

## Quarry Cruxes

Crux one of solo aiding happens at the parking lot. A hummingbird appears for a second and peruses the splashes of color raining from my haul bag and onto the sidewalk next to my car. Simple mathematics would tell me that the most efficient way to pack and sort the gear would be to shovel it back into the trunk of my hatchback and drive back home where the sun hasn't started to bear down and the cotton sheets work just as well to cool a body laying on top as they do warm a body laying beneath them the night before.

Riverside Quarry is a jelly donut in a hardman's aiding circuit. Gridbolted for sport climbing between aid seams that hold scars that can be traced back to seventh day adventists preparing for their own assault upon the stone in Yosemite, nailing was never so safe. A flat approach and within sight of the car, never has aiding been so, LA.

With my Bdel Touchstone overflowing, I attach my ropebag to the outside straps. Bucky is poking his head out, waiting for a ride across the field to the rock, then to be chocked into the top of my hydration sack, staring away from the wall as I try to figure my way up, a few feet at a time.

I'm heading for Slab City. The sport climbers grunt from higher on the crag, Metro Area and the Roof. My goal for the day is roped soloing. My goal for the day is actually to survive the heat, which accounts for the 1.5 gallons of water and gateraid in my pack. A full rack of cams is triples. Doubles in nuts with doubles of offset brassies. 2 each lost arrows 1, 2 and 3 and doubled blades in three sizes, heads and funkness, chisels and butterknife, 3 each of beaks in all sizes, hooks and cam hooks, and the smallest angles. I look up at the routes. I will need 5% of what is now on my chest and waist harness. My hips are starting to warm up against the iron that I've attached to my side gear loops. Today I try a new racking configuration with iron on my waist harness. I hear my peers saying "light is right", I look up again at the route, place 4 more quickdraws and 3 more locking carabiners to my rear gear loops and begin flaking the ropes.

Setting the anchor is the first problem; fractured rocks and epoxied cracks do not a happy climber in me makes. A soloist will build bombproof anchors to support a 100' climb up A4 terrain. Knowing that your anchor will hold a fall that will rip enough pieces to hit the ground anyways is the kind of lateral thinking that gets one up a route. I have yet to bring a yardstick.

I recreate diagrams from textbooks in my head, twist my hands in the air involuntarily as I attempt to build the main anchor that will appear 15 feet above the ground on the first slap of Vertical Vee, an A3 route requiring hooking and heading according to the topo. I am vaguely aware, as I hear the music from the birthday party happening back by my car that I have not spoken since I left my girlfriend's house 2 hours before. With Tejano music filtering through the techno music blaring through my headphones, I suddenly become aware of the silence that soloing is supposed to be all about.

Bucky is laying on the rock with the hammer laid across his chest. Placed there because of the picture that it would create and still there because stuffed animals have difficulty moving on their own. I never bothered to move him once the shutter had closed. Before placing the loop attached to the hammer over my head, I stand with Bucky and stare up at the route. Speed is not the most important thing today.