

Orange Blossom Review **(<https://orangeblossomreview.org>)**

A Journal of Creative Arts

To the Woman You Were (Before You Were My Mother)

Issue 10 (<https://orangeblossomreview.org/journal-issues/issue-10/>) | [Summer 2023](#)

(<https://orangeblossomreview.org/journal-issues/issue-10/>) | [Annie Marhefka](#)

(<https://orangeblossomreview.org/our-authors/annie-marhefka/>)

In pictures, your limbs are always a blur, as if the camera couldn't possibly catch you in a still moment. Always wide-mouthed: mid-laugh or mid-song or mid-happiness. Your eyes are always fixated on the camera, or its operator. Dad had an eye for photography. Or maybe he just had an eye for you.

There is this way the light is drawn to your shape in photos, the way others in the background are always looking at you. I imagine you were so disarming.

I wish we could have been friends. Friends, choosing each other rather than being tethered together by force. Friends, orbiting around each other's stories, checking in on a whim rather than the push/pull obligations of a mother and a daughter challenging each other's patience, pushing each other's boundaries. Testing. Ricocheting.

I recall my therapist asking me why I always felt the need to resolve the tension between us, the question she asked me: *What would it take for you to let the tension sit between you?* I remember my answer: *Isn't that my job, as a daughter? Don't I owe her that?*

After you become a mother, you stop appearing in photos. You become the photographer, the documentarian of my life. *Here is Annie walking, here is Annie eating cake, here is Annie opening a present. Annie, Annie, Annie.*

The way my existence erased you. The way it extinguished your light, sent you to the shadows. The way it put you behind the lens, made you the creator, the director, the observer, the stranger.



[_ \(https://twitter.com/obr_litjournal\)](https://twitter.com/obr_litjournal)

© 2023 [Orange Blossom Review \(https://orangeblossomreview.org\)](https://orangeblossomreview.org) | [Site by Josh McCall \(http://joshmccall.com/web-design/\)](http://joshmccall.com/web-design/)