isaiah and i

for a time too-long too-often and too-young, we lived with a kind of pre-grief, one felt or dreaded or hoped for. so we left with hang-nailed hands our spare allowances, then paychecks in clear mason jars on windowsills or drawer-backs, saving for if, when, we should need to buy drugstore funeral flowers.

later, volunteering for an elementary school dance, we silently leaned to gather the tossed remnants of childrens’ joy, pink streamers and stickied punch and our own memories in the air. we felt it then, grief in the form of glitter— something lost and found broken beyond repair. we hummed "Wish You Were Here."

like the ("hey, cheap souvenir") tourist trap pamphlets we gathered or middle school ("my mom said i can go") mall-maps we decoded i wake before dawn the night after tragedy and YOU ARE HERE!: the moment between my eyes opening and my dial-up memory casting you back into death. isaiah, we joked,

but i really can't remember how many suicide funerals we went to. a death will pack a high school auditorium past capacity in a way that prom never could. i cried then, but i was really just complaining. i was really just imagining you dead. i was pre-grieving. i was counting the steps from here to the drugstore.