

“Tug of War”

Writer: Grace Lichwalla

I promise I'm reaching desperately for the touch of your fingers in mine, like a kid playing tug of war in the sand, before the rope slips and my hands are bloody and I sink into folds of abrasive silk, hoping that maybe this time I can at least keep you from choking on the all consuming smoke filling my lungs. Maybe you'll get to suffocate on something much nicer than me.

But I'm still hanging on, just barely clinging to a golden thread and a single smile. Maybe it will hurt less if I let go now, while the sand is still soft with the heat of the summer and the last thing I see before I fall won't be my tear stains clawing at your cheeks.

But I want to hold your fingers between my own. I know in my bones that if I'm lucky, if the string doesn't break, I could pull and pull and pull until it unravels me like a sweater but you'd want to be wrapped up in me again anyways. Then maybe our ghosts would watch, and they'd smile, and the imprint of my palm would be pressed into your hand just before you take the final step into the light.

I hope you go towards the sunrise.

I hope you think of me when you feel the warmth of the fires that I fell towards.

That's why they call it a war, right? No matter how hard you both try, someone always has to lose in the end.

But I held your hand in mine once, my thumb ghosting over yours and back again because I didn't know how to tell you in words that I would never be the one to let go first.

So I'll play tug of war as many times as you ask me to, hoping that one day you'll take pity on the fact that I would fall for you over and over and over again.

But until then, I will fall for you.

Over and over and over again.

I promise.