

WHAT HE WOULD SAY

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. TABLE MOUNTAIN, SOUTH AFRICA - DAY

Establishing shot of the natural landmark. Clouds caress the top of the mountain like a table cloth.

A little closer, we can see cable cars carrying passengers to the summit.

Other groups of people hike the mountain. They stop to take selfies with the view of Cape Town below. A tour guide snaps a family photo.

EXT. PARKING LOT - TABLE MOUNTAIN - DAY

LIAM (40s) exits a taxi cab. He's rugged, but gentle. John Krasinski, but with feminine energy. His nerves are palpable.

He straps his Camelbak to his waist and hands the cab driver money through the window.

INT. TOUR GUIDE OFFICE - TABLE MOUNTAIN - DAY

Liam walks up to the front desk. He's greeted by an enthusiastic FEMALE GREETER (17, first job, overly helpful).

FEMALE GREETER

Good Morning! Do you have a reservation with us today?

LIAM

I just need a map.

She opens a large map on the desk.

FEMALE GREETER

We have a variety of paths you can take up the mountain. There's Plattekliip Gorge, the easiest and most direct route. Personally, I'd recommend taking the India Venster route if you want the best view. There's also Skeleton Gorge through a beautiful lush--

LIAM

--Can I just have the map?

FEMALE GREETER  
(through a pained smile)  
Is this your first time visiting  
Table Mountain?

LIAM  
It is.

FEMALE GREETER  
It's highly recommended that one of  
our guides accompany you in case  
you get lost or need assistance.

Liam slams some money on the desk and takes the map.

LIAM  
I think I can handle a hike on my  
own.

She's running out of options. She frantically takes a  
business card from the desk and hands it to him.

FEMALE GREETER  
Please just take this! For my peace  
of mind.

Liam reluctantly takes the card. When he turns to go, he  
holds the card up in the air to mockingly appease her.

LIAM  
Got it!

As he turns, he bumps into a strikingly good looking TOUR  
GUIDE (40s). He drops his map.

TOUR GUIDE  
(picking up the map)  
My apologies.

They lock eyes, freezing for a moment. There's a familiarity  
about him. Liam is entranced by his piercing blue eyes  
against his darker skin tone. He has a calming affect, like  
you could tell him anything without being judged.

TOUR GUIDE (CONT'D)  
She's right, you know.

LIAM  
(dismissive)  
Thanks, but I came here to be  
alone.

## TOUR GUIDE

I meant about India Venster. The views are incomparable.

He's slightly embarrassed at giving attitude.

## LIAM

Oh. Thanks.

Liam brushes past him. In what seems like slow-motion, their shoulders graze and Liam feels something he hasn't felt in a while. Excitement? Possibility?

When he gets to the door, Liam turns back to look at him once more, but the Tour Guide is already talking to a family he's about to guide up the mountain.

Liam shakes it off and resumes his mission.

EXT. TABLE MOUNTAIN - DAY

Liam scales boulders on the side of the mountain while trying to read the route on the map. He's more than physically capable, but something seems to be weighing him down besides the giant backpack.

He reaches a final large boulder. The path seems fairly clear. How difficult can this be? It's been easy so far.

He lowers the map, keeping it in his right hand as he climbs. He steps on the corner of the map and it rips in two. A gust of wind blows the second half off the side of the mountain.

## LIAM

Come ON.

Frustrated, he crumbles the other half of the map and tucks it into a pocket.

He pulls out his phone to check google maps, but it won't load his location. He stands looking out over the cliffs and let's out one LOUD SCREAM, echoing to the ocean.

EXT. TABLE MOUNTAIN - LATER

Exasperated and sweaty, Liam trudges on. The climb feels endless. Every time he thinks he's reached the top, there's another set of boulders to climb.

He pulls himself up when his foot loses its grip and he slips. It's a three foot drop and he lands on his ankle poorly, spraining it.

LIAM

AH, FUCK.  
(to the sky)  
Really?!

He sits there nursing his pain, unsure what to do.

He pulls out the card he was given earlier. The last thing he wants to do is admit he was wrong.

He checks his phone. No service.

EXT. TABLE MOUNTAIN - LATER

Liam limps up the mountain, waving his phone in the air trying to magically capture service. Nothing.

He puts the phone away. He doesn't need any help. He trudges on groaning from the pain, sucking his teeth, as if acknowledging the pain lessens it.

As he continues to climb, he slips on some gravel and worsens the sprain.

He lowers himself onto a boulder, rubbing his ankle.

He suddenly feels defeated and lays back, staring at the sky.

EXT. TABLE MOUNTAIN - LATER

Liam lays where we left him, on his back with his eyes closed, and his arms flopping out to the side.

A shadow of a person appears, blocking his sunlight.

TOUR GUIDE (O.S.)

