



over into the sense that you cannot breathe, or move, or make a sound. Just a wide grin and a slight shake to the shoulders is the only distinguishing mark between a body at rest and one immensely deep in laughter.

It shows all throughout the face, a scrunched-up nose, a mouth being stretched from one corner to the other with pearly whites lined up between, eyes losing their appearance behind highly raised cheeks, and even a dimple or two making their grand arrival.

Although the point when one's laughter ceases to create sound is the epitome of the warmest fuzziest feeling, the sound that emanates from the occasional laugh is music to my ears.

And as laughter is a treasured item for me, so is humor. Whether it be my own to cause that laughter I enjoy that much, or others that bring me to that breathless exuberant feeling. I love finding humor in the mundane.

There is an opportunity for laughter any and everywhere and I will be damned if I am not the one who is going to find it.

(I would display an example of my comedic being but much like a chef and an egg, I cannot just crack one on command, timing is of the best essence to the art of jokery.)

One of my favorite childhood books involved a giant who caught sweet dreams and kept them in an array of glass jars to give to children as they slumber.



If I were to be so lucky to be able to capture laughter just as he does dreams and jar them, I would. I would have a room in my house dedicated to it, with shelves upon shelves filled with jars of the laughs I have encountered throughout my life.

There would be a shelf for my family ranging from the deep laughter of my father which **comes from the very bottom of his chest** to the **maniacal hyena laughter** of my four-year-old brother that seems to dance through the air. One for my friends, each of their laughter matching their personalities almost perfectly, some **high and giggly** others much more **somber and heartier**.

No matter the octave or length of the laughter, each is so incredibly beautiful in its own way, like the loveliest personal melody given to

*each*

and

*every*

human.

However, life does not merely consist of laughter as there must be a balance to things. And as such, other deafened moments exist.

Breathe in.

Breathe out.

BREATHE IN.

BREATHE OUT.

*BREATHE.*

*The noise from my mouth goes silent and I'm left with only a tightening feeling that is spreading through my chest. From an outside point of view, it seems as if the world has been deafened as I am unable to move or make a sound except for the occasional shaky breath that manages to slip through my lips.*

*An unjoyful moment defined by silence.*

oooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo

It is quite funny how such different emotions can share similar aspects at their highs. While the extent to one's laughter can lead to a quiet expression of such joy caused by a funny moment or phrase, it can also be a direct description of how I feel at my lowest state, when there is also a deafened moment, but it is so loud.

### *anxiety*

Sometimes it hits after a stressful day when it feels like the odds are stacked up against me, but at least in that case I see it coming and can act accordingly.

It is the worst when there is no valid reasoning for panic, no problem I can pinpoint to try to solve and get rid of the ickiest feeling known to me.

The feeling of anxiety can have many metaphors to try to describe what it is, especially for my personal experience with it:

It can be an elephant that sits on your chest prohibiting you from the most basic movement or thought.



It can be like an astonishing entity but rather than being a blessing to one's eyes it simply takes your breath away, sometimes all at once, sometimes slowly, but always **all** of it.



In this case, however, the loss of breath is not worthwhile as it is with laughter, there is no warm feeling, it does not feel fleeting.

It is ironic in that externally it makes itself seem so silent when inside it has never been louder.

It is an overwhelming full body experience.

You can feel your *heart* screaming in your *ears* to try to keep the *skin case* it has kept alive for 18 years still going.

Your *lungs* ache for every bit of air they can get yet at the same time it itself feels like it has no room to hold the breath it yearns for.

Your *head* feels overwhelmed, in almost a dizzying way.

There is a *lump* in your *throat*, but you cannot cry to let it out, the only thing you can do is simply be. But it is an unpleasant way to be, one *I would not wish for even my least favorite of companions*.

It does not present itself in the typical ways made common, I do not have trouble socializing with one and all, I love the theatre and feel at home on the stage,

and yet it is still there hiding in the shadows like the monster underneath my bed. But it is not underneath, it is in my bed, in my mind,

c r u s h I n g my chest.

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NOW CUT TO OUR SCHEDULED COMMERCIAL BREAK!

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*Scene is set in a modern-day classroom during a debate lecture. The situation should be low stress. Should be. There is an underlying mumble of chatter emanating around the room throughout.*

UNNAMED CHARACTER:

Clara. Clara, are you alright? You do not look the best right now.

CLARA:

*(In a voice too breathless to be fine and a body too tense to be also)*

I'm fine, I'm just going to run to the bathroom.

INNER MONOLOGUE NARRATOR:

But she was not fine, she was experiencing what some may call anxiety ladies and gents. It could have been from the mention of a possible practice debate round or for no reason at all. But still, it was there. The tightening pit started in her chest and grew like a virus, multiplying. She did not lie

about the bathroom, she did in fact go. The door was slammed shut as her mask was ripped off her face like an invasive species constricting her air, but it was not the invasive species at play here. She stood in front of the mirror, fingers gripping the sink in an attempt to keep herself grounded and her feet upright. Bees swarmed her mind as if there was no rationale, yet she managed to get one thought through. Breathe. She did her breathing exercises and although the lump that felt like it swirled through her esophagus and up to her throat remained, her chest began to untighten. Slowly but surely her senses opened, and finally when her mind got a moment to worry about something other than its livelihood, the rationale came back. It hit her the amount of time she had been absent and so she washed her face and braced herself to return.

CLARA:

*(With a slight raise to her eyebrows to balance their natural yearn to embrace its current state of tension and an ever so forced smile on her face.)*

Hey! What'd I miss?

-

It sneaks its way into regular situations, a lecture happening in a classroom, a movie with friends, even a night alone at home.

One moment filled with normalcy, the very next panic.

I have learned to not let it greatly affect the functioning of my everyday life, which I should be and am thankful for, but it is still a burden, nonetheless.

An unspoken one, a deafened one even.

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Much like within this piece, at times I feel as if anxiety takes over the discourse of laughter within my life.

Sometimes I wish I could replace that breathless deafened feeling that comes so often with the one of laughter that I cherish so dearly.

An even exchange of a moment that turns the silence into a fluttery feeling in my mind and stomach to replace the one that feels like a

parade of c o c<sup>k</sup> r o a<sup>c</sup> h e s

enveloping me inside and out.

And yet the conclusion to me is clear, much like my hatred for writing about myself due to its permanence yet the sweet release doing so gives me, they must coexist.

Those deafened moments in which I am at my lowest only make those that are filled with laughter, whether silent or not, so much more special.

They comparatively make the sounds *sweeter*, the feeling *warmer*, the breath *lighter*.

If the sun and moon can live in unison, then who am I to stop the natural order of balance?

And so, I have learned to deal with both the pleasant and unpleasant deafening moments in my life and, although it is still an ongoing process I do have to admit, allow my jars of laughter to sit next to my padlocked cases of anxiety.

One emphasizes the lack of control of my senses and one that washes over me like the only sense of surety. Yet within the epitome of both:

a moment deafened.