



## AAC Publications

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### **The Cleaver, Dark Tower, and Gambler's Special: New Routes and First Free Ascent**

California, Eastern Sierra

**In June, Brian Prince, Alaina Robertson, and I set up a camp below the northeast face of the Gambler's Special and Dark Tower to celebrate Alaina's birthday with some exploratory climbing. The Dark Tower is a subsummit of the Cleaver (13,382'), and we named it after finding no previous record or signs of ascent. Roland's Journey (1,000', III 5.9) started from toe of the main buttress and tackled the middle part of the steep red headwall.**

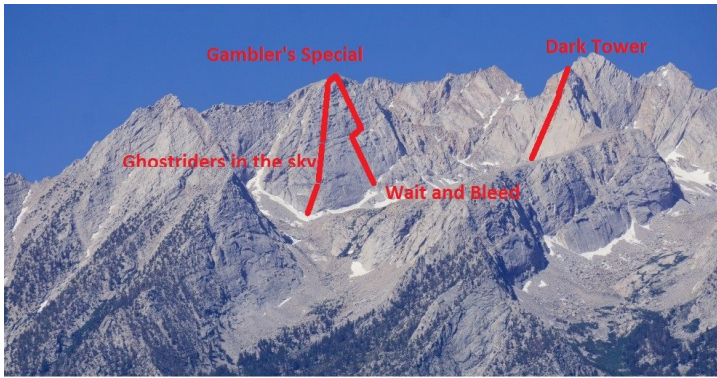
After climbing the Dark Tower, Alaina Robertson and I completed a long, fun and engaging climb on the northeast face of the Gambler's Special. This peak, which is unnamed on most maps, rises along a ridgeline about a quarter mile southeast of the Cleaver. We found no evidence of previous climbs, only evidence of the plane crash for which it is named (the plane was en route to Vegas). Ghostriders in the Sky (2,000', IV+ 5.10 PG-13) starts near three prominent cracks on the eastern part of the face and goes up mostly clean, flaring crack systems with a memorable overhang about three or four pitches up. The harder sections featured adequate protection, but the more moderate terrain was run-out and exciting.

I returned to the area about a month later with Shaun Reed, who had completed a new route on the southeast face of the Cleaver with another friend in 2015 and now wanted to free it. The Butcher (850', IV 5.12) features sustained and enjoyable cracks, with the crux being a wild 5.12 overhang near the middle of the wall. After several attempts, we managed to free the crux with barely enough daylight to finish the route. This climb is a must-do for those who enjoy difficult cracks. [The new route is just to the left of Chronic Harmonic (IV 5.11+), which Reed and Nate Ricklin put up in 2014; see AAJ 2016.]

We then set our sights on a wide system on the western side of the Gambler's Special, which turned out to be more of an adventure than a great rock climb. After encountering mostly garbage rock, we were happy that at least the line topped out on the main summit. We called the route Wait and Bleed (1,600', IV 5.10- PG13).

– Vitaliy Musiyenko

## Images



New routes on the northeast faces of Gambler's Special (left) and Dark Tower.



Third pitch (5.12) of the Butcher. Shaun Reed making delicate moves off the belay.





Shaun Reed savors a cool 5.11 flake and crack system on the Butcher (IV 5.12) on the southeast face of the Cleaver.



Roland's Journey on the northeast face of Dark Tower.



Vitaliy Musiyenko leading the second pitch of Ghostriders in the Sky on Gambler's Special.



Shaun Reed pointing out the distinct second-pitch enduro corner (5.11) and rest of the Butcher on the Cleaver.



Vitaliy Musiyenko leading the fifth pitch (5.11) of the Butcher.

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