

TALK

O.K. You want to talk? Go ahead and talk.

*how strange
the challenge in your voice
as though defying me
to make you talk.
can't you see
i don't want to talk
for the sake of noise?
i want to share;
i want to share my heart with you.
i want to share your heart too –
to talk, discuss, exchange.
i yearn to talk with you
but am powerless to speak*

Well? What do you want to talk about?

*odd – your half raised newsprint
held as shield to keep away the world
holds me at bay.
do you know your paper always folds the same?
it's the way you hold your thumb
to keep the ink away.
what do i want to talk about?
so many things.
i want to tell you what i see when i look at you
i want to know what you see
when you look at me.
no!
perhaps that time has passed.
i see from your face that what you see is not me –
it can't be me.
you can't know who i am since you have never asked,
never explored,
never reached for me.
you rest content
to hold me with the folds intact
seeing only the headlines.
i wonder,
do you read the editorials
buried deep within your paper?
or are you content there also*

*with superficiality that's plain for all to see –
the public part
the headlines.
so what you see is not me
but only part of me
and i am afraid to know,
when you look at me,
who you see.*

Come on. Say something. I hate these little games of yours. It's like twenty questions. What's bothering you?

*what to say?
where to start?
how can i explain the isolation
of loving you?
how can i speak the pain
of the contempt in your eyes –
contempt for my love of you?
why can't you see
that loving me
does not diminish you
unless you believe
that loving you diminishes me.
perhaps that is why
i see
the contempt in your eyes
when you can see the love in mine.*

God, women are frustrating! You say we never talk. Well, let's talk now. The news won't be on for another twenty minutes.

*twenty minutes!
twenty minutes to tell you that
you have abdicated,
abandoned,
your responsibility
within this relationship.
do you know relationships are like homes?
people come, people go,
things happen, things change,
paint chips, walls crack.
cosmetic or symptomatic of failing foundations?
doors squeak, needing only oil at first,
but left too long must be replaced.*

*daily account must be made of little things,
of weather, of order.
daily chores,
weekly,
monthly,
yearly each task in its season must be tended.
each change assessed –
foundations reviewed –
not after collapse
but before when breaks may still be mended.
we live
inside our relationships as our homes.
yes, my love, even you!
but you have abdicated,
abandoned, your share of the maintenance
and i am required to do it all.
it is invisible to you by your choice,
yet you call me
weak,
emotional,
clinging,
illogical,
because i tend to the health of us
when you will not.
and still i am able to speak aloud the words ...
... I LOVE YOU*

That's it? It took five minutes of silence to tell me you love me? Well, I love you too.

*how?
how can you love me?
do you know how i feel about love?
how i feel about hate?
do you know how i feel about freckles?
do you know how i feel about sex?
how i feel about lovemaking?
do you know how i feel about moonlight on the snow?
about sun on the water?
about the color of your eyes?
do you know that i am afraid of snakes?
why my heart melts when you play with my hair?
do you know why i studied math?
why i studied philosophy?
do you know why i quit school?
do you know my deepest fears?
my strongest hopes?*

*do you know what i want for my children?
what i want for me? for us?
do you know my dreams? my silly, secret longings?
how I feel about the president? god? heaven and hell?
do you know that i would like to fly on a spaceship? to anywhere?
do you know that i was raped?
do you know the nightmares i live with still?
do you know any of these things?
do you know?
do you?
how can you say you love me when ...
... YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW ME!*

Huh? Oh, god! Not that again. Of course I know you. I'm married to you. What is it this time? Darling, I wish you could be a little less emotional about everything. Are things OK at work?

*must this be about something other than we?
do you really believe only i have emotions?
you want –
no!
you need my affection and love.
you depend on my support
and you are not less because of it
but
when i require the same from you
then i am emotional,
clinging,
demanding
and you see me as less
and you treat me as illogical
and i ache inside
constantly ...
... NO. THIS ISN'T ABOUT WORK ...*

Good! I'm glad work's OK. So, what's bothering you this time? The news starts in a few minutes and I want to see what happened today.

*do you know that you invest more time in the news than me?
you are interested in what happens in the world
but not interested in me.
i am a wonderful, complex, intelligent being
and i ache to share what's happening inside
but you won't ask –
and i have learned to hold my thoughts and heart.*

*“cast not thy pearls....”
wise words of an ancient god.
to share my precious self under your contempt
is truly demeaning,
is casting pearls to swine.
i no longer offer freely of my heart.
i fear you would trample me into the mud.*

Will you get on with it? If you're just going to bottle things up, I can't really do anything about it. Can I?

*perhaps you're right.
perhaps you can't do anything about it.
i can no longer speak
and you can no longer hear.
perhaps we are locked in place,
ever cycling in despair
unable to join
and so i say to you one more time
... WE NEED HELP WITH COMMUNICATION.*

Oh, for god's sake! We've discussed that before. I told you, we communicate fine.

*you're fine
so we're fine?
not so!
if i'm uncomfortable then we're uncomfortable,
because i am part of we
and so are you.
denial does not change reality
and we do not communicate well
if i can't share my heart and ...
... I FEEL SO ALL ALONE.*

There you go again. If you want a relationship that's all deep communication and feelings ... Well if you want someone who really opens himself I guess I don't know what to say. You're just being unrealistic. Men aren't like that. We don't feel things like you. We don't think like you do. And this constant nagging is really getting to me ...

*can it be true that all men are the same –
incapable of sensitivity, awareness, connection?*

*incapable?
i don't think so,
though unwilling may be true.
if so, at long last i know
i can be whole without a man.
not true when i was younger,
but you are not my first
nor i yours.
i have already been the keeper of emotion
for one man
and the price is more than i can pay again.
i am not an invisible housekeeper to be denigrated
for bearing another's share of upkeep
as well as my own.
if i cannot have an equal
i will have myself
alone
and will not feel isolated and alienated.
i will only be alone.*

Don't worry. You're exceptionally logical for a woman. You'll manage to work through this tendency to be overly emotional. I've got a lot of faith in you and I love you enough to be patient while you sort it out. I know you're not really one of those clinging women. Why don't you soak in the tub while I watch the news then we can snuggle in bed.

*yes
i am very logical
and now i see
it is not logical
to live in a place
where the role i play
is forced on me
and then i am despised
for the role i play.
you're right
i am logical
and i am not
a clinging
woman.
and through the emptiness i find my voice ...
... I WANT A DIVORCE.*