

the biggest football team north of the border had their way with me. Tom lowered me, barely making it to the belay. After a quick check, and in shock, I tried two other possible ways, no apples. The last time I tried to top out: more serac screams and shifting iciness. Fuck it, the route ends here, half a rope of unclimbable, multifaceted, very symmetrical, matrix-like wedges and shapes stops any man or woman from standing on top. We rapped the route and got back to Jasper by 10:30 that night.

DAVID MARRA, *Canada*

Mt. Temple north face, winter ascents of Greenwood-Locke and Robinson-Orvig a.k.a. Sphinx Face. "It is impossible to say how first the idea entered my brain; but, once conceived, it haunted me day and night." – Edgar Allan Poe, *The Tell-Tale Heart*.

I must have already been thinking of a winter attempt on the Greenwood-Locke on the north face of Temple when, after climbing the route in the summer of 1999, I drew up a topo complete with potential bivi spots. I knew the history of winter attempts on the route: storms, retreats, stubborn returns. The mountains we climb are only partly inanimate rock and ice; they are also made of the fact and legend of climbers' struggles. My own first winter attempt (if it could be called that) came in 2001. Eric Dumerac and I made the mistake of camping below the route, so we were already cold and uncomfortable come morning. Muttering about the face being too snowy and out of condition, we skied back to the parking lot. Attempt number two, in 2003, bogged down in the parking lot, when Ben Firth and I noted that 30cm of snow had fallen overnight.

This past winter we took the thing seriously indeed. We spent several days on Yamnuska climbing steep 5.8 corners with big boots, gloves, and tools, learning what works. Ben and I were veterans of the young discipline of M-climbing, its dead-points, figure-fours, and heel hooks. We liked to believe that this seemingly contrived activity was relevant beyond the Gulag and the Cineplex. The Greenwood-Locke in winter, a snowed-up alpine rock climb, would give us a chance to walk the talk.

The alarm went off at 3 a.m. We wolfed down breakfast driving from Canmore to Lake Louise, and soon were skiing through starry darkness. By the time we broke out of the trees below the face it was daylight. Stashing our skis, we headed up. Snow conditions were mostly good, though in a few places we wallowed up disconcertingly steep slopes. In early afternoon we bumped up against the steep rock of the upper face. We banged in a belay, geared up, and, after a swig of water, started up. The initial groove had a vein of ice, but that soon ran out. After that it was hooking small limestone edges, then front-pointing up them, cleaning snow from cracks for cams or blasting through it with pins. The leader climbed with a light pack, while the second jumared with a heavier one. Free-climbing mattered to us, and jugging represented a definite compromise, but there was no denying it was faster.

By the end of the afternoon we had climbed five ropelengths. Rather than continue and frig around in the dark, we fixed a rope and rappelled to a ledge one pitch lower. By chopping into the crest of a snow rib, we fashioned a platform that would take most of our bivi tent. It is amazing the difference that being zipped up inside even an imperfectly pitched tent makes. Once we had brewed up, sleep came easily. The morning was well advanced by the time we had jugged our fixed line and sorted ourselves out for the next lead. Chopping through the cornice topping a groove to a small, windy stance, we congratulated ourselves for deciding to stop early

the night before. Pitch followed pitch, none desperate but all challenging: a knife-edge of snow traversed a cheval, a steep snow-choked groove, a clean headwall with front-points biting into tiny dimples. We were moving fast, wasting no time, and enjoying ourselves.

