



## AAC Publications

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### Reinhold Pussycat

Canada, British Columbia, Purcell Mountains, Bugaboos

**The clock doesn't lie. But sometimes it seems to bend the truth. In the mountains, time seems fluid, its viscosity changing unpredictably. In a storm, tentbound, the sludge of time barely oozes forward. Yet when racing darkness on a climb, time rushes like snowmelt down a warm glacier—hours tick by like minutes. And so it was in the Bugaboos of British Columbia last August with Bruce Miller.**

It was our fourth trip to the Bugs together since 2005, and we shared one clear goal: to free climb Reinhold Pussycat, a 1,700' route we had established in 2006 on the west face of the Minaret (AAJ 2007). During the first ascent we freed all but one 130' pitch right in the middle, where we resorted to banging pins and pulling on gear. Later that trip we climbed back up and tried to free that section, but time and weather got the best of us. We failed again in 2013 under cold, soggy conditions.

This year we flew in to East Creek Basin with three weeks of food and fuel, hoping time was on our side. Through repeat visits to these mountains we've learned approaches, descents, and weather patterns. Every trip becomes a little easier, the chance for success a little higher. Yet when the helicopter left us on a snowfield surrounded by duffel bags, I couldn't help but feel a visceral loneliness. Three weeks suddenly felt like a long time.

The crux of Reinhold Pussycat lurks 1,000' feet up the route. The sun illuminates this panel of granite for about five hours, starting at 2 p.m., which meant Bruce and I would climb for several hours up cold and sometimes wet or icy cracks before we could even begin to make progress. Over two weeks, as time flip-flopped between sludge and snowmelt, Bruce and I climbed to the crux five times to decipher a free variation and rehearse its moves. We eventually linked a dead-end crack into the seam we had originally nailed by utilizing a horizontal section of very thin face climbing. This variation, the Murder of the Impossible, yields two pitches of 5.12c.

August 26 dawned calm, clear, and warmer than it had since our arrival, 16 days earlier. The forecast called for several days of cold and snow ahead, so our time was running out. It would be our last chance to free the Pussycat this year. I should have felt confident and relaxed on our sixth lap up the same chunk of rock. Instead, I felt more nervous. I think Bruce felt the same. We knew the moves well—I'd mentally rehearsed the two cruxes more than I'd actually practiced them—yet we hadn't led either pitch without falling.

For the first time this trip the sunny rock at the crux felt warm. Perspiration softened our fingertips, making the smallest holds feel slick. I somehow calmed my nerves before the traverse and executed the moves precisely. Bruce did the same, but only after greasing off the half-pad edges and restarting the pitch several times. After so much extra climbing his successful effort was nothing short of heroic. The second crux, a vertical seam with finicky footholds, went down first try for both of us. Meanwhile, the sun was setting and time hit warp speed.

We raced up the Minaret by headlamp, gained the east ridge of South Howser Tower, and then followed it to the summit. We bumbled around searching for the new, bolted rappels, and then settled for the old raps down the north face. Before we touched the glacier there was light again in the east. Back at our camp in the East Creek Basin, the clock told us our round-trip journey had

taken 26 hours and 20 minutes. It also told us that the following day, when we flew out, was my 41st birthday. Maybe the clock does lie—I sure as hell don't know where all that time went.

**Summary:** First free ascent of Reinhold Pussycat (600m, V 5.12c, originally graded 5.10+ A2, Bugaboos, Minaret, west face, by Bruce Miller and Chris Weidner (USA), August 26, 2015.

## Images



Bruce Miller en route on Reinhold Pussycat.



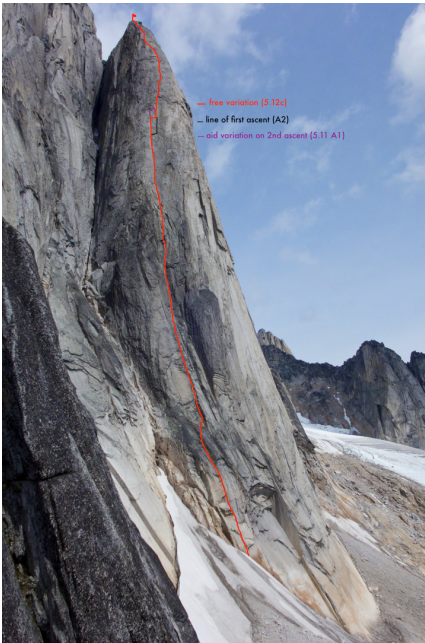
Bruce Miller on the first crux pitch of Reinhold Pussycat (5.12c).



Chris Weidner leading the thin seam of the second crux pitch (5.12c) of Reinhold Pussycat.



Bruce Miller follows the upper part of the second crux pitch of Reinhold Pussycat.



The west face of the Minaret showing the route Reinhold Pussycat, with the line of the first ascent (established in 2006), an aid variation established while trying to free the route, and the eventual free variation that was climbed via two pitches of 5.12c.

## Article Details

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