

Elisa L. Everts

The Twisted Goodbye

Three little souls floating
over the carpet
arranged in an arc,
eyes riveted ahead.

Story time?
Hardly.

The tall, fractured soul of my father
towers in front of the window,
his shadow slithering over us
with sadness and desperation.
He has come, he tells us,
to “say goodbye.”
In his hands, a neatly tied,
white noose.
The rope is limp;
its fibers are shiny.

To my five-year-old sister,
it’s just a loop of rope,
maybe a handle or a leash?
She fidgets, bewildered.

But Eric is eight and he has seen
enough Westerns to know
exactly what a noose is.
I wonder how long it takes him
to puzzle out Dad’s intentions.
His girly little face with bangs
hanging down in his eyes,
his shy smile, and his expression,
still a bit inscrutable.

I remember the event with a
layer of fog, a little numb.

This was not his first threat.

And then there were compelling
reasons for the divorce.
Among other crimes against us,

hadn't he tried to strangle
our mother once, and to push her
over the balcony another time?
Hadn't he molested his own
child just a few months prior?
Didn't I have nightmares of him
gunning down the family as we
fled down a hill?

I don't remember where my blind
mother was, what she "saw"
or what she did to resolve
this macabre encounter
between her children and
our father's mental illness.
There was a restraining order;
perhaps she called the police.

I remember one thing clearly.
That though I had so long
adored my father, I found
myself now with

mixed feelings
about that noose.

Elisa L. Everts , holds a PhD in Sociolinguistics from Georgetown University. She has poems and creative nonfiction forthcoming in *Lavender Review*, *misfit magazine*, *Mused*, *Anti-Heroin Chic*, *HerStry*, *Three Line Poetry*, *Zany Zygote* and *The Avalon Literary Review*. Elisa writes and teaches near Washington, DC.