options before I cut out right and up an open corner. New England Boy almost needed a puff on his pipe to figure out the third pitch; dropping down and underclinging the blocky roof was not apparent until he was committed. Three more *largos*, only the last of which was obvious, and we plopped onto the mid-way ledge.

Finally, after a full day of route finding up runout and quite featureless rock, we arrived at the start of the Upper South Face, the Tom Gibson and Rob Rohn extravaganza, six pitches directly above where we started. We continued up the upper part of the route the following day. We were surprised at how stout and sustained the Rohn-Gibson is—definitely a masterpiece of the era.

No pins nor bolts were placed, though we certainly wished we had them at the time, and they may be a good idea for any future ascensionists. Grading? On the lower half, Australian 24 with a capital R. Bump up the Rohn-Gibson part to French 7a+ and add an extra pitch to the topo in the guide book.

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