The Mountain Between Us Review

* After their plane crashes into a remote snow-covered mountain, two strangers forge a connection while trying to walk hundreds of miles to safety.
* Starring Kate Winslet and Idris Elba
* Directed by Hany Abu-Assad: *Paradise Now*

Nope.

Don’t get me wrong, I truly love the “plane crash survivors struggle with the harsh limits of their own humanity and will to live” genre. But most filmmakers who embark on a project like this understand instinctively that if you want to pull off a movie like that, you need to meet the audience half way. Toss us a little bit of a gimmick, for lack of a better word. We’ll endure your two hours of people walking and complaining about cramps, but in return we damn well expect a ‘man-eater’ of a bear to be stalking you the whole journey, or for food rations to get so low, so quickly that killing and consuming the weakest member of the group is the only possible recourse. Hell, we’ll even settle for an anthropomorphic volleyball with a face made of dried human blood. We’re not unreasonable, here.

This film decided to play it straight. Two people and a dead pilots dog, walking down a really cold mountain, dealing with manageable leg injuries and rational cold related health concerns. The kind of stranded in the snow movie where, the second the characters realize they need to make a fire – they find a fully functioning lighter on board, no questions asked. I almost respect it. I can picture the writers room now: Two philosophic artists talking about how they were gonna do for the man vs.. nature genre, what *Blue Valentine* did for the romance genre. ‘none of that Hollywood bullshit man! I’m talkin’ about two characters just talking their way down that high altitude sumbitch!’

Late in the movie, the story takes a much more intimate turn. This comes as an unnerving surprise given the utter lack of chemistry, and what bordered on apathy, coming from the co-stars, and it becomes clear that this possible romance in the making is what we were supposed to be holding onto this whole time. Now I don’t know if halfway into production the director realized all the things I’ve just mentioned for himself and tried to contrive together some chemistry between the leads, hoping against hope that because Winslet already pulled off Romeo and Juliet on a Shipwreck, maybe she could pull it off on a plane wreck as well. Or if it was always written to have the arc it did, but no matter how it happened, the film devolves into a weird romantic scenario that feels like being forced into doubling with a couple on a blind date, in which nobody wants to be there, but everyone’s too annoyingly polite to give up the charade.

PERSCRIPTION:

For better plane crash survival movies: Watch *The Edge, Cast Away*

For a better - but still bad - version of this movie: Watch *Six Days Seven Nights*