

Are there things you used to do that you don't do anymore that you miss? A lost passion? Maybe you feel your body isn't up to it. Maybe you just stopped making the effort, maybe you no longer have the opportunity. That passion has fallen by the wayside. But now you think about it, remember what it was like, do you regret its passing?

What would you say if someone gave you the opportunity to rekindle that passion? Even if you weren't sure that your body would cope?

My lost passion is - for a place. The Cuillin Ridge on the Isle of Skye. A mecca for mountaineers. The Cuillin Mountains are connected by a ridge that rises from the sea up to 3000 feet, then winds and curves for over seven miles, a knife edge passing over 18 jagged tops.

My story doesn't begin with me sitting comfortably. Sitting in the car as Rob, my partner in adventure, drives us to our start in Glenbrittle for an assault on the ridge. I feel mounting trepidation. The ridge forms the skyline besides us, standing ominously like a massive castellated fortress forbidding intruders. We reach the car park, ready ourselves, exchange an anxious look, and set off in a fearful silence. Rob is normally the most loquacious of colleagues, but he was constricted by the same apprehension flooding my own body.

To get up onto the ridge was a challenge in itself: over 2 hours of tramping across boggy moors, clambering up lung-busting slopes, increasingly resorting to our hands to make any upward progress. Until at last our goal was attained, we could scramble no higher. We had reached the ridge.

Any feeling of elation was abruptly overwhelmed by a rising sense of terror at where our efforts had led us – perched on a yard wide eyrie with vertiginous drops of hundreds of feet on either side. The mist swirls around us, strangely muffling any sound but my laboured breathing. I look towards my companion for comfort, but he is also gripped by such dread he is incapable of speech. What am I doing here?!

Then we begin to move and as our focus alights on the rock and the challenge in front of us, the precipitous drops to right and left begin to blur. The coarse-grained gabbro, that most abrasive of all igneous rocks, affords a secure grip for my hands and boots - although at a cost if my hands slip or are misplaced: it's like coarse sandpaper being dragged across my skin. I am indeed bloodied by the ridge.

With movement my fear dissipates and the excitement builds. The task confronting me is so all encompassing and demands such titanic concentration it feels akin to entering into a trance. Exhilaration pumps through my veins as I sequence each of my hands and feet, a hold to grasp here, a ledge for a step there. One foot, one hand, one foot, one hand, I develop a rhythm, there is fluidity to my movements.

Now I grow accustomed to the colossal drops on either side and can marvel at our position. I glimpse saw-toothed peaks through the mist, and marvel at the sheer scale of the ridge, mile after mile of the most imposing mountains I have ever seen.

The knife edge between the two tops of Skoor a Hreeta, soars like the curving blade of a giant scimitar. On its arête at times my hands are clasped onto the top of the ridge, my feet are tip toeing

across ledges and between my legs - a drop of 3000 feet down to the sea loch below. No rope, no protection.

What sensations course through my veins. Yes, a sense of jeopardy, but a tingling of excitement across my skin and hyper alertness from the adrenaline pumping through my system. Intense concentration, an incredible thrill, and delight in my own ability. "In the zone" as athletes say.

That week I explored just over half of the ridge. Each day demanding at least 10 or 11 hours of strenuous effort. Experiences, memories that will live with me forever.

But that was ten years ago. Despite an ambition to climb the whole ridge, I've never returned. A fall off a peak in Torridon a couple of years later and a resulting stay in Inverness hospital, shook my confidence. You should see my bum. Or rather...A decade of passion for red wine and excess calories has undermined my fitness.

But. Last weekend. A bottle of red wine with Rob. We talk. He's intent on bagging Munroes: climbing the 283 Scottish mountains over 3000 feet; he's knocked off over 190. This year or next he wants to complete them all. Guess where the most difficult twelve are? Yes, the Cuillin Ridge on Skye. Guess who he asked to go with him, albeit with a guide – and a rope this time. And guess what I said?

So, my question to you is what passion would you like to rekindle? Will you have to wait to be asked? Or could you decide now to relight the fire? What do you say?