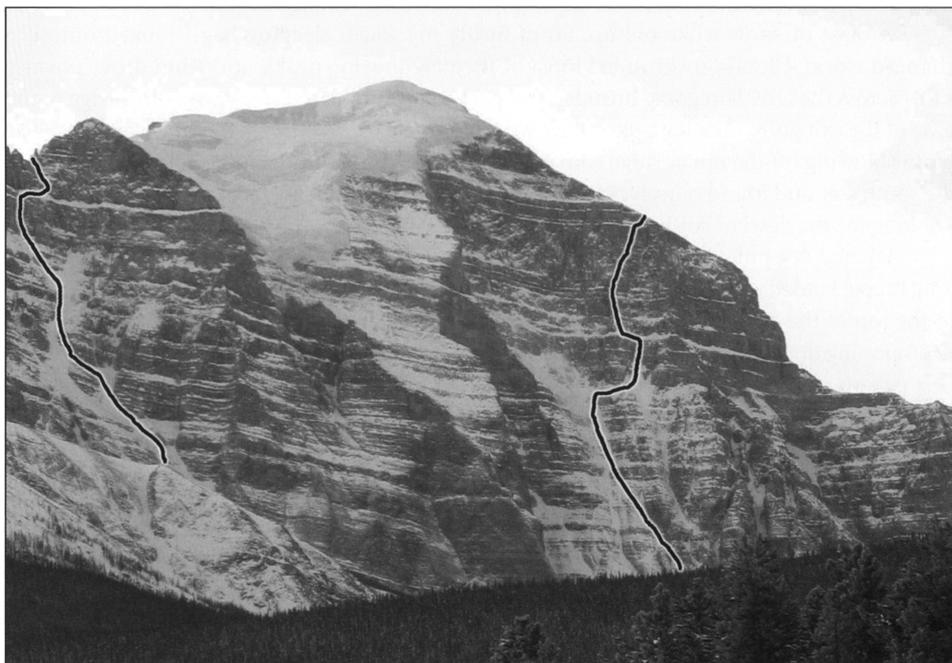
Dry-tooling over a bulge at the top of the last hard pitch, we were ecstatic. The few moderate traversing pitches that remained were a mere formality, and soon we were on top, if that is what a scree slope a few hundred meters below the actual summit could be called. The Ten Peaks and the Goodsirs stuck out of a sea of valley cloud. We lingered in the yellow rays of the setting sun, but then it was time to go. Eschewing the summit, we traversed the windswept west slopes and ran down the tourist route. Reaching Sentinel Pass ahead of Ben, I watched stars appear in the cloudless sky. The next morning we retrieved our skis and by early afternoon were back at the car.

During the drive back we were already making plans to attempt the obscure Robinson-Orvig, a.k.a. the Sphinx Face, of Temple. A few days before the appointed date, however, Ben emailed saying that he was unable to go. Weather and snow conditions were good, and I tried to think of who else might be interested. The guidebook, with its talk of "atrocious rock" was not going to make it easy to find someone. Then I thought of Valeri Babanov, who had just moved to Calgary. We had met the previous weekend at the Canmore Ice Festival, but I had long known of him by reputation. I picked up the phone. "North face of Temple ... probably no more than one night out...." Never having even seen the face, Valeri flipped through the guidebook. Yes, it looked nice; yes, he was interested.

I picked him up at 4 a.m. During the drive we sorted out translations of such terms as "secure" and "on belay" and by 10 a.m. were stashing our skis. It was surprisingly cold; within a few minutes of stopping I was wearing everything I had, but still shivering. There was nothing for it but to start climbing. A short quartzite band yielded quickly, and soon we were slogging up the snowfields that make up the bulk of the route. Hour after hour went by, the steep buttress of the Greenwood-Jones on our right flowed down past us, yet the crumbling yellow bastions guarding the top of the Sphinx Face did not seem to be getting closer.

It was late afternoon by the time we were anchored at the base of the crux chimney. Valeri, unfazed by his first climb in the Rockies, racked up for the lead. As he fought up the chimney, a week of late nights preparing lectures and grading papers caught up with me, and I struggled to stay awake. I woke up following the pitch; rock and protection were better than anticipated, but the steep climbing demanded attention. From the belay I looked up at the exit, blocked by overhanging chockstones. It was late, and the narrow confines of the chimney were not a comfortable place to spend the night. I grabbed the rack, stepped over Valeri, and, crampons scratching on the smooth limestone, squirmed upwards. A few meters up I hooked what looked to be blocks frozen in place. But as I weighted them they yielded; slamming onto my other tool, I watched helplessly as they crashed down the chimney.

