



## Personal Essay on Translation and Responsibility

At five in the morning, the Atlantic was a dark sheet of water that pulled against my legs as though it wanted me gone. My uncle handed me a tangled fishing net and told me to hold on tight. I gripped until my fingers burned, the tide dragging me forward, the sand giving way under my feet. For a second, I thought about letting go. Then I didn't.

That morning had started with reluctance. I was fifteen, half-asleep, and bitter that summer break meant labor instead of rest. My uncle had fished these waters for decades, and he thought it was time I learned what real work felt like. I had imagined helping on the boat would be simple, maybe even peaceful. Instead, my first lesson was how cold the ocean feels when it seeps past your boots before sunrise.

The net weighed more with every pull. My uncle said nothing, just worked beside me with the rhythm of someone who knew the sea better than land. Watching him, I tried to match his steadiness, even as my arms shook and my back ached. It wasn't the kind of moment that looked impressive from the outside. There was no finish line, no medal, no audience. Just two people wrestling against water and gravity until the task was done.

When we finally dragged the net into the boat, I expected him to congratulate me. He didn't. He moved on to the next step, and I followed, too tired to argue. At first, I thought that silence meant he hadn't noticed the effort I put in. Later, I realized it meant something else; that persistence didn't need applause. It was supposed to be ordinary, the baseline for any work worth doing.



That lesson stayed with me in places far from the ocean. When cross-country training grew harder each week, I remembered how the tide felt pulling at my legs. When I struggled with calculus, I pictured my uncle hauling in the net without complaint. Persistence stopped feeling like a heroic quality and became more like a habit, a quiet decision to keep moving even when no one was watching.

What surprised me most was how the memory shifted over time. At fifteen, I thought of it as survival: proving I could stand in the surf and not collapse. Now, I see it as a moment when I began to measure success differently. I stopped asking, Did this come easily? and started asking, Did I keep going when it didn't?

As I look toward college, I know the hardest parts won't be the late nights or the heavy workload. It will be the moments when I feel the pull to quit, when a problem set won't click, or an idea for a project keeps failing. That morning in the Atlantic gave me proof I can lean on. The tide was stronger than me, but I held the net anyway. And in holding on, I found the version of myself who doesn't back away from hard things.