



## AAC Publications

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### **Mt. Lawrence Grassi, North Face, Tainted Love**

Canada, Alberta, Canadian Rockies

**November 2014.** Ian Welsted and I were gunning for the Hole (AAJ 2015), a natural arch in the middle of the north face of Mt. Lawrence Grassi, a prominent yet obscure wall above Canmore. We missed the break leading up to the route and instead found ourselves below the Gash. The thin ice dribbling out of the giant chimney looked innocent enough. It was only when I was halfway up the 25m flow, picks wobbling in shallow placements, that I began to think I had strayed over the line separating scrambling from soloing. Pulling onto a steep snow ledge, I spied faded cord connecting two bolts: relics of previous attempts on the Gash. But we hadn't come for the Gash. Tying into the rope, we took off on a rising traverse in search of the Hole.

**December 2014.** The Hole ended up being fun in an "alpine" kind of way, but the sport climber in me was drawn to the undone project. A couple of weeks later, Ian and I, joined by young Sam Eastman, slogged back up to the Gash. This time we continued straight up. After a few pitches—steep rock, slabby rock, unconsolidated snow, and the occasional token patch of ice—we entered the guts. With Ian and Sam bundled up at the belay, I started up the overhanging back wall, hooking frozen choss, hanging from tools, drilling bolts: an altogether too familiar, anything-goes dance to get up the pitch.

At this point in the game, Ian, always more of an alpinist than a sport climber, declared himself uninterested in my construction project. Finding partners for my newest obsession was proving challenging. All the same, I managed two more short, snowy December days on the Gash, prepping what was starting to resemble an alpine sport mixed route.

**November 2015.** "The route's rigged, it just needs to be sent." I thought it more likely that Juan Henriquez would be interested if he knew it wasn't to be another aiding, bolting, and standing-around mission. Colin Simon was also in the Rockies from Colorado. They were both game. For once it was a mild, windless day. Perhaps I'd earned a treat after all the blustery, snowy days working on the route. Now all that was left was to climb it.

A few hours later all three of us stood tethered to the station below the crux corner. I eyed the largely decorative icicles dripping from the dihedral. "I haven't really tried the moves before, so first I'll just go up a few bolts to check out the holds," I said, as Juan put me on belay. To my surprise, a few minutes later I was searching for a seam, an edge, anything to take a tool beyond the overlap, where the wall kicked back to vertical. Blindly finding a hold, I released my bottom tool. If I fell off here, they'd hear about it down in Canmore. But the hold was good. Slowly, carefully, I hooked and torqued my way up the last few meters. While I belayed my friends up, I strapped the headlamp to my helmet. We'd be finishing the route properly: in the dark—Tainted Love (320m, WI3 M9).

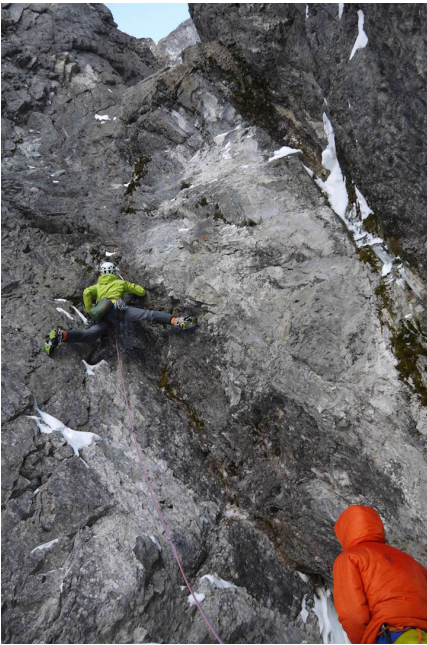
Summary: The first ascent of Tainted Love (320m, WI3 M9), Mt. Lawrence Grassi, North Face, Canadian Rockies, by Juan Henriquez, Colin Simon, and Raphael Slawinski, November 28, 2015 (with help from Sam Eastman, Peter Holder, Wiktor Skupinski, Steve Swenson, and Ian Welsted).

Raphael Slawinski, Canada

## Images



Juan Henriquez tackles a snow mushroom on pitch two of Tainted Love.



Raphael Slawinski leads a steep rock groove on pitch four of Tainted Love.

## Article Details

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