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# Rock

Wesley Turner

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## ROCK

by

Wesley Turner

The four of us were busy with college and one of us was poor, but we decided to get passes at the local climbing gym.

Back when Sarah was in middle school, she attached her harness wrong and her forearm learned how to make a right angle. She used to get scared of slipping when she started climbing again, but now she isn't afraid. She climbs and falls and climbs and falls and uses up all my time belaying her. Her boyfriend bought a ring without telling her and then he proposed in the mountains. She said yes—what else could she say in a place so close to God? When Sarah gets to the top, panting with her chalky fingers clinging to that last plastic rock, she whispers to her rope thank you thank you for catching me. You're always there to catch me.

James talks about grigris and ice climbing. He says that if he can't find his climbing shoes he can buy a new pair, and that he's fat and it's okay. He laughs because some rocks are called "jugs" and because the men constantly have to readjust their harnesses. At the top of his climb he says—loudly—you needn't worry rope, I don't intend to fall. You know just as well as anyone that I've never fallen before.

Lenny used to stutter, and he didn't read well, so he had to go to a special school for a while. Whatever school he went to compounded his awkwardness and then he started wearing glasses. Still, he climbs gracefully. The first girl he ever kissed wept because it was snowing and Coldplay was going in the background and can you believe that? It was her first kiss too, and she'd waited a long time for it. She said sorry, sorry and he said its okay and kissed her again.

I stumble now and then when I climb, but I'm decent. When I get to the top, I glance down at the three of them, so far below, feeling guilty that of the four of us I'm glad I'm me. I turn to my rope, about to thank it, about to wish it a nice day. Instead my rope speaks to me. It tells me to find some real rock, to get out from under this ceiling and feel the cold earth pressing on my hands. It tells me to try falling where no one can catch me.