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ABOUT (/ABOUT/)

SUBMIT (/SUBMISSIONS/)

LINKS (/LINKS/)

# CONF: TO THE WOMAN IN THE WAITING ROOM WITH THE FEVERISH CHILD

by Annie Marhefka

I pretend not to see you, not to notice, because that's what we're supposed to do, spare you a look of pity, pretend you are invisible.

But I see you. I want to tell you that I see you, that I've been you.

I see how your eyelids flutter as your child's limbs shake like tree branches about to detach from the torso, his tattered blanket haphazardly wrapped around him. I imagine you probably grabbed it instinctively as you rushed out the door, panicking about what else you may have forgotten. I see the way your hair is matted to scalp, that new wrinkle under your eye, the way you haven't slept in days. I see the dark stain just below the neckline of your shirt, maybe milk, or oatmeal, or the stickiness of a dose of grape-flavored medicine spat back out at you. I see the way your own hands tremble as you rub his feet, the way you tuck his hair behind his ear, as if that will quell his shivering aches. I see the way you whisper to him that it's going to be okay, the way you



Check out the write-up of the journal in *The Writer* (<https://www.writermag.com/get-published/literary-journal-spotlight/journal-of-compressed-creative-arts/>).

Matter Press recently released titles from Meg Boscov, Abby Frucht, Robert McBrearty, Tori Bond, Kathy Fish, and Christopher Allen. Click [here](http://matterpress.com/press/) (<http://matterpress.com/press/>).

Matter Press is now offering **private flash fiction workshops** and critiques of flash fiction collections [here](http://matterpress.com/private-workshops/) (<http://matterpress.com/private-workshops/>).

## SUBMISSIONS

Poetry, creative nonfiction, and fiction/prose poetry submissions are now open. The reading period for standard submissions closes again December 15, 2023. Submit [here](https://matter.submittable.com/si) (<https://matter.submittable.com/si>).

## UPCOMING

12/25 • Trish Hopkinson  
01/01 • Kim Chinquee  
01/08 • Jill Michelle  
01/15 • James Thayer  
01/22 • Nicole Monaghan  
01/29 • Alyson Mosquera  
Dutemple  
02/05 • Laton Carter  
02/12 • Michelle Biting  
02/19 • Matthew Anderson

try and convince yourself. I see the way you're holding back, the way your body looks like it might splinter into pieces from the weight of it all.

I bet that you have learned how to cry without making a sound in the deepest, loneliest pit of night, opened your mouth into the shape of a roar, jaws spread like birthing hips, silently fed your pain to the darkness.

02/26 • D Angelo  
03/04 • Steve Cushman  
03/11 • Rita Taryan  
03/18 • Jessica Purdy  
03/25 • TBD

*Annie Marhefka is a writer in Baltimore, Maryland whose writing has been published by Lunch Ticket, Fatal Flaw Lit, Literary Mama, The Citron Review, and others, and her work has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net. Annie is the Executive Director at Yellow Arrow Publishing, a Baltimore-based nonprofit supporting and empowering women-identifying writers. She has a degree in creative writing from Washington College. Follow Annie on Instagram @anniemarhefka, Twitter @charmcityannie, and at [anniemarhefka.com](http://anniemarhefka.com) (<http://anniemarhefka.com>).*

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