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A woman with voluminous, curly brown hair is looking directly at the camera. She is wearing a white, long-sleeved button-down shirt that is unbuttoned at the top, revealing a black top underneath. Her hands are raised to her cheeks, and she has a slight smile. The background is bright and out of focus.

LEONARD ANDERSON JR

LOVE  
WON'T  
LET ME  
WAIT

Title

Love Won't Let Me Wait

by

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## *Prologue*

Charmaine is an intelligent and beautiful woman who thought she found the love of her life. In the initial stages, she was showered with love by Devon who placed her on a pedestal. He catered to her every whim and she wanted for nothing materially, physically or emotionally. She was sure she had found heaven on earth and Devon was her angel.

Her dreamy existence deteriorates suddenly and without warning, crashes and burns. She continues to love Devon through the agony and ecstasy, but he doesn't reciprocate any feelings or emotions. Devon disappears and Charmaine vows to find out what happened to him.

To further complicate her life, she's constantly battling a rival at work always vying for the same jobs. Her disdain turns into curiosity and then desire. Looking for attention, she contemplates giving in to her physical and emotional longings. But even through the heartbreak, disappointment and rejection, her heart's desire is to find Devon and the love they shared once upon a time.

# *Chapter One*

Charmaine walks through the condominium again to ensure that all appliances are off. It's part of her daily ritual since leaving the iron on and causing a fire three months ago. Fortunately, the smoke detectors were working properly. The fire was contained to one room with minimum damage, but it scarred her deeply emotionally. She still breaks out in sweats whenever the phone rings since that's how she learned about the incident. She checks the stove, oven and toaster, although she only used the microwave and coffee maker. She does an about face and heads to each room, unplugging all electrical appliances including the clocks. If the food wouldn't spoil, she'd unplug the fridge, too.

The orchids aren't due to be watered for a couple of days, but she sings to them while gently rubbing their petals. She adjusts the window blinds so the rising sun will kiss her babies just right without exposing them to too much sunlight. While passing the full-length mirror on the door, she stops to review her ensemble, a sky blue linen sundress with matching pumps. Sheer stockings cover her long shapely legs. Charmaine's five foot nine with a honey-like complexion and dark, piercing eyes. She's naturally beautiful with flawless skin. Today, she

decides to apply a little lipstick and blush. She scoops up some styling gel, runs her fingers through her hair and voila waves and curls. She holds her hand up to the mirror and admires the ring she bought herself. Wearing it on her ring finger, she lies often, telling folks Devon proposed. She immediately follows her news with “It’s a secret, so definitely don’t ask him about it.” She blindly picks a fragrance, sprays it in the air and runs under the droplets like it’s a light summer shower.

She inhales the vanishing aroma of bacon from breakfast, gathers her briefcase and keys and exits her condo. She starts towards the elevator and runs into her neighbor who mysteriously leaves and returns home the exact time she does every single day.

“Good morning, Ms. Walker,” says the dapper elderly gentleman fixing his handkerchief. He grabs his comb from his inside jacket pocket and strokes his hair three times.

“Good morning, Mr. Newhart. How are you today?” Charmaine asks while looking at her cell phone for the third time. She’s running late for a senior management meeting.

“The world is sure a better place with you in it,” Mr. Newhart says coyly. He then looks her up and down and shakes his head.

“You’re a Mack from way back, aren’t you Mr. Newhart?” Charmaine asks while stepping onto the elevator.

“I do the best I can for an old man,” Mr. Newhart responds entering the elevator and pushing the lobby button.

“And you're a poet and didn't know it. If I was ten years older, I’d give you a run for your money,” Charmaine says playfully.

“If I were ten years younger, I’d be walking without this damn cane,” Mr. Newhart states, then chuckles.

“You get my day off to a pleasant start every morning, Mr. Newhart. Might I ask where you’re going so early in the morning?” Charmaine asks as the elevator doors open.

“I run my errands early in the morning before rush hour. It's some real crazies out there later in the day,” Mr. Newhart professes while retrieving the keys from his pocket.

"You're a very smart man, Mr. Newhart," Charmaine says pinching him on the cheek.

She exits the lobby and hurries to her reserved parking spot. She attempts to open the door, but drops her keys. She bends to pick them up and the phone rings. It jolts her as she recalls the call about the fire, but then thinking

it's her boss, she lets it go to voice mail. The phone rings again and she misses it while starting the car. She looks at the phone and sees it's a blocked number which she never answers.

"Yo, who's calling?" Charmaine yells finally answering out of frustration. She pulls out of her parking spot and into traffic.

"This is Santino. I work for Devon at the site. "

"Okay, well Devon left an hour and a half ago. He said he was going to work, but evidently he didn't," responds Charmaine angrily.

"Miss you don't understand. There's been an explosion and we think Devon is tramped under tons of debris," Santino explains trying to remain calm.

"What? Please say it ain't so." Charmaine screams and slams on the brakes simultaneously.

