

Gary Rainford -- Three Poems

Dying Room

“Come sit by me,” Bobbi croaks,
pats the side of her bed, so I move a chair
closer, slipping off my shoes, and put up
my feet. “Are you mad?” she lifts

her head from the pillow, then back
down. “I never wanted trouble.” “Of course
not, Mom,” I reply, squint at the window;
the heavy curtains block the sun

from spilling in the room. This is the opposite
of a baby born, this is every son and his mother
being dead, the poignant scene in *Cool Hand
Luke* where Luke’s mother,

frail and propped in the back of a pickup
truck, visits him in prison to reminisce before
she dies. A sad scene but necessary. “Why
did you leave us?” Bobbi’s tongue falls

out of her mouth, pokes dry lips; she thinks
I’m her first husband, my father. “Something
was calling,” I reply. “Something good,
I hope,” Bobbi’s eyes are driftwood.

Filicide

“It’s cold,”
Bobbi moans
while Rhonda
washes her

thighs with
a warm hand
towel. “Let’s
get ready

for your son,”
she redirects
with a voice
melty as Milk

Duds. "Here's
fresh pants.
And let's fix
your hair."

"I don't have
a son," Bobbi
pushes Rhonda's
fingers away.

Imposter

Bobbie wants me to call her
son for help. "I *am* your son,"
my response reeks of

shock. "Your name might be
Gary, too," Bobbi replies, "but you
are not *my* son, Gary,

who knows what's what."
Bobbie's words buckle as if each
one is warped, twisted

out of shape. "When I see him,
Mom," I smile at my daughter sitting
nearby, a sadlovefear smile

that my brain might forget her
one day, too, "I'll give Gary your
message, have him call you."

Bobbie thanks me for knowing
what's what, says her son's voice
is a lot like mine.

Gary Rainford is the author of *Salty Liquor* and *Liner Notes* and lives year-round on Swan's Island (six miles off the northeast coast of Maine) with his wife and daughter. His third book in progress, which will also be published by North Country Press, is a verse novel that tells the story of my of his mother's dementia and Alzheimer's disease.