

Christine Klocek-Lim

Christine grew up in northeastern Pennsylvania. She began writing poetry as a child one rainy day while sitting on the swing at her family's summer cabin; she's hasn't been able to stop since. After graduating from Carnegie Mellon with a BA in writing, she worked for several years as a technical writer in Manhattan. Now she spends her time taking photos and writing poetry. Some of her poems have appeared online in the "Cities" issue of *Mi Poesias*, and in the "Water" issue of *Ella, Mi Po Women's Beat*. She lives with her two young sons and husband in Pennsylvania.

Acid Mine

The stream flows rusty in the green land
where I lived as a child.
All the minnows are dead.

Anthracite coal mining marks
the fields and water.
Portals lie open,
like the one in Jeddo:
a mine tunnel
pouring acid
into the world.
We drink it.

We're all marked
with each bitter
lingering
swallow.

You thought only grandfather
inhabited the dark world
of coal mining;
black lung described
his disability benefits.
Now children splash
in the feathery iron hydroxide
sediment
shivering in the current,
in the rusty brackish water,
and the mine touches them.
The mud castles they build
eventually fall into the creek bank
like an old mine shaft
crumbling,
a sinkhole opening,

collapsing
beneath us all.

Soot

She said she shouldn't have married a man
darker than a paper bag,
and not a Haitian man, oh no,
but she looked happy to me
as she chewed the salad I'd refused.
The burning church that spit smoke at us
coated my face with soot like a left-over color.
We'd walked between the buildings,
scarves over mouths, over chins and noses,
and sometimes eyes.
The haven of the Manhattan deli
stank of garlic and by the time we got there
my white skin looked like death beneath the ash,
but it didn't matter.
The conversation wasn't about me.
She said her grandma no longer spoke to her,
never met her two boys:
the family didn't approve of the man she married
with his soot-black skin-
but at least he wasn't Puerto Rican,
she said. "Those guys are no good."
And later on the bus my Latino friend
Angel, he just laughed when I told him
he was no good and said:
"all those black chicks hate us."
I was still wiping the soot from my face
when the bus stopped to let me off.