Everything alright?

Startled, Liam opens his eyes. Oh god, it had to be the handsome Tour Guide. Couldn't it have been anyone else?

The Tour Guide flashes Liam a million watt smile. It's warm and hospitable.

He looks down, noticing Liam's injured ankle.

TOUR GUIDE (CONT'D)

What have we got ourself into?

TIME CUT:

MOMENTS LATER

The Tour Guide is wrapping Liam's ankle. He is gingerly and takes his time. Liam shakes his knee, impatient.

TOUR GUIDE  
(clocking his impatience)  
Almost.

He finishes and stands.

TOUR GUIDE (CONT'D)  
There. Now let's get you back down.

LIAM  
Down? No. I have to finish.

TOUR GUIDE  
We're liable if anything happens to you and I really wouldn't want you to hurt yourself any further. You can come back another day.

LIAM  
Look. I flew here specifically to climb Table Mountain. This is just a pit stop on my way from New York to a conference in Japan. I figured I wouldn't make the trip unless I was already traveling half-way around the world, which isn't often.

TOUR GUIDE  
Your ankle is really swollen. You should call it a day.

LIAM  
You don't understand. It has to be today. This is something I have to do for...for someone important.

TOUR GUIDE  
Well, I guess I could let you finish the hike...

Liam is relieved.

TOUR GUIDE (CONT'D)  
But, as the resident expert on the safest paths, I'm going to have to accompany you the rest of the way.

Fuck.

EXT. TABLE MOUNTAIN - LATER

Liam has his arm around the Tour Guide's shoulder. He hobbles, attempting to keep the weight off his bad ankle. He doesn't want to admit it, but his presence is comforting.

They walk in awkward silence. Strangers unsure how to begin.

TOUR GUIDE

Quite a journey for a four hour hike.

LIAM

Jonathan always wanted to bring me, but we never found time.

TOUR GUIDE

Jonathan's your partner, I assume?

LIAM

Was. Cancer's a bitch.

TOUR GUIDE

I'm sorry to hear that.

LIAM

He'd always tell me how beautiful Cape Town was, so I thought I'd get the best view from all the way up top. He moved to the states when he was a teenager, but never left Cape Town behind. He was like a walking encyclopedia for the damn place.

TOUR GUIDE

It's hard to forget. Been here all my life. Even through all it's problems, I don't think there's a more beautiful part of the world.

The Tour Guide gets an idea.

TOUR GUIDE (CONT'D)

Do you mind taking a small detour?

EXT. SKELETON GORGE - TABLE MOUNTAIN - DAY

A mossy covered cliff with a ravine running down the side like a waterfall. It's shaded by trees hanging above.

The Tour Guide helps Liam sit on a rock next to the stream. He sits beside him.

Liam looks around in awe. He palms the water, letting it slip through his fingers.

LIAM

It's so peaceful.

TOUR GUIDE

It's my favorite part of the mountain. Most people don't know it exists. They want to get to the top and take in the view, but the gorge is the mountain's beating heart. I feel like I'm in Eden when I'm here.

Liam reaches into his backpack and pulls out a round tin, possibly for cookies.

LIAM

He wanted to be scattered here.  
Above Cape Town.

The Tour Guide is caught off guard, but doesn't pass judgement. Liam starts to get emotional.

LIAM (CONT'D)

He loved chocolate chip cookies.  
He'd eat them by the dozen.

Liam chuckles as he starts to cry.

LIAM (CONT'D)

People do say you are what you eat,  
and now he's inside a cookie tin.

The Tour Guide reaches for his hand. His compassion allows for Liam to finally let go. He sobs and falls into the Tour Guide's chest.

LIAM (CONT'D)

It should've been me. He was so kind, and talented. A writer that made you feel seen, you know? He didn't even get to publish his memoirs.

TOUR GUIDE

You know, in most African cultures, we don't believe anyone is really dead until there is no one left to remember them. He's not gone if you're still here.



LIAM

Jonathan used to say something like that all the time. He was very spiritual.

Liam looks up at him, realizing he is vulnerable and also having conflicting feelings. Why does he want to kiss him?

Liam sits up and wipes his cheeks, collecting himself.

LIAM (CONT'D)

He used to say a lot of beautiful things. He really knew how to tug at your heart strings. I'd even have him write my mom's birthday cards. Now she'll have to deal with a simple "Happy birthday!" She really loved him, too.

TOUR GUIDE

How lucky you both were. To have found each other. Your grief is a blessing. It shows how deeply you loved. I've only felt it once myself.

LIAM

What was he like?  
(catching himself)  
Or she. Sorry, I don't mean to assume...

TOUR GUIDE

No, that's alright.

The Tour Guide thinks for a moment.

