

The River Runs Red

Years ago, Xien and his family had a good life. They were a fishing family and made a decent amount of money fishing up wild fish from the nearby river. Xien's father, Lau, had a large net that he would cast out into the lake. Every afternoon he'd pull it in and take the fish into town to sell them.

While Xien's father was in town, Xien and his brothers would swim and play in the lake while their mom washed their clothes and sang. Xien likes to think back to these days with fondness. His brothers loved to dive into the cool, clear water to catch interesting creatures. Xien could always best them at holding his breath and sometimes liked to rub their noses in it.

About a month ago, after the nearby factory opened up, Xien's father started to notice that the fish he caught were not as plentiful. In fact, in little less than a week he was only able to pull in small amounts of very sick looking fish. No one would buy these fish and Lau soon lost his job. At this time, Xien's mom was still washing their clothes in the river, even though they came out smelling a little funny. Xien and his brothers swam less and less, the water stung their eyes and made their skin itchy.

Now the river runs red. Not a true red, but a sick, purplish red that symbolizes the death of all the wildlife. Xien's dad had to move into the city to get a job to support his family. His mom has to take their laundry into town to get it cleaned using up the little money that they have. Xien's brother tried swimming in the river against his mother's wishes and fell very ill.

The river, once the source of Xien's and his family's prosperity and happiness, now only brings sickness and death.