"Can you get here as soon as possible?" Santino asks as emergency vehicles begin to arrive.

"I'll be there as soon as I can," Charmaine says, frantically trying to regain her composure. She then proceeds to the work site.

## *Chapter Two*

"Marilyn, how long are we going to hold up this meeting for Charmaine? I have to visit my other sites to chastise some delinquent staff members," whispers Foster Arrington, crossing his arms. He's pouting and ready to throw a tantrum. Foster is six foot two and dark-skinned with brown eyes and hair styled in twists. He's a fitness nut who spends even more time at the gym since his break up with Twania, his girlfriend of six years. He buys most of his clothing off the rack, but can pull it off because of his physique. He's been Charmaine's nemesis since arriving at the Health System four years ago. They've bumped heads five times while interviewing for the same position which neither of them won. They debate at every meeting and often go way off topic to the agony of everyone else. Marilyn always has to intervene to get them back on track. She tells them to settle their beefs offline.

"Calm down. We'll give her another five minutes, and then start the meeting. She can do her presentation another time," Marilyn says while distributing information packets around the conference table. Marilyn has been the Director of Finance for the past five years. She started with the health system twenty years ago right

out of high school. She persevered and climbed the education ladder by obtaining her Master's Degree in Health Administration. Her goal is to become a Chief Executive Officer. And based on her history and performance, she'll accomplish her objective.

"No need to wait Marilyn," Foster states, pulling the flash drive from his pocket and flaunting it. He tosses it from hand to hand almost dropping it.

"And why's that, Arrington?" Marilyn asks, knowing he's up to no good.

"I took the liberty of preparing a presentation on the same topic," Foster boasts while plugging his drive into the computer and accessing his presentation.

"You don't say," retorts Marilyn continuing her task.

"Yes, I do say. We were having similar issues in our departments and I wanted to look at the root causes. I created a report to present to the doctors via PowerPoint. I can now test it out on my colleagues first," says Foster, quickly flicking through the slides.

"You don't trust Charmaine's analytical abilities?"

"I'm not saying that at all, Marilyn."

"Then exactly what are you saying?" Marilyn asks, checking a recently sent email.

"I'm just better at what I do than she is," Foster states arrogantly while popping his collar.

"Are you sure you're not the cause of her delay? Did you stop past her house and flatten her tires or syphon her gas?" Marilyn asks judgmentally.

"I would never really do anything to cause her physical harm, Marilyn. I love playing mind games with her though. I have murdered her in my dreams several times," Foster says with a smirk.

"Keep your voice down. You don't want to be a prime suspect if something really happens," Marilyn says with concern.

"She'll be here just to get on my last nerve," Foster says, wiping his brow.

"Hello?" Marilyn picks up her phone.

"It's me, Marilyn," Charmaine says solemnly. She begins to sob on the line as Marilyn storms out of the conference room.

"Where the hell are you? I can't keep covering for your ass while you're going through this shit with your man. Your fucking game has been off for about seven months now," Marilyn screams, finally reaching her boiling point.

"But Marilyn..." Charmaine bellows, bursting into tears.

"But shit. I'm insisting you go to the Employee Assistance Program immediately or I'm going to terminate you. You need help."

"Marilyn, please listen to me. I'm begging you."

"No more."

"There's been an accident at the construction site and Devon's been buried alive," Charmaine explains while dodging through traffic. She's driving with one hand and wiping away tears with the other.

"Oh dear Lord, I'm so sorry darling. Are you sure he was on the premises?" Marilyn asks, feeling Charmaine's pain through the phone.

"One of his employees called and informed me," Charmaine says sniffing then blowing her nose.

"Handle your business, baby and call me with an update real soon. I'm sorry for coming down on you. Take a couple of days if you need it," Marilyn says in a consoling tone.

"I'm pulling up to the site right now. I'll call you when I can. Bye," Charmaine says while parking the car. Marilyn reenters the conference room to break the bad news.

## *Chapter Three*

Charmaine, weaving through traffic, experiences a million emotions while making her way to the site. She runs a series of red lights almost striking a couple of pedestrians and vehicles. Love, hate, guilt, anxiety and a barrage of other dark feelings rifle through her mind, but fear is most prevalent. The fear that Devon may be dead is just too overwhelming. Feeling claustrophobic, she opens the windows and the sunroof. She inhales and exhales deeply while crying nonstop. She vividly recalls the knock-down, drag-out fight she and Devon had before he departed. He came home after being MIA for three days. She waited a couple of hours for him to offer some type of explanation which he usually fabricated on the spot.

But on this occasion, he shit, showered, shaved, got ready for work and paid her no fucking mind. He didn't give a damn about her feelings and his actions bore witness to that fact. When she finally confronted him, he told her to kiss his ass literally and figuratively by pulling down his pants. She erupted and even threw a few household items, but he avoided them and simply laughed. After calling her a bitch, he slammed the door and supposedly headed to work.

