

Coffee Slings and Grief

Why is it easier to mourn
all alone, amongst strangers
who will not see my tears?
Is it because
no one else knows the girl I grieve?
Her mother knows
the baby she birthed,
the woman she nursed,
the daughter who became best friend.
Her husband knows
the beauty he wooed,
the butterfly he chased,
the wife he didn't quite deserve.
I know the child who cried over new books,
the girl who dreamed world size dreams,
the woman who settled for something less,
without bitterness,
but without much hope.

Surely
I cry for myself,
for the talks I didn't have,
for the hope I didn't give,
for the life I didn't help her live.

Too late,
too late,
I have a tram to catch,
back to the home
where I will wear a calm face,
and say all the calm words,
in a calm place.

I can always cry
in another anonymous public space.

by Sandra Effinger
for Crista Andrews Anderson,
My niece