

I soon found myself hanging off the upper ledge, and just when I thought I was going to crash back down where I had just rested, my right hand fumbled blindly before taking hold of what saved me. It was a thick green root, firmly fixed into the moss-patched rubble that lay underneath me. A cool breath soothed my itchy, sweat soaked brow. In a dry, windy, desolate place I found life. I'd stumbled into Narnia. Small, green, dew covered trees and shrubs were a bastion for insects that drifted about in the blue dimness of the early morning light. I crawled into the little domain, more than happy and let my heavy eyes close. I let my mind drift away. A soft harmonious hum of crickets filled the air.

Many minutes went by before I reluctantly abandoned my new found sanctuary. I crawled to my feet and regained my bearings. I looked over the sheer drop below me and down at the gorge. Swept with sudden nausea I nearly lost my balance and scrambled backwards to safety. I didn't want to think about how I was going to get back down. Instead I looked for a way onwards. Behind me was a good 20 metres left until the summit, each stretch made up of loosely fitted rock that sloped steeply upwards. I could see that it wasn't going to be a simple matter of recklessly charging on. Inhaling and exhaling deeply I began to map out my route. Then I noticed a thin ridge of stone held together by the occasional knotted shrub. If I was going to find out what was on the other side, this was the path I was going to have to take. Another deep breath and I was back on track.

I checked and rechecked every hold I found and more often than not, dislodged chunks of rock would come flying past me. It was a gruelling process but if I didn't do it I ran the risk of face planting into the edge of the ridge or toppling backwards and crashing down onto the Plateau below. After what seemed like an hour the end was finally just a foot or so away. Then a crunch emanated from deep in the stone below. I stiffened, worrying that the hard racing thump of my heart beat would cause the entire rock face to crumble underneath me. I reached out a hand cautiously towards a small ledge of stone above me, gripping it firmly. To my horror, small cracks began to appear in the earth underneath me. With a surge of adrenaline I hauled myself up onto it, just as the earth below began to crumble away down the slope. I stared down in disbelief, realising the fate I had so narrowly avoided. At last, I'd made it. Finally I could see what lay on the other side. Below me was a sea of trees that stretched out to the horizon, where it was met with the rise of the sun which painted the sky with glowing shades of red and pink.

By reaching the top I was able to overcome my own fears and self-doubts, as well as gain a far greater appreciation for the natural beauty of the world around me. As I slowly made my way back down the slope, following the distant calls of my worried mother, I remember feeling a sense of pride that to this day has rarely left me.