

## **The Tuna I Let Go**

by Ysabella Sofia Lasalita Ragus

Everyone on the boat started shouting, voices overlapping at once.

“Pull it!”

“Don’t lose it!”

"Careful!"

My dad looked at me. “This one’s yours.”

My hands shook as I grabbed the line. Whatever was on the other end was tough, pulling hard enough to make me stumble.

“Lean back!”

I did, using all my strength. My arms burned, but I held on. Slowly and carefully, it came closer.

Then I saw it.

A flash of silver beneath the surface of the water. Swift. Forceful.

“Tuna!” someone yelled.

A big one. The kind people remember.

I tightened my grip, imagining bringing it home, the pride, the stories. I held it like a promise, imagining the weight of the pride and the echo of the stories. But as it got closer, something changed.

The tuna held back. Not still, just...tired.

When it rose near the boat, I saw it clearly. Strong, shining in the sunlight. Alive.

“Pull it in!”

I didn’t move.

I stared at it, at the way it moved, at the quiet strength it still had. And suddenly, all I could think about were the stories.

How it used to be easier.

How they go farther now.

How some days come back almost empty.

“Pull it!”

I looked at my dad. He wasn’t shouting. Just watching.

Waiting.

The line felt different in my hands. Like I wasn’t just holding a fish, but a choice.

I took a breath.

Then I loosened my grip.

The line slipped free.

The tuna shot back into the water, gone in a flash of silver.

For a moment, no one spoke.

Then the shouting came.

“Why would you do that?”

“That was a large one!”

I couldn’t answer at first. My hands were still unsteady.

My dad finally asked, “Why?”

I swallowed.

"Because...what if it's important later?"

The words felt fragile, but it stayed there.

No one argued after that.

That night, I thought I’d regret it.

But I didn’t.

I kept thinking about that flash of silver disappearing into the deep, fast and free.

And I understood something I hadn’t before.

Sometimes winning isn’t about what you take.

Sometimes it’s about what you choose to leave behind.