

## SOMETHING TO SAY

FANNY FELIXINE

I found healing when I told ego to lower its  
voice and sit in the corner, while I asked my wounds  
important questions.

Billy Chapata

When I was little, I remember often being attracted to girls and simply wanting to experience things with them. Of course, everything was done with consent. So one day, in kindergarten at after-school daycare, my friend and I hid under the table. With our green shirts to signify our grades, furtive little kisses were exchanged, but finally our nanny saw us and separated us. The story then went back to my mother's ears, and I remember exactly the moment when, in the car with my sister and brother, at the intersection to go home, she asked me why I'd done that, and so I replied: "Because I love her and she's my friend." She then shouted at me that it wasn't normal, that it wasn't how I have been educated, and that I better not reproduce this again. My brother, just four years older than me, laughed, and my older sister looked away with an unfamiliar gleam *in her eyes*.

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"Be careful with what you say."

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I honestly think I'm capable of counting the number of times I have seen my parents kiss in my 20 years of life. And kissing is a strong word. One moment that reflects their relationship particularly well, and that left a lasting impression on me, was when the five of us were at a family wedding this summer. During the photos, my mother always distanced herself from my father. When it came to the dances, my father would always end up performing with other

people rather than his own wife, and if he did, it was a torment for my mother to allow him one single dance. But the most striking thing is the physical contact; there's no way my mother would not react with mimicry when my father tries to hug her. The whole relationship is a difficulty.

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“You’re talking too much.”

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It's 4:30 pm. The pressure is increasing. Leaving my room to go to the kitchen, I discovered the state in which it had been left. I had to hurry, my mother would be here at 5pm and I didn't want to hear her. With the sword of Damocles hovering over my head, I hurried to put everything away. Hup! the plate. Hup! Empty the dishwasher. Hup! Take the clothes off the drying rack. Hup! Put the pillows back in order. As usual, I was busy while my brother was in his room doing "more important" things. But in a short time, everything was in order, and I was returning to my room serenely. A few minutes later, the keys would click on the door. I could hear the footsteps hazarding through the house without complaints. Then, when she got to her room, my first name was shouted : “Who has touched my things ? ”

Damn ! I forgot to check the room.

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When I was little, I was still naive, and at no time could I have guessed the burden of being a girl in my family's dynamic. So when my sister left to study for eight years, little by little the

roles changed, and I became a "woman" in this house. Every chore, every remark, every responsibility was placed on my back. Yet the strange thing is that I'm the last one. But as my mother used to say, she couldn't count or talk to the men in this house. Therefore, as a support, the complaints and whispers multiplied as I entered this cycle. Indeed, I realized this, the day my father complained to me about the fact that my mother hadn't made any food before she left. I remember I didn't reply and went back to my room. Except that when I got hungry myself, nothing was done. Therefore, I decided to make *myself* something to eat. However my father realized this and called me ungrateful. Guilty, I prepared something for him and my brother. And of course this didn't just happen once.

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This summer 2023 my mother suffered from sciatica. She was therefore placed on sick leave for about two weeks. For the first two days, she rested as the doctor had instructed, then finally when she started to "feel better again", she resumed her activities at home. Yet the pain was still there, and had even worsened. But the need to be in control and active was stronger than the pain. Actually, like a mother like a daughter, only a few weeks earlier, I had my wisdom teeth removed, and hours later I also returned to my activities. The same need was present.

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Group Chat : Summer Flex

Jeremy - *Hey guys ! So what about our vacation?*

Maëlyce - *Yeah, that's a great question. What are we doing?*

Indira - *We're waiting for Mommy Fanny?*

Maëlyce - *Yeah we definitely should!*

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One day, I received a black eye from someone I cared about. I got it for at least a week. On my way to school, I had to make up a lie to avoid being noticed : “I hit the glass door of my house,” I was saying. But the truth is, I got this one trying to say what I was thinking.

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"Think before you speak."

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Ever since I was a little girl, I have had a lot of comments on my report cards about chatting. In middle school, I even lost out on an award because of it. I have always had a lot to say. In the cafeteria, or even at home, I was always the last to finish eating. However, as I grew up this became rarer, and I only talk when I feel comfortable, which is what I base my friendships on. Last year, when I was in New York with some “friends,” they were looking for the subway direction. Since I had found it, I tried to explain what to do to them, until one of them cut me off and told me I was talking too much.

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"Shut up."

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So I remember telling this once, before totally erasing it from my memory. My cousin was murdered by the hand of her own mother. I was thirteen and this is actually now at 20 as we were talking in one of my classes when the memory reappeared. Basically, what happened. The mother, after having a fight with her boyfriend -which was not the dad of the child- was with my cousin in our grandma's ancient family house. She was only five or four years old and was asking for something, from what I heard. Hands on her neck, several minutes later, she was dead. And as the boyfriend was coming back he informed the police and the family. My dad was on our mutual balcony when he was called as it was his side of the family. I remember hearing the story and didn't say anything. Later this week, the whole funeral was put in place and it's only the night before that my family asked me to come to my parents room. They were all seated in a circle and I knew what was going to happen. My dad told me about it and the only thing I responded was "I knew it, I didn't tell you, because I didn't want to make you sad. "



## CODA

From my life I took my parents, I took my friends, I took my cousin, I took my mom's desire to have everything clean. I took the black eye, the kisses, and the glass door. I took my wisdom teeth. I took perfectionism. I took myself. Myself, that I constructed from everything, every experience. Every experience, as Beth Kephart says, leads to universal consequences.

I love to talk and analyze, yet somehow I have never been able to introspect on myself and my traumatizations if I can say. Mainly because I would rather keep them to myself, as it was so often asked from me when I was younger. Indeed, my friends can attest to the fact that I very rarely talk about my problems. However, I always want them to open up to me and tell me about their problems as I don't want them to feel like I do. Is it a maternal instinct? A need to be in control? Or an escape ?

"Everything has to be neat and clean in order for me to work," this was always my mother's slogan when I was at home, and still is today. Now that I've grown up, I can easily relate these remarks to my attitudes towards myself: I also need everything to be tidy in order to work. Whether professionally, personally or academically, I have to be organized. I feel guilty when I don't meet these standards. Maybe this is why I was planning on finishing my degree in 3 years. This is the self-inflicted pressure, as one of the "women" of the house. Something is expected of me. And I can also link this event to the difficulty of establishing a true understanding of my sexual orientation. I don't fit in with the norm, I don't fit in with the standards that have been instilled in me, and I'm not in control of how these people would react. So it's easier to say nothing or to hide.

*Hide, be discreet, don't attract attention.* The only real example of a relationship I've ever had was my parents. Without real love, physical contact or appreciation, my vision of relationships is distant, cold. Whether it's friendship or love, I don't like physical contact. Often, even before establishing a loving commitment, I have been reproached for not being close and affectionate enough. However, the hardest thing is willing to do it, but being afraid. What if the person doesn't like it and a conflict arises like with my parents? A clash so great that, once again, a mark forms on my face. Often, in the end, fear and the expected perfectionism get in the way of the real willingness hiding in my thoughts. And unconsciously, there's a lot more hidden in it that still needs to be analyzed.

Memoir is a life story, artfully (honestly) resurrected.  
It is a quest to understand those things that matter.  
It is a singular tale with universal consequence.

Beth Kephart