

Somewhere Beyond the Mind: What It Means to Live in the Recklessness of Silence  
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Silence is the mother of everything.

It's the mini merry-go-round your grandmother bought you for your 18th birthday. Baby blue. It plays one of those soft tunes that's like a nursery rhyme you would listen to as a kid. Sometimes it sounds a little bit like that part of the movie where you only see through the cracks of your fingers as you wait for the suspense to end. And the song, always ends.

It's every summer. The best time for rainfall. The warmth that makes the water smell like something greater than nature. All the elements come together and produce what you describe as what you think hope would feel like. The pelting of rain on windows and the feeling that washes over you.

Silence is what it means to look in someone's eyes.

It's the sunny day, and all you want is to sit back in the cool grass next to the three people you love so much - the friends that mean more to you than you could possibly explain. You're masking in the slow rise and fall of your chest as you watch the clouds shaped like possibilities move through the air. The breeze that wraps you in a neat little bow of wonderment and childlike dreams.

It's sitting and watching the same movie for the 30th time with her - the one who almost always knows what you're thinking. Singing along and quoting the scenes before they even happen. It's sitting and watching movies you've never seen before with him - knowing that you could talk once a day or once a week and nothing would change. It's loving them and hoping they love you too.

Silence is another sunny day.

It's the moment before they say 'I Do' and everything stands still. The bird's don't sing, the orchestra doesn't play, and no one dares to take a breath. It's standing beside your aunt in her long white dress, inspired that she found her happy ending. It's a first glimpse at what it means to connect your life with another's. You hope that will be you one day.

It's the late nights in the apartment on opposite sides of the hard couch that's oddly comfortable with the one person who knows too much. The three to four hour talks about anything and everything. Love, loss, hate, thoughts - and the calming weight of in between. It's taking steps toward an unforgettable sisterhood that will last - even through the bad times.

Silence is comparing the saltwater ocean you went to as a kid to the saltwater that seems to slide down your face some days.

It's the wind that's trying to say something on those nights when you are lying in bed in your small dark room and outside the trees are fighting to stay upright. It's anger and maybe desperation, like what you had that one day three weeks ago when you just needed someone to understand. It's learning to ultimately understand yourself - in the midst of those who don't.

It's exchanging looks from across the room, wondering if it means... something. Laughing through the lingering tension, or maybe it's awkwardness? Wanting the right words to be spoken before it's too late. It's never knowing if it's too late.

Silence is the prayer at the dinner table. The one you sometimes don't believe in.

It's the liquid fire that flows through your bloodstream on lonesome nights, looking up at the stars. The first time you found both dippers no one was there to tell you how proud they were. But the swing set was there for you, as it always has been. As it always will be.

It's your junior year of high school, and you're wearing your nicest black dress, the one with the quarter length sleeves and cotton fabric. It's standing in rows next to people you know and others you don't - hands clasped together and eyes that look anywhere but where he is. Quiet murmurs and hundreds of people that are too scared to smile. It's knowing your friend was burned rather than buried - sitting in the urn on the table at the front of the room. His parents probably didn't want people to see the permanent line etched across his neck.

Silence is being alone.

It's knowing that 6.7 percent of the US population, above the age of 18, suffer through the sadness that you do. Having little control over your personal switch. Seeing life through a lens without color. Watching the clouds that no longer look like possibilities. What it means to feel heavy – the ball and chain dragging two feet behind you. Attached at your ankle, the key was thrown out years ago.

It's being trapped in your own mind – sometimes not knowing what it means to breathe. Happiness has become nothing more than an asphyxiation. It's looking over and seeing the words - *My Granddaughter I Love You Too The Moon and Back* - etched in white, at the bottom of that mini merry-go-round, being one of the few places of separation from heavy-hearted thoughts. It's when you have yet to go back to the ocean like tears.

Silence is never admitting that you are lost when you are most definitely, unquestionably lost.

It's lifting a child out of its surroundings. Taking someone from the arms of a mother. Letting them take from her arms as a mother. And becoming a wanderer. Refusing to accept a place as your home. The constant running from your own thoughts, but those thoughts seem to have found the map before you even glanced at it. You may never know, who gave you life - but you know who protected it.

It's getting out of bed at 2AM to paint on the canvas your mama had bought for you. Standing above yourself, you watch the frantic strokes of red and black. Covering light with dark. The lines blurred together, and you saw a future. You know what it's like to die - you don't want to die.

Silence is knowing death to be inevitable.

It's feelings of severe despondency and dejection. That's the definition, but you don't want to be defined. It's being told you're one thing but feeling another. It's reading the "12 signs you are depressed" and thinking the people who wrote the list just don't get it. It's the refusal to be a statistic.

