The Rope

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'Your children become your friends
Earlier after a divorce.' Tom tying in
Between me and my regular partner

Warmed that cold start with an unspoken
Bonding beyond the boots and the rope,
The shared knowledge of the knots.

We had climbed into the sun,
Tom snagging his rucksack
Traversing under a tree, crying out

Momentarily above me, but knowing
That here you have to free yourself.
It is what we have come for, together.

We do not linger on that ledge
On the open face of the mountain.
Grabbing gear, I lead through and up

Until stopped by a tree. I tie on
And take in the rope back to Tom.
I do not think of him as my son.

'Climb when you're ready!'
I call, but my partner shouts up
With an edge of accusation,

'Tom's blue rope has come undone!'
I shudder, suddenly feel sick.
He will retie the knot between us

But a gap has widened between me
And my judgement, me and my son.
I must stay closer, check the knots,

Climb as a father not as a friend.
Tom comes smiling up, showing no sign
Of being other than an open friend.