Valeri was doubled over in pain, but after a minute or two he straightened up and indicated I could continue. A few meters higher I sent down another block. Miraculously, again we narrowly avoided disaster. Dry-tooling over the chockstones proved easier than anticipated, and soon I was cruising up the low-angle but loose gully above. By the time I found a solid belay in the shattered tile it was almost dark. Valeri came up on Tiblocs, manhandling the pack I had left halfway up the chimney. Scratching a small platform out of frozen scree, we settled down to Ichiban and tea. The night was relatively warm, and from our small perch we could look down on the lights of Lake Louise twinkling below.



Top: Mt. Temple, showing the Sphinx Face on the left and the Greenwood-Locke on the right. *Ben Firth*

Bottom: During the second day of a winter ascent of the Greenwood-Locke, Ben Firth jumars on the final crux headwall. The leader climbed with a light pack and the second jugged with a heavy one.

A blast of snow woke me up. From inside my warm sleeping bag I looked out on a changed world. Clouds enshrouded most of the neighboring peaks, and wind drove powder snow across the face. Foregoing breakfast, we packed up and kicked steps across the ledge to the base of the exit gully. One long pitch later we were sitting astride the crest of the east ridge. The plume blowing off the upper ridge convinced us to give the summit a miss. We rappelled down the south side and found ourselves in a different world: no wind, no visibility, bottomless snow. Looking for the descent couloir would be dangerous, which left but one option.

We had not pulled the ropes, so we yarded up them as we wallowed back to the ridge. A long rappel landed us on the traverse ledge where we had spent the night. We retraced our steps to the top of the crux chimney and set anchors, keeping a wary eye out for dislodged rocks. Cramponing down the slopes below amid streams of spindrift, we kept the rope on in case the first person set off a slab. But luck was with us, and we reached the bottom without incident. We laughed when we got to our skis: pummeled by the windblast of a serac avalanche, they stuck out of the snow at odd angles. Cutting across the fresh debris, we headed toward the valley. Though Temple reared up cold and white, collapsed snow bridges over the creek told of coming spring.

RAPHAEL SLAWINKSI, *Canada, AAC*

Mt. Stephen, Great Western. Great Western lies on the north face of Mt. Stephen (3,199m) in Yoho National Park, by the town of Field. The line follows a series of mixed gullies, ice runnels, and hanging ice pillars. The ice pillars do not always form but are essential to a quality experience. The route starts, basically, at the road, with a half-hour approach. While the majority of terrain is quite moderate, there are several distinct cruxes and over 1,900m of relief.

Start by climbing Extra Lite (245m, WI4). Above, Great Western follows lower-angle terrain up and left, aiming for a deep gash that presents several pitches of high-quality mixed climbing, including one short pitch (crux, M7 offwidth) past a massive chockstone. Above this gash the terrain eases off and opens up.

Continue to a cliffband that houses the first pillar (60m, WI5R). Above, several moderate mixed pitches are followed to the second pillar (50m, WI5). This pillar leads to several high-quality moderate mixed pitches until the terrain opens up and kicks back. Up to this point it may be possible to escape to the right and follow easy, albeit avalanche-prone, slopes to the west ridge. Follow open snow gullies up and left to gain the North Ridge. Climb an endless amount of terrain, combining sections of the ridge with more exposed snow/mixed gullies west of the ridge. Retreat at this point would be very involved. The final pitch climbs a short gully to the east of the ridge. The first ascensionists bivvied in a snow cave one pitch below the summit. Descent is down the South Ridge for 100m and then down a steep—and avalanche-prone—gully to the west. Once the angle eases, pick your way through the alpine terrain heading southwest, avoiding exposure to potentially dangerous slopes. Once below treeline, follow the drainage to Field. The “Fossil Bed” trail may be gained eventually on the ridge north of the drainage. Descent takes three to five hours, depending on conditions. Take a full rack including pitons and 8 ice screws. The first ascent, by Scott Semple and me on April 8 and 9 took 32.5 hours car-to-car, including a seven-hour bivy near the summit.

ROB OWENS, *Canada*