



Neighborhood Theater

I stand in the doorway, the cavernous room empty before me
Nothing exists here now save the stage and it is bare—it is dark
But it is usually dark and crowded and loud and full of people
Escaping from
Escaping to
Escaping with
Now it is something new
Eerie
I have walked here a thousand times
Most of them with you
Stood outside the windows papered over with flyers of bands that have come and gone or have
yet to play
Snapped photos of the ones we wanted to see or look up or listen to
The last time
The saddest time
We saw Whir and you chain-smoked and gazed at your shoes like
A good addict should
And I felt my ears would bleed from the volume and the dissonance of chords
I don't even like Whir
But you were holding my hand and God knows I had missed that
In the middle of the smoky room, bodies packed tightly together
Like people used to do before pandemics
Where the air was too thin, and everyone's eyes were burning
I could, after months, finally breathe
Now only ghosts dance here

The ones who jumped and the ones who nodded along holding plastic cups full of cheap, cold beer

The ones who held only one another and swayed with their eyes closed as they listened

I am dancing through memories of you

I am one of them

And I am pretty sure we don't need to breathe at all