

It was the hottest day of the year and the High Tops shimmered, in this unusual climatical excitement. The leviathan of Scafell Pike loomed above the distant haze, as the heat cascaded down Hardknott Pass; faster than the cyclists, with their razor thin tyres and holier than though attitudes.

A cheeky panda shandy in the Boot Inn was the order of the day. Followed by the short walk back to the holiday cottage – rented for the week that had passed too quickly. Returning tomorrow morning, it was time to repack all that kit that is normally required in the Lakes, but had not been needed once. A short walk back, that with all this heat, required a subtle detour. Down past the war memorial to the bridge over the waterfall.

‘But I’ve got no swimmers,’ moans my mate.

‘It doesn’t matter’, I replied, as I stood loud and proud on the parapet stripped down to my shreddies.

‘You’re not going to – are you?’ One of four girls asked.

‘Has to be done,’ I reply.

She is stunningly attractive. Even her accent blows my mind. Lobster pink, despite the floppiest of hats. Sweaty and scantily clad in ripped t-shirts and shorts, I believe she hangs on my every move. She, they, must have been out on their Duke of Edinburgh’s, judging by size and nonconformity of the rucksacks they were porting. There was no turning back now. Full-on commitment.

I let out a Tarzan style shout, that emanates as more of a strangled yodel, then launched myself into the void. I fly out from the parapet, over the waterfall, towards the plunge pool below. For one brief moment, the world stands still. The water twinkles and sparkles. Then I scream for real.

Have I burnt it? Will I smash onto the rocks on the far side and break every bone? Or have I undercooked it, about to tumble down the nearside cataract - achieving a very similar result.

My jump is perfectly judged. With an almighty splash, I hit the dead centre of the pool and my breath is snatched away. Even in the heat of the moment, the Esk is as cold as the melted ice that feeds it. Neither Scott nor Shackleton could have ever felt this numb.

My feet hit the bottom of the pool and with a kick, I push myself back towards the surface. I hold my breath and swim for my life, until my fingers grab and cling to the smooth rocks on the river bank; giving me the chance to pull myself up and out. Diamonds drip and scatter on the surrounding moss.

I’m impressed. I pray the girls and one in-particular will be awe-struck too. Dazzled even? I look and they are no longer there. Vanished like the jewels so recently shed from my torso.

I spread my arms wide towards my mate.

‘They couldn’t wait - gone for an ice cream.’

I grab my shorts and T-shirt. ‘Quick. Come on, we can catch them up at the shop.’

