

Lost in Rainbow Valley

written by

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Michael
Tenzin

EXT. MT. EVEREST SLOPE - DAY

Five mountaineers trudge their way through thick snow. The sun glares down from above but offers no warmth as they plant their climbing poles and pull their jackets close.

Their guide, TENZIN, 40s, encourages the group to stick together, but MICHAEL, early 30s, forges his way in front. He gets a few meters ahead before his team stops.

TENZIN
(calls)
Michael.

Michael turns and watches the other climbers drop their packs and set up camp. He frowns.

MICHAEL
We're camping this close to the
summit?

TENZIN
See those clouds?
(points)
Bad weather. Best to prepare.

Michael trudges back towards him.

MICHAEL
Why don't we just keep going while
the weather's clear?

TENZIN
Air's too thin up there. We could
run out of oxygen if we get snowed
in.

Michael glances between him and the clouds.

MICHAEL
I think I can make it before the
storm hits. I move faster on my
own.

TENZIN
(shrugs)
Maybe, but you won't make it back
down.

Michael scoffs and turns. He starts hiking back up the slope.

TENZIN (CONT'D)
When it's too much, look for the
red lady. I'll rescue you there.

Michael scowls at him, undeterred, and treks on.

TENZIN (CONT'D)

Michael!

He does not turn back.

EXT. MT. EVEREST SECOND STEP - NIGHT

Wind whips through Michael's icy hair as little whirls of snow coil across the ground. He makes good progress despite this, grinning triumphantly when he sees a steep cliff face: the final climb.

He stomps forward through the thick snow and trips, trekking poles flying from his fists.

Michael rises to his hands and knees; he's unhurt, but when he sees what tripped him, his face curls in fear.

A woman, frozen stiff, lays half-buried below him. She gazes up at the sky with eyes like milk-glass marbles, her skin a sickly blue.

She wears a crimson jacket, the same make as his own.

Michael shoots back to his feet and retrieves his poles. Shaken, he glances around his surroundings before he slowly, carefully, prods her with a pole to roll her face back into the snow.

He looks back down the slope and sees the faint light of his group's camp. He pauses. Considers...

With a shake of his head, Michael hikes back up the step.

EXT. CLIFF FACE NEAR SUMMIT - SUNRISE

The weather is worse now. Sleet crystals catch the light of the rising sun, setting the Everest ablaze. The frozen firestorm slows Michael's climb to a crawl. In the hours since he secured his ropes, he has only made it up 50-60 meters.

Michael can't see it, but his grappling hook drags through the snow above. Millimeter by millimeter, it slips towards the edge.

He buries an ice hook in the sheet above his head and hauls himself up. His foot slips, he falls back to his previous position. The force drags the hook above; it catches on a tiny bit of exposed rock.

Michael doesn't notice. He regains his footing and continues the climb.

Halfway he makes it: halfway up that final trial.

He rests for a moment to check his oxygen tank: plenty to go. He smiles, hanging there, as the grappling hook stresses against the rock. It begins to crack.

Michael grabs his ice hooks once again. He plants his foot against the cliff, ready to continue the ascent.

Right when he launches upward, a gust of wind catches him mid-jump. He falters, losing his footing. This time, when he falls back, the line doesn't catch him.

EXT. FOOT OF CLIFF FACE - DAY

Michael's head peeks above pink snow. He groans into an impenetrable silence. No more howling winds, no more clattering sleet or whistling stone.

His head lolls as he rises, blood frozen down his cheek. Doubled vision clears slowly. He sits up fully, wiping away the melt stuck to his bluish face. The breath he sucks through chapped, grey lips comes in short wheezes.

Michael clears the snow from his body with a clumsy swipe of the arm and finds his oxygen tank. It cracked in the fall, busted open, empty.

Laying back, the sun glares into his milk-glass eyes. Michael forces himself to stand; he cannot find his trekking poles.

Trudging back down the step, he reaches where he thinks the red woman should be. There is nothing.

He searches with his gaze; he finds rock and snow. He stumbles around the top of the world. There is nothing.

Near the edge of the step, something catches his eye, or the lack of something.

The tents of his companions are gone.

Defeated, he turns away, back up the step. It's not where it should be-it's far too close to the cliff-but he finds the body again.

It wears a blue jacket, the same cut as his own.

He finds his trekking poles and journeys on, but the summit draws no closer.