

from "A Dress" by Tatiana Duvanova

On the day the fabric for the dress is dyed, the Pearl River in Guangdong province in China turns black. Two middle school boys in white shirts stand on the bridge in a city close to the factory. They stare at the water, fascinated, enchanted as the dye slowly moves along the stream, just like watercolor on wet paper in their art classes.

The dye travels in the water, breaks down, disperses. By the time Lin's husband, Chao, who lives in a village down the stream goes fishing he can't see anything. He has an excellent catch: the fish is sluggish, jumps on his hook almost willingly.

Lin smells the fish long before her husband enters the house. Chao has a proud grin on his face when he brings her two baskets with gray, fluttering fish, stinking of mud. They have been married for five years. He hasn't noticed she hates the smell of fish.