



## AAC Publications

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### **Powell Peak, Vanquished Wall, Revelation**

Colorado, Rocky Mountain National Park, Glacier Gorge

Andrew Andraski following the new first pitch of Revelation that he and Will Fazio encountered on their second trip to the Vanquished Wall in October. In May, when they made their first attempt on the line, the snowline was 90' higher, allowing them to bypass this section of the cliff. This new first pitch went at M6+ PG-13 with an A0 tension traverse. Photo by Will Fazio

**On May 9, Will Fazio and I trudged for three and half hours and four snowy miles up to the Vanquished Wall in Rocky Mountain National Park, armed with a small rock rack and a selection of pins and stubby ice screws.** We had set our sights on the wall's namesake route, Vanquished (5 pitches, WI5 M5), a Michael Bearzi and Bill Myers line from 1991. The forecast promised cold, wind, and snow.

As we gazed at the wall, searching for the line of Vanquished, our eyes were drawn to a system of ice runnels and thin smears about 150 meters to the right of Vanquished, where no known routes yet existed. Staring up at the network of ice and snow that splattered and snaked through unknown territory, we both had the same thought: Let's follow those smears!

I was as giddy as a 16-year-old with car keys in his hands for the first time. After ten years of climbing in Rocky Mountain National Park, I'd finally be able to realize a long-held dream of establishing a new winter route in the Park.

Will started us off with a challenging lead up a runnel of ice in a corner, protected with precarious gear. When he was 40 feet up, a small section of weakly bonded ice broke away where his picks were placed—and he was airborne. When the rope came taut, he was just ten feet above my belay. Will made a second attempt on this pitch and set the tone for the rest of the day by sending it—a stout 190' WI5 M5+.

I led out on the second pitch, determined to deliver a strong effort to match Will's. Bypassing an attractive corner with good protection, I opted for an alluringly thin series of seams and ice runnels that lined an otherwise smooth granite panel. After placing my sixth and last pin, a shallow knifeblade, I searched unsuccessfully for better gear. The line wouldn't go this way. I delicately tick-tacked my way back down to the corner I had initially passed. Climbing this produced another 190' pitch of thoughtful and balance-y M5.

Will and I deliberated for some time about where to take the third pitch. Flurries of snow began falling. A hush filled the otherwise empty Sky Pond gorge as it was swallowed by the clouds. Will launched again into the unknown and brought us up another steep M5+ corner of delicate ice runnels and dreamy moss sticks. As Will belayed me up, the snow got heavier. Early in the day, we had been able to see the alpine tarns far below; now they were lost in the clouds. Soon we couldn't see any more than 30 feet in any direction. Worried that the heavy snow would prevent us from finding our stashed skis in the boulder field below, we decided to bail.

We returned five months later, on October 21, and found an unexpected new first pitch. The snowline was 90' lower on the wall than it had been in May. Before us were two shallow corners, a blank slab, and a closed dihedral—all of which Will would link to reach the beginning of our original first pitch. He set off up the thin corners and drove a Lost Arrow into a seam. Next he tension-traversed across the slab and established himself in the closed dihedral. As he perched on his front points on tiny edges

and palmed the walls of the corner, a few body lengths above the pin, gravity won out, and Will plummeted 25 feet, with his crampons skittering down the slab. Once again, he came to a stop just ten feet above the belay. Mirroring the first-pitch playbook from May, Will went up a second time, ran it out even further, and sent the pitch at a grade of M6+ A0 PG-13.

I took over for the next few pitches (the ones climbed in May) and brought us to our previous high point. This time, instead of clouds, we had clear skies. I continued up another 250' on new ground and found myself at the top of the wall. After I brought Will up, we surveyed the ice-coated peaks around us, reveling in our experience and soaking in our good fortune. We called our route Revelation (250m, 5 pitches, IV WI5 M6+ A0 PG-13).

— **Andrew Andraski**

## Images



Andrew Andraski, in October 2021, establishing the clean and delicate fourth-pitch M5+ corner on Revelation (250m, 5 pitches, IV WI5 M6+ A0 PG-13), Vanquished Wall, Powell Peak, Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado. Will Fazio



Andrew Andraski following the new first pitch of Revelation that he and Will Fazio encountered on their second trip to the Vanquished Wall in October. In May, when they made their first attempt on the line, the snowline was 90' higher, allowing them to bypass this section of the cliff. This new first pitch went at M6+ PG-13 with an A0 tension traverse.



Andrew Andraski following the new first pitch of Revelation that he and Will Fazio encountered on their second trip to the Vanquished Wall in October. In May, when they made their first attempt on the line, the snowline was 90' higher, allowing them to bypass this section of the cliff. This new first pitch went at M6+ PG-13 with an A0 tension traverse.



Looking down on Andrew Andraski as he follows the cruxy pitch three of Revelation. The top of this pitch was Andraski and Will Fazio's highpoint on their first attempt on the route in October. They retreated when clouds enveloped the wall.





Revelation (250m, 5 pitches, IV WI5 M6+ A0 PG-13) on the Vanquished Wall of Powell Peak, Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado. The wall's namesake route, Vanquished, is just out of the frame to the left. Andrew Andraski



Revelation (250m, 5 pitches, IV WI5 M6+ A0 PG-13) on the Vanquished Wall of Powell Peak, Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado. The wall's namesake route, Vanquished, is just out of the frame to the left.



Will Fazio approaching the base of Revelation (250m, 5 pitches, IV WI5 M6+ A0 PG-13) in May 2021, on the first of two trips he and Andrew Andraski made to establish the route.



Will Fazio enjoying frozen turf and clear skies on the rope-stretching M5 pitch two of Revelation (250m, 5 pitches, IV WI5 M6+ A0 PG-13), during his and Andrew Andraski's second trip to finish the route in October 2021.



Will Fazio leading the new first pitch of Revelation in October. Just past this, Will tension traversed left across the blank slab and entered a left facing corner that led to the curving snow-choked crack up and left of him.

## Article Details

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