It's the four years it's been since you've worn your nicest black dress. At least for the reason you once did. Three years since all of you who were there that day have been together in the same room. Funny how friendships were lost when loss is what usually keeps them together. One year since you've mentioned his name. No particular reason - sometimes that's just how it works.

Silence is breath.

It's sitting in the brown leather chair, talking about anything but your feelings to the one person who just wants to talk about your feelings. The clock is ticking - practically sitting in your eardrum, and it takes all the power in your being not to throw it out the cracked open window. It's a never ending 50 minutes, once a week, every week, because you may never again feel okay. A year later - it's never again sitting in that brown leather chair because you like to believe you're finally okay.

It's sitting in the dark theater during a horror movie - one of the things you hate most. It's bodies that surround you, yet an isolation of your singularity. Fearful of what's not there - of what you can't see. Slumping deep into your seat, grabbing the hand of the person to your left - waiting for your worst nightmare to reveal itself.

Silence is the desperate need to feel alive.

It's trying to fall asleep with the lights off and the doors closed, but the window is open, and you can't help but listen as the rest of the world passes you by. Seconds turn to minutes, minutes turn to hours, and you can hear the clock that was once ticking next to you in the brown leather chair.

It's the beauty of your life in your life giver's eyes, the moment before you begin to cry, before the collective sigh and laughs for the magic of it all. It's trying to imagine her face from that day in the delivery room, after everything stood still, but knowing that 20 years changes a person. You never knew her then, how could you possibly know her now? It's the muffled sounds of what you can't remember. In the frustration, the anger, the sadness, and the lack of ability to change a thing - you sit, wondering what it would be like to know her. She is your birth mother, but she did not raise you.

Silence is power - or lack thereof.

It's the bullet that was dragged through the man you learned about as you grew up - the man who dared to dream. It's knowing that he did what he could in the time he was given. It's the procession of cars among the crowd of the mournful - and the brief loss of belief that one day things will be different. It believing that time heals - but knowing there hasn't been enough of it yet.

It's saying nothing to the boy that called you the cruel name of the people who look more like your father. Understanding that it will never be okay, but it will also never stop. It's watching as the world goes from the acceptance and hope of a new future to worrying that the world will be made worse again.

Silence is watching a documentary about the oppressed within a class full of the oppressors.

It's being told you don't have a the right to speak of anger because you are just as light skinned as the rest of them. The ones who threw your brother in jail. The ones who are protected because the sun bounces off their skin. The white that hides their prejudice. It's doubting who you are and where you belong because you are just as light skinned as the rest of them.

It's the mornings that sometimes are the hardest. The defeated look of dark circles and poor complexion that greet you. The tears that blur your reflection. You ask 'why' to no one other than yourself on those mornings of hatred. But mornings don't always feel like that. There are good days too. Days where you see the beauty your loved ones speak of. You can feel it in your bones. Confidence. Acceptance.

Silence is knowing that doubt encourages newfound clarity.

It's knowing that family is more than blood. You do not look like your father or your mother. But you are theirs as they are yours. Brother from another mother is more than just a saying. It's the tattoo placed in the center of your left forearm - born separate and grown together - the tattoo placed in the center of his left forearm.

It's the car ride home after your first break up and understanding what it means to never fall out of love. The screams that echo off the glass. The sky that cries just as you do. Wondering if it was ever worth it. It's finding out two years later that he was worth it.

Silence is a love that lasts.

It's letting the music say what you don't have the words for. Using melodies as meanings and chords as connections. Drowning out the thoughts that suffocate your mind. Feeling what it means to one day live your life. The breath between notes, the pause before the chorus, the way a song can take you to anywhere but here.

It's restless nights spent thinking, rethinking, and overthinking. You know what you want. Do you know what you want? How could you possibly know what you want? Then it's waking up in the morning just to think, rethink, and overthink. You know what he meant. Do you know what he meant? How could you possibly know what he meant?

Silence is never saying what you mean.

It's packing up your apartment at 8pm on a Friday night and getting a message from your best friend. 'Did you hear about Blake? He committed suicide on Wednesday.' It's knowing that on May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018, you lost someone else – and there was nothing you could've done about it. It's pausing – then continuing to pack up your apartment.

It's sitting, living - searching the deepest parts of who you are. Believing that the past has no desire to define you. It's understanding that tomorrow is another day. It's using your voice to scream from the rooftops that you are worth it. It's love. Empathy. Pain. Forgiveness. Anger. Loneliness. Acceptance. Good and bad. It's anything. It's everything.

Silence is never truly silent.