TOUR GUIDE (CONT'D)

He was very hard headed, and could be selfish, but he had the biggest heart and he never missed an opportunity to let you know how much he loved you. He would go to the end of the world for the people he loved.

Liam smiles.

TOUR GUIDE (CONT'D)

I think what I'll miss most is his humility.

LIAM

How do you mean?

## TOUR GUIDE

He had no idea how brilliant he was. It always broke my heart to see how hard he was on himself. He was the most passionate, dedicated, and smartest person I'd ever known. He quite literally invented technology that never existed and he still felt insecure about his place in the tech sphere, about his worth. Like if he wasn't Steve Jobs, he was nothing.

## LIAM

Well, as someone sitting behind a computer all day developing software, I can relate. It's hard to live up to the expectations your parents have for you when you grow up telling them you want to be Bill Gates. Guess I set myself up for that one.

## TOUR GUIDE

But you don't need to be Steve Jobs or Bill Gates to be great. You just need to be Liam. You are already doing things millions of people can't comprehend, including me.

Liam softly chuckles.

## TOUR GUIDE (CONT'D)

You should be proud of yourself. I'm sure he still is.

The Tour Guide smiles at him.

## TOUR GUIDE (CONT'D)

I'm glad you sprained your ankle.

Liam laughs.

## LIAM

I'm glad it was you that came to my rescue and not that god awful peppy teen girl.

Liam blushes and then catches himself again.

## LIAM (CONT'D)

Oh god, I cannot believe I am hitting on you in front of my dead lover's ashes.

The Tour Guide chuckles. Liam talks to the tin directly.

LIAM (CONT'D)

Sorry, honey. Can you blame me?  
Look at him!

He holds the tin up as if to show Jonathan.

They both laugh, blushing and looking away.

TOUR GUIDE

I guess we should get back to our  
trek up. How's your ankle feeling?

LIAM

A little better, but would you  
mind?

He lifts his arm as if to ask for help up.

Liam drapes his arm around the Tour Guide's shoulder once  
more. He helps him to his feet. They share a smile.

EXT. TABLE MOUNTAIN SUMMIT - DAY

They reach the top of the mountain. The clouds have parted  
and the sun shimmers off the ocean below.

LIAM

Wow. It's even more beautiful than  
he said.

Liam walks forward to a boulder and sits. He takes off his  
backpack and takes out the tin once again. He opens it up.

He turns back to the Tour Guide.

LIAM (CONT'D)

How should I do this?

TOUR GUIDE

Maybe just release him little by  
little into the wind. Do you have  
anything you want to say to him?

LIAM

I'm not really the religious type.

TOUR GUIDE

Doesn't have to be anything like  
that. Just speak from the heart.  
Thank him for your time together.

Liam nods while contemplating what the hell he should say.

LIAM

(looking down at the tin)  
Johnny, I wish you could give your  
own eulogy because you'd say  
something profound and we both know  
I am horrible with words. What  
would you say?

Liam looks back at the Tour Guide. He nods at him as if to say, "Go on."

LIAM (CONT'D)

I'm grateful for the almost fifteen  
years we shared together, from  
living in a shack of an apartment  
in the Lower East Side, to our  
beautiful West Village townhome.  
Our fur babies were more loved than  
any human children could ever be  
because of you. There were days I  
didn't think we'd last. Whether it  
was because you refused to wash the  
dishes, or because I refused to  
tell you how I was feeling. But I  
never felt more loved and accepted  
for being who I am, especially  
during times I didn't know how to  
love myself. You saved me in many  
ways, and honestly, I don't know  
how I am going to do that without  
you.

Liam starts to cry.

LIAM (CONT'D)

Thank you for bringing me here to  
this beautiful place on our final  
trip together.

The Tour Guide smiles, standing behind Liam.

Liam grabs a fistful of ashes.

LIAM (CONT'D)

I love you.

He opens his palm and the wind carries the ashes to the sea.

Liam continues to release the rest of Jonathan's ashes until  
the tin is empty.

LIAM (CONT'D)

I guess that's it.

The Tour Guide sits beside him, but now he's out of his uniform and wearing street clothes.

TOUR GUIDE

Seems you had the words after all.

LIAM

Not as good as what you would say.  
Do you have to leave?

TOUR GUIDE

I'll always be with you. You  
brought me here today.

LIAM

But what if I start to forget you?  
What it felt like to hold you? How  
you smelled?

TOUR GUIDE

Write it down. All of it. Our life  
together. Our story. You're gonna  
want to relive it one day.

The Tour Guide kisses Liam's tear stained cheek and begins to disintegrate as if he himself were made of ashes.

Liam is left sitting alone.

He looks out at the horizon and smiles.

LIAM

(quietly)  
Thank you.

He closes the tin. He sits with his knees up, arms wrapped around them, and for the first time in a long time, he feels the weight of his grief melt away.

FADE OUT.