



6-15-1998

I'm Never Sure What to Expect From a Marriage

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Recommended Citation

Handler, Joan Cusack (1998) "I'm Never Sure What to Expect From a Marriage," *Westview*: Vol. 17 : Iss. 2 , Article 18.
Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/westview/vol17/iss2/18>

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I'm Never Sure What to Expect From a Marriage



ILLUSTRATION BY BOBBY AVILA

I want to be cherished. Reassured.
I want to prefer sex to sleep.
I want words
for an aggressive man: one
right out there on the line
telling me what he wants
and needs. But my husband
likes quiet.

I'm relentless, he says,
parading endless comment or
question – *What do you think?*
How do you feel? I need
a hysterectomy. Let's talk about
David, sex, the business...
We need couples therapy... But
he has nothing to say.

Silence
frightens me. Behind it some
outrage or wound smolders
too hot to form words.
My mother's taught me that.
And silence indicts: it says
it is my fault.

So I fill this marriage
with words that cover the silence:
warm safe blankets that keep it
from rising up on me,
accusing.

But tonight his silence
muzzles me. Words scurry
in frenzied circles inside
my throat. Louder and louder,
they repeat themselves.
To me.

Joan Cusack Handler

