

## Ascent

*Michael Salinger*

*Belay off*

They tell you to never look down  
The average climbing rope is 50 meters long  
And rated by the number of falls  
It can withstand  
Because  
It is expected that you are going to lose your grip  
And these ropes are designed to stretch  
Up to 6.5%  
Absorbing your body's weight  
As it accelerates  
Thirty two point one eight feet  
Per second per second  
Spring-backing you to a stop  
Rather than snapping you in half  
But with a carabiner click  
You've unhooked yourself

*Belay off*

And up you scale  
Chalk absorbs hand sweat  
But not your fingertip pain  
Trigger loaded cams  
Sway at your waist  
Like a cluster of colored pendulums  
Picked one by one  
Inserted into fissures and cracks  
Then left behind  
As if they were antique keys  
Poking from an attic's trunk  
And you look up  
Because you've been warned to never look down  
Feeling for imperfections in the rock  
Facilitating enough friction  
That you may cling to its face  
As you surmount this obstacle  
One hand  
One foot  
At a time  
Simply

Because

It is there

And once you've reached the summit  
Before you spy your next climb  
Go ahead  
Look down  
See how far you've come

*Belay off*