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Flash for Tuesday Feb 26<sup>th</sup>  
To Leap

I really didn't want to go home, so I went to the rock gym. It was empty, just opening for the afternoon, and a dude wearing the official blue t-shirt unlocked the door. I swiped my card, laced up my tight purple shoes, stretched my arms.

"Look, I didn't mean to forget, I'm sorry," I said.

"But you *did* forget," she said, angry, accusing. "You *always* forget."

I bounced my constricted toes on the padded floor. Chalked my hands.

Did 'Walk in the Park,' a good warm-up climb. Some other guys came in.

I put my hands on the first couple of holds of 'Little Timmy Two-Step.' Too hard. Did 'Sun on the Sea.' Much better. My muscles were waking up.

Did 'Butter and Eggs,' then another, and another.

Two guys were climbing the overhang, taking turns on the hardest routes. One was lanky, the other squat and muscled, and their feet swung out as they caught the higher holds.

"That section is awkward," the short one said. "There's no way I can reach the green hold without taking my lower foot off."

"You have to leap for it," said the tall one.

"Easy for you to say!"

The tall one tried and made it. The short one fell, fell again, and then finished, too. They whooped, and went to harness up for longer climbs.

I glanced nonchalantly toward their route, but I knew which one it was. 'Devil in the Details.' I had never tried it, because I knew I couldn't do it.

"I'll try harder," I said. "I really will."

"How many times have I heard that?" she said. "You *won't* try. You're allergic to effort."

I was silent.

"Either that," she said, "or you're scared."

I gripped the first hold, a shallow grey ledge without much to grab, and placed my feet. I reached for the next hold, caught, and reached again. Missed, jumped down.

Tried again, and fell again.

*One more time*, I thought. First hold, place feet, second, third, re-place feet, repeat. I was half way, filled with elation, and then nearly there, staring way over to the left at a lime-green hold marked with finish tape. Rough fake stone scraped my palms. My fingers ached and muscles quivered, exhausted.

I stretched for it, missed, barely caught myself.

Took a deep breath, resettled my feet again, leapt, and caught! My body swung left in a wild arc, crashing gracelessly into the wall. A protruding red hold came at my face.

My other hand caught, and I hung safely for a moment before dropping to the ground.

I smiled, triumphant; my split lip leaked a little bubble of salty blood. No one had even seen me.

"I can't just wait for you to finally get the courage to leap," she said, quiet, sad. "I need to move on with my life. I'm wasting my time with you."

"Don't say that," I said, desperate.

"I'll get the rest of my stuff tomorrow." She shut the bedroom door.