

Land of Alkali and Chromate

Erie with its dead fish in the '50s, the Cuyahoga River burned. Air was filled with chartreuse particles and the earth wore a witch's lip around ponds of sulfur, salt, a burbling grey soup waiting for my father to fall into.

He grabbed at the slippery sides in the dark, muck sucking his shoes off. When he finally crawled out, *his clothes were set like concrete*. That's what the doctor said. *Being drunk probably saved him*.

Today the river's clean. Erie's got herons and fish.
Diamond's been turned into high-ceilinged apartments
and the Chromate's been razed by men in protective clothing. The land lies under new grass,
fenced.

It will take a hundred years for the ground to grow clean.
Across the railroad tracks, weeds grow around the headstones.

by Susan Landgraf, posted by pontoonpoetry