



## AAC Publications

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### **Giants Foot, Northwest Face, Death of a Sinner**

United States, Montana, Beartooth Mountains

**On October 20, I reached the summit of the Giants Foot (also known as First Wall) in East Rosebud Canyon via the previously unclimbed northwest face.** I climbed the route alone over 12 days of effort (climbing and shuttling gear). I used siege tactics, hauling multiple loads of gear to the base, fixing lines up the heinous approach pitches, and fixing lines on the first two pitches of the route, before leaving the ground for a six-day continuous push to the summit.

Between moving my 200 pounds of gear to the wall and getting it back to the trailhead, I did the long, steep approach five times, racking up over 55 miles and many, many hours of falling down in scree piles and snowdrifts.

On October 10, as I lay in my portaledge only 100' above the ground, I watched snowflakes accumulate. It snowed 18" in 24 hours. The day before had been 70° and sunny. All of my water froze solid, and the delay caused me to run out of Wild Turkey. It had been my intention to stay on the wall, but these changes and my need for extra fuel and warmer clothes forced my hand. I descended and made one more trip to the trailhead before leaving the ground for good.

Two days later, I barely got back to the wall. Fresh snow avalanched frequently down the approach gully and buried my fixed lines in debris. At times I was crawling nipple-deep in powder snow up what used to be 5.8 slab, all while carrying a 50-pound pack.

Once in the vertical, though, all was fine: The wall is so steep that snow rarely accumulated. I was actually grateful for the cold when I discovered a loose pin at my first anchor was now frozen into place—much safer!

I placed one protection bolt and four 1/4" rivets, and installed bolted anchors on every pitch. Low on the wall, I clipped some old bolts and pins, presumably placed by Alex Lowe during a late 1990s attempt. (I reached out to Lowe's climbing partners from back then, but those who responded did not have any further information about his attempts. Lowe had climbed three short pitches and left a fixed line between his second- and third-pitch anchors, but, strangely, not one to the ground. I climbed a different line but passed his high anchor in the middle of my second pitch. It looked like very difficult climbing above this, but as he was an aid master who didn't seem to hesitate to place lead bolts where needed, I'm unclear on why he bailed.)

The first three pitches of my route were sustained aid climbing on mostly thin gear. The first pitch begins in loose rock and after 100 feet ends abruptly under a massive roof. I believe previous attempts may have climbed out the roof, but the cracks there were created by giant loose blocks that were terrifying just to look at. I chose to tension horizontally off beaks to climber's left and exit the roof where it was less overhung on hooks and a 1/4" rivet. The third pitch wandered to the right through loose blocks and then back left. I was thankful to be rope-soloing because it kept rope drag to a minimum on this pitch. Many of the #1 and #2 Tomahawks that I had placed with a hammer came out easily by hand.

The fourth pitch marked the end of the difficult aid. After climbing left from the third-pitch anchor on

knifeblades and beaks, I found a very nice crack in good rock, and the route became much more straightforward to the top.

I rappelled the traversing, overhanging route with much difficulty. Future parties should be prepared to leave fixed lines in certain sections for the descent or consider walking off the south side. In addition to Lowe's effort, this wall had been attempted in the past by a few legendary Montana climbers—Rusty Willis made at least two attempts. It was an honor just to stand at the base of it, let alone find passage up its subtle features. My route is called Death of a Sinner (1,800', 9 pitches, VI 5.9 A3).

— **Matt Ward**

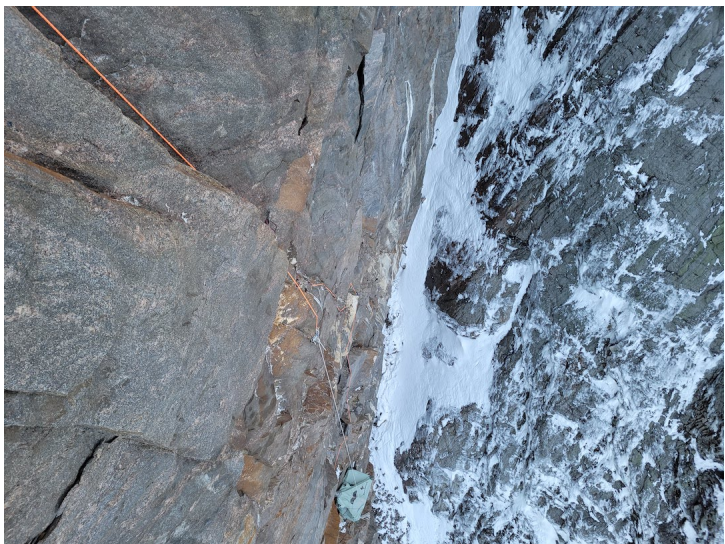
## Images



The route line of Death of a Sinner (1,800', 9 pitches, VI 5.9 A3), on the northwest face of the Giants Foot, East Rosebud Canyon, Beartooth Mountains, Montana. Matt Ward established the route—which was the first ascent of the northwest face—solo in October 2021. The closer wall is the Bears Face.



Matt Ward's portaledge hanging at the pitch one anchor on Death of a Sinner on the northwest face of the Giants Foot. The visible water-ice formations had been flowing water before a sudden storm and temperature drop at the beginning of Ward's ascent.



Looking down the beginning of Death of a Sinner from the anchor at the top of pitch three. Alex Lowe's old anchor and white fixed line are visible hanging over the portaledge.



Matt Ward juggling frosty lines in a cloud during the first ascent of Death of a Sinner (1,800 feet, 9 pitches, VI 5.9 A3), which was the first ascent of the northwest face of the Giants Foot, East Rosebud Canyon, Beartooth Mountains, Montana.





Pitch seven of Death of a Sinner (1,800 feet, 9 pitches, VI 5.9 A3), which Matt Ward dubbed "The Frostbite Chimney."



Matt Ward above the clouds overlooking East Rosebud Valley, during the first ascent of Death of a Sinner (1,800 feet, 9 pitches, VI 5.9 A3) on the northwest face of the Giants Foot, East Rosebud Canyon, Beartooth Mountains, Montana.

Article Details

Author	Matt Ward
Publication	AAJ
Volume	64
Issue	96
Page	116
Copyright Date	2022
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions