

and shelter on a mossy terrace, a steady drip of water for liquid, and a view north to Robson National Park. A down day after six days on the move was welcome.

Crack-o-nine and I was sipping my second cup of java, revving up for the second buttress. Three leads and swap, that was our tactic. The second guy would clean and carry a load, while the leader hauled. My leads were fun, moderate 5.7 to 5.9. We scrambled over another terrace to the third buttress, where Mark tied into the sharp end. His leads were even finer: three steep 5.9 pitches up sparkling quartzite cracks and corners. The climb weaved through some large roofs, like a classic Gunks route. We settled into another five-star bivvy, inhaled a bowl or two of wall food and watched the sun set.

Again we awoke to perfect weather. No wind. No clouds. No cold. We were shooting for the summit and left the bivvy gear. We carried slings, hardware, and light boots. We also carried crampons and an ice tool, since a snowfield of undermined nature separated the fourth and fifth buttresses. Getting to it proved to be simply seven rhythmic pitches of moderate climbing interspersed with rocky ledges. Three more ropelengths of easy mixed put us on the sunny ridge below the final buttress. This was obviously going to be the crux. The steepest cracks and corners yet, for 500'. Mark led the next three pitches—5.10b, 5.10c, and 5.10d. The 23rd and last pitch was as it should be—the hardest. I belayed nervously, watching the sun approach the horizon, but by 6 p.m. we were standing on the summit with a view that I will never forget.

Postern is somewhat like an overgrown desert spire—no easy way off. Retreat would not be straightforward, as snagging a rope was a real threat. We had placed a cairn at one point to help us find our way back. After a dozen rappels and several rope snags, we happily crawled back into our tent at 1 a.m. At the end of the following day, our tenth, we dropped wearily into ABC after only one close call. A rope pull on the 16th rap dislodged a helmet-size bomb, badly scraping Mark's left shoulder. He sucked it up and continued down.

We'd missed our rendezvous with the horse packers, so two days and 30 miles later we arrived back at the trailhead in a blowing drizzle, barely able to walk. But the elation of finishing our quest numbed the pain somewhat, until we learned what had happened six days earlier, on September 11. Then we went completely numb.

JOHN CATTO

*\*Previously unreported: In August 1994 Mark Hesse and Brad Shilling established a new route (VI 5.10 A2) on Mt. Geikie's 1,500m north face. Hesse writes: "Ascends prominent buttress directly below the summit as viewed from Tonquin Valley and Moat Lake. The route is well left of the Lowe-Hannibal route and left still from the Robbins-Hudson route. The route is primarily 5.8-5.9 until the rock steepens on the upper part of the wall, where the difficult climbing begins (crux was wide cracks that were wet). The descent is not trivial! It's a great route." The descent: "From the summit we walked west a few hundred yards, then descended a major gully (rappels) on the south side of the peak (first rap slings visible from below the summit ridge, but hard to see). From the gully we traversed west to a saddle, then dropped back into Tonquin Valley." – Editor.*

*Mt. Kitchener, Rights of Passage.* Somehow we had appeased the Mountain gods, for they granted us Rights of Passage. No doubt a reward for being patient while still staying keen. Alpine conditions were finally setting up, and the forecast was promising. There was a magic line I had been waiting to try. I thought I had seen it all. Delicate icicle-spangled pitches so thin, so thin. Wobbling, bonging, narrow pillars, strenuous ice roofs. Not! On the far right side of Mt.

Kitchener's north face lies a beautiful gully system that leads to an aquamarine pocket glacier, notched into the constriction of a classic gully. It presents an obvious objective from the road, yet is only another of those devious alpine trickeries. Barry Blanchard and Albi Sole had tried it years ago, and others as well. I can see them now, enjoying a good day out, covering ground fast, climbing ever up in that fantastic couloir, moderate ice steps and pleasant mixed ground. Like driving your sports car up a pleasant winding mountain road. You turn into that blind corner, the car hugging the curve smartly, RPM's screaming as you down shift, and—SHIT!—there is a cement wall in the middle of the road.

Tronc, in French, means "tree trunk," generally oak. In France Philippe Pellet is known as "Tronc." A humble, gentle, smiling father of three, he is also a rip-roaring, raging machine. He got to Canada, onsighted a 5.13, and we hit the road. We returned from our road trip, and it was time to "get amongst."

We settled into our bivouac for the night, our tent sagging as the poles had snapped in the high winds. The glacier protested its hangover by disgorging seracs toward the valley.

When it comes to ice, living in Canmore has advantages. You can climb frozen waterfalls seven or eight months a year. You naturally tend to play the "ticking game," and I had set out to tackle all the hardest ice routes. Of the range's six ice climbs rated WI7 or WI7+, there were only two left for me to do. On Riptide, Isaac had generously let me lead every pitch, yet once we were at the top, and Grandmaster Lacelle's direct finish was at hand (The Continuing Saga), we'd had enough. As for M-16 on Howse, well, you need perfect conditions, an excellent crew, and the brass balls of Mr. House. Still, after my own scary alpine ice ventures, all that upside-down dangling, after the silliest frozen canyon top-rope problems, I thought that ice would never challenge me beyond what I knew. Until I faced "The Marble"!

The surreal constriction glacier is layered and marbled with gray streaks of rock dust. Peeling from its base are steep, stepped roofs, then a glassy, continuously steep curvature. The only features are gently polished ripples. We affectionately called it "The Marble." We understood why this classic was yet undone. Tronc prescribed a technique I had learned on the Real Big Drip (for one screw): one manicures the ice up to a screw and downclimbs to a stance. After resting one does this again for another screw. It creates good placements and a sequence, banks endurance, and brings courage. Tronc manicured only for the first screw, but somehow got another two in and levitated to a stance. I preferred manicuring for two screws, and, my ass hanging out in space, fear evaporated in the moment's intensity and I almost forgot how gripped I was. Tools popping off were a given.

We climbed a narrow chimney between the glacier and the rock wall. There was a low-angle ice rink at the top, a perfect venue for a Slovenian hockey game. We finished in a daze, smiling and silent, as one feels after weathering a severe storm. Making the free rappel off, we were stunned by how distant the ropes were from the base. We both knew that this was by far the most difficult ice we had ever climbed.

WI8: An ice climb that is both physically and mentally taxing. A long, continually sustained ice formation that due to its consistent overhang requires great amounts of strength, endurance, and technical ability. Protection is scarce, as the energy required to place it takes great effort, due to its angle and its dense and/or fracturing and/or thin and/or aerated nature.

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