



What A Woman Wants

Anthazia Kadir

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What a Woman Wants begins with a broken engagement. Dismayed by the inability of the men in her life to fully commit, Julia Se Pat embarks on a journey of the heart and finds herself on a constant search for love and answers.

While struggling through yet another unsatisfying relationship with her new fiancé, Nash, Julia ponders the cause of her difficulties. She wonders why the love she shared with her former fiancé couldn't overcome cultural differences and why her relationship with Nash, with whom she does share that undefined cultural background, becomes even more troubled. "Why am I tortured and haunted by love?" she asks.

Julia's quest for romantic fulfillment leads her to some peculiar choices, not the least of which is continuing her engagement to Nash, whose investment in the relationship is clearly nonexistent. She settles for his neglect, remaining committed, despite his emotional distance. Even his decision not to contact her for weeks at a time when she is out of the country doesn't discourage her; after exhaustive soul-searching, she justifies his behavior and offers forgiveness without discussion. She calmly accepts his feeble explanations, attributing his lack of enthusiasm upon her return to the fact that, "surprises didn't work well with him; he wanted things and events to be planned. A woman liked spontaneity." His lack of physical desire for her is also overlooked: "When a woman's man refused to make love to her, what was she to do? Julia waited for morning, got up, made breakfast; and he rushed off to work."

Julia consistently repeats past mistakes, proving herself vastly insecure, submissive, and easily led. A couple of brief forays into unfaithfulness with an old (married) friend during her engagement to Nash seem devoid of any moral dilemma. "Women should not be doing everything that is right," Kadir explains; "they all have that side in them—they would like for themselves a moment to indulge, live a little, and afterward return to their designated little cage."

As a heroine, Julia is simply too self-absorbed and uninspiring. The end of the book, where she expresses her desire to remain independent, feels contrived and lacks credibility; the reader is certain she will soon find another equally unsatisfactory man to obsess about while bemoaning her need for love.

Beyond the unsympathetic protagonist, *What a Woman Wants* suffers from shaky narrative structure and choppy transitions. Dialogue tends to be unnatural, and relationships are superficial and under-developed.

Julia's emotional turmoil conveys author Kadir's thoughtful introspection on the subject of love between men and women. However, these unrelenting forays into soul-searching ultimately come across as indulgent, disrupting the flow of the story and adding to a lack of narrative cohesion. Such extensive philosophical pondering may be better suited to a nonfiction format.

A talented editor and further research into proper novel structure and characterization could help shape the story into a potentially interesting tale of a woman's quest for love and independence. As it stands, *What a Woman Wants* will likely leave readers wanting much more.

JEANNINE CHARTIER HANSCOM (August 5, 2010)

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