Secret
by Caitlin Stanford Kintner

I need to know your secret
How you've been living this way
Since you lost them
How you've carried on
With this gnawing ache in your chest
With this sob crawling up your throat
Choking you
Knowing you're about to have tears rolling down your cheeks
Dripping off your chin here in this bagel shop.

Talk to me about how to look forward to things
When I know he won't be there.
To see the stretch of years ahead as potential instead of pall
To stop feeling so raw
To go on living the big and the small moments
When all the time we had is over
And going forward is too far away

Teach me how to do this
Keep my head up when my eyes shift down
And I stare hard at the ground
And get lost in my memories
My grief
My relief he's not in pain
Not on this plane and whole again
But crushingly out of my reach

Tell me how you do it
Because I can't live so shattered
Cracks running through the armor he helped me build
Eyes looking for someone who's not there
Just an empty chair
And I don't care what it takes
Just as long as you let me in on the secret
For going on without them
When every step, every day forward and away feels like a betrayal
And every future fantasy is colored in gray
Because how could it be amazing
When he's not here to experience it too?

So tell me how you do it
Tell me what to do
So I can maybe breathe a little
See a little
And do it too