



## AAC Publications

---

### **Sunlight Creek, Battered by the Devil**

Wyoming, Clarks Fork

In June, Kevin Volkening and I established a new route in the Sunlight Creek tributary to the Clarks Fork, a relatively remote climbing area just outside of Yellowstone in Wyoming. After months of Kevin telling me how awesome and full of potential Clarks Fork was, and sending me countless beta photos when we were supposed to be working, I finally agreed to check it out. We took a long weekend from work and busted out the eight-hour drive from Salt Lake.

Day one was spent scouting the area's massive potential in the rain. After identifying a promising-looking line from the north side of the canyon, we crossed to the south side and bushwhacked to the top of the buttress we had identified, in hopes that we would find a way to the bottom without having to rap in from the top. As luck would have it, we found an improbable descent down the buttress' side that dropped us right at the base of our line (which lies approximately a mile-and-a-half east of Highway 296). The psych level was high on the 'shwack back to the car through pouring rain.

Fortuitously, the weather cleared overnight, and after a nice morning coffee we were once again bushwhacking down to the bottom, full new-route kit in tow. After an initial scramble to the top of a boulder, we started the actual climbing. The wandering, not-well-protected first pitch deposited us at the base of what we had hoped—from looking through binoculars—would be splitter fingers. The crack ended up being a little thinner than anticipated, and after using basically our entire rack of brassies, Kevin reached a good stance and called for our hand-drill. Soon, I was juggling ropes and racking up for the next pitch: funky aiding in a corner to a good crack. I used up the last of our daylight drilling an anchor. We fixed our ropes, rapped, and bushwhacked out in the dark, making it back to camp around midnight, tired but psyched for the next day.

Morning came quickly, and after a now-familiar bushwhack and a little aerobic rope-juggling, we were back at the top of pitch three. Kevin set off on pitch four, with clean aid up to a ledge and a massive block above; he placed a bolt here for protection and continued past the block, finishing on a huge ledge system. I headed left on the ledge and then up into a relatively clean, easy corner-crack system that took us to the top, where we enjoyed a few victory beers, did one last bushwhack, and then hightailed it back to Salt Lake for work in the morning.

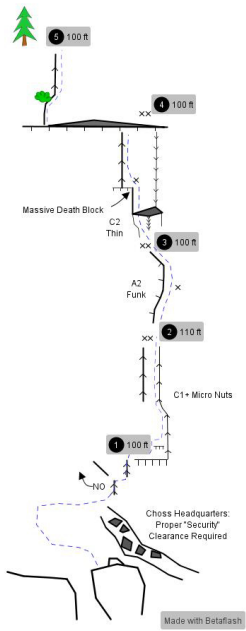
We named the route Battered by the Devil (5 pitches, 5.8 A2), which is a play on the Southern phrase "the devil's beating his wife," which means that it's raining yet blue-skied and sunny—this describes a good majority of the weather during our climb. With some cleaning and fixed gear, much of the route would likely go free. Our plans to go back for a free attempt were tragically derailed when Kevin passed away in a climbing accident in Clarks Fork over Labor Day weekend.

There are no other routes on this buttress (we asked the Bozeman crew who've put up most of the stuff in Clarks Fork), and the only other evidence of climbing we saw in this canyon was an anchor one pitch up on a completely different buttress.

# Images



The approach to the new route Battered by the Devil.



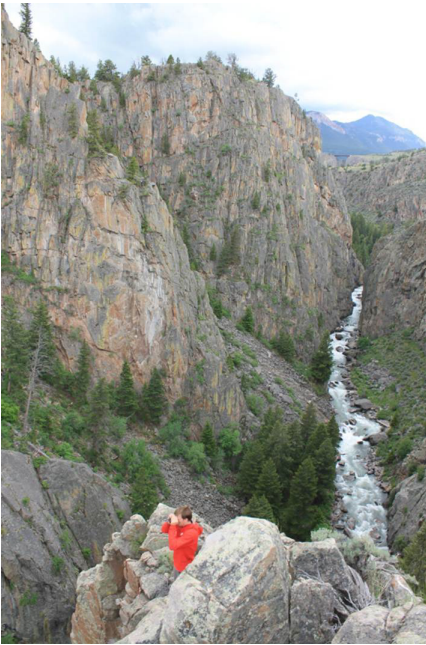
Topo of Battered by the Devil.



Photo topo of Battered by the Devil.



Neighboring walls viewed from the approach to the route Battered by the Devil, above Sunlight Creek, Wyoming. The walls shown are 600–800' tall.



Scouting the walls of the Clarks Fork area.



Kevin Volkening on lead.



Looking up the route.

## Article Details

Author	Ian Dorko
Publication	AAJ
Volume	56
Issue	88
Page	129
Copyright Date	2014
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions