

Gym Climbing Protocols

A play of words in one act

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Cast of Characters

BELAYER male or female, 14 years of age or older
CLIMBER male or female, 7 years of age or older

Time The present

Place The interior of what appears to be a large gymnasium with numerous climbing walls each approximately 50 feet in height. A top rope, floor belaying anchor, and grigri are available at each climbing station.

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SCENE 1 - EQUIPMENT CHECKLIST

The BELAYER and the CLIMBER are putting on their harnesses and helmets. The belayer shows the climber how to adjust the harness so that it is just short of uncomfortably tight. Then the belayer assists the climber in attaching one end of the top rope to the climber's harness using the attached autolocking carabiner. The belayer pulls the open carabiner over the harness loop and flips it so that the latch appears away from the climber's body while simultaneously taking up the slack in the top rope. While the climber is adjusting his helmet, the belayer attaches the grigi on the other end of the top rope to her harness. Finally she attaches herself to the webbing connected to the floor anchor.

BELAYER

Looks like you're ready. Let's go through the four-step safety check.

CLIMBER

Step one: check to see if the rope is clear. No wrapping.

BELAYER

(looks up)

Clear.

CLIMBER

Step two: make sure you are wearing a helmet and it is fastened properly.

They move closer together and pull on each other's helmets assuring a tight fit.

CLIMBER

Step three: make sure your harness is buckled properly and the attached biner is secure and facing out.

Both the climber and the belayer pull on the rope just above where it is attached to their harness. The belayer checks to see that she is properly anchored.

CLIMBER

Step four: squeeze check.

CLIMBER AND BELAYER

Squeeze check.

Both the belayer and the climber watch each other squeeze the biners attached to their harnesses to assure that they are indeed locked.

The climber moves over to the rock wall in preparation to begin the climb. The belayer makes sure the rope does not get tangled during this move.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE 2 - VOICE COMMANDS AND RESPONSES

The climber is standing next to the rock wall ready to climb. He is looking directly at the belayer.

CLIMBER

On belay?

The belayer takes up the slack in the rope, and then eases it out just a bit.

BELAYER

Belay on.

CLIMBER

Climbing?

Climb to the next rock and stop.

BELAYER

The climber climbs to his first position just off the floor. The belayer takes up the slack in the falling half of the rope using one or two smooth motions without ever releasing the rope with either hand. When finished, her right arm is fully extended and her right (brake) hand is resting palm outward on her right leg.

The climber is looking at the rock face determining his next move. Then he glances at the belayer who appears ready.

Climbing?

CLIMBER

Climb to the next rock and stop.

BELAYER

The climber moves smoothly to the next position and stops.

Climbing?

CLIMBER

The belayer has taken up the slack quickly. She gives the command for continuous climbing.

Climb.

BELAYER

The climber moves quickly up the wall from one position to the next using the muscles in his legs to drive him up. His hands seem relaxed, almost like they were steering rather than adding any pulling force to his motion.

The belayer suddenly puts too much tension on the rope making the next move difficult.

CLIMBER
(looks down)

Slack!

BELAYER

OK!

The belayer releases some of the line.

CLIMBER

Climbing?

BELAYER

Climb.

The climber moves to the next position, stops and examines his next move. It appears difficult.

CLIMBER
(looking down)

Watch me!

BELAYER

I'm with you.

The climber executes the move but slips and falls. There is a slight jerk on the belayer's harness as the rope takes the full weight of the climber.

Since the belayer had already taken up most of the slack and was ready, the actual falling distance is minimal. The belayer relaxes her grip on the rope with her right hand allowing enough slack for the climber to regain a comfortable position on the wall.

The climber adjusts his position, examines the route and looks down at the belayer.

CLIMBER

Climbing?

Climb.

BELAYER

The rest of the climb is uneventful. The climber stops at the top, looks down at the belayer and smiles.

Take.

CLIMBER

The belayer takes up all the slack in the rope.

Falling.

CLIMBER

I've got you.

BELAYER

The climber moves his feet off the rocks and uses them to push himself away from the wall. His full weight is now on the rope.

Lower me.

CLIMBER

The belayer begins to lower the climber by pulling the grigri brake lever to the opposite side with her guide hand, then slowly releasing the rope in her brake hand (the right hand in this exercise).

The climber grabs the rope just above his harness to stabilize his movements. He puts his feet on the wall and "walks" down the wall as he is lowered.

The belayer lowers him until the climber reaches the halfway mark on his way down.

Halfway.

BELAYER

The belayer continues to lower the climber to the floor.

When the climber reaches the floor he bends downward at the knees to induce more slack in the line, so that the harness is not tugging him uncomfortably when he stands erect.

BELAYER

Nice climb.

CLIMBER

Nice catch.

They shake hands (or kiss).

END OF PLAY