Devon had developed a wandering eye during the relationship and acted out on a few occasions. Charmaine was deeply traumatized every time, but took him back with open arms. He continually trampled on her heart again and again, but she just licks the bottom of his boots so he can put a clean foot up her ass again. Charmaine still believes the day will come when he'll devote himself to her only as in the beginning. She continues to search for the man and relationship they had the first year and a half. But how much more can she take? She blames herself for the current state of their relationship, always questioning what she did to turn him into this monster. She wonders if she's good enough for him. Although she's a very intelligent, gorgeous and confident woman in business and other affairs, Devon is her Kryptonite.

Their relationship wasn't always this volatile. They first met at the Philly airport. They were both waiting for the same flight which was delayed out of Denver due to weather. While at an eatery Devon walked through and couldn't find a seat. He approached and asked if she'd mind sharing her table and she invited him to sit down. They were physically attracted to each other immediately. They conversed, exchanged numbers and vowed to get together when they returned from their respective trips.

Devon is five feet eleven inches tall, bald and sports a pencil mustache. He wears a diamond and also a hoop earring in his left ear. He's still buff from his days

as a college athlete where he ran track and played basketball and lacrosse. Lifting weights while incarcerated also contributed to his physique. Upon graduating from college, he went to work as an Investment Broker and that is where his story truly begins.

Devon was straight up with Charmaine from the jump. He was released from federal prison after serving a three-year stint. He was out on parole for over a year. He was incarcerated for embezzling money from clients who trusted him to protect and invest their money. He earned their trust through the years to the point where they never questioned him. He then decided he wanted to run with the big boys and live the high life. He ran through his bank accounts and credit cards in a very short period of time. In order to keep up his façade of living large, he stole from his clients until he was finally busted. Charmaine, having a forgiving spirit, believes everyone deserves a second chance. He'd paid his debt to society and she was willing to give him a chance.

The first five months were total bliss. He wined and dined her and said all the right things. Three months later, they began to cohabit. The next eight months were filled with Devon preparing home cooked meals, bubble baths, bringing roses to the job, massaging her feet, doing the chores and paying all the bills. He even came home most evenings and they spent quality time together. In an instant, it all went poof.

Charmaine arrives on the accident scene as emergency personnel contemplate how to get to Devon safely. The Department of Licenses and Inspections has representatives on the scene conducting their investigation. Employees present at the time of the accident are questioned. A group of onlookers discuss the odds of surviving and agree that they are slim to none. The area is taped off, but Charmaine slips through to ask questions.

"Let her through officers," Santino yells while waving to get her attention.

"How do you know me?" Charmaine asks, breaking her heel while walking towards Santino.

"I called you about the accident. Devon was my boss and kept pictures of you on his desk," Santino says, shaking her hand.

"Really. Were there pictures of other women, too?" Charmaine asks, watching the workers position equipment to begin the excavation process. Santino deliberately ignores her question.

"He told me if anything ever happened to him to contact you," Santino says, escorting her to the portable office.

"That seems very odd for someone who excluded you from their life," Charmaine says, perusing the office for evidence of other women.

"Well I don't know about all that."

"Does your company have a history of job-related accidents?" Charmaine asks, sitting down and crossing her legs.

"Negative. This is the first one since the company's inception twelve years ago," Santino says, retrieving a bottle of spring water. He passes her the bottle and she declines.

"That's no consolation."

"He talked about you all the time."

"Have there been any updates? Can they find him? Is he still alive?" Charmaine inquires as she begins to sob again. Santino gives her his handkerchief.

"It's a very delicate situation. To further complicate matters, there's a gas line below which could erupt at any moment," Santino says solemnly.

"My last words to him were very cruel. I'll never forgive myself if he's dead," Charmaine says as Santino pats her on the shoulder.

"You can't blame yourself for what happened."

"If I'd just let things be, he wouldn't have left early and been involved in this horrific accident. So it's indirectly my fault," Charmaine says, fidgeting in the chair. There are several knocks on the door.

"Come in," says Santino walking to the door.

"Hey Boss, it's me. We've done a headcount and everyone's present except for Devon," Luigi says, handing him the employee checklist.

"Thanks."

"What's your position in this company?" Charmaine asks while staring at Luigi. She's paying particular attention to his right eye, which appears to be glass.

"I'm Devon's second in command. I run things when he's not here," Santino says boastfully.

"The police are here and want to talk to Devon's next of kin. There's no one listed on file, so maybe Ms. Charmaine would like to talk to them," Luigi states while bending to tie his boots.

"Why would they want to talk to me? Has this been declared a crime? Does someone know something they're not telling me?" Charmaine asks, heart racing.

"I asked the same question and they say its standard procedure," Luigi chimes in while walking towards the door.

"I'm sure they're routine questions. Tell them you'll come down to the police station after you regain your composure. Or they can send an officer to your

residence. I'm sure they'll understand," Santino says, assisting Charmaine from the chair.

"That's a wonderful suggestion," Charmaine says, straightening her skirt.

"Please keep us informed of any additional updates. If there's anything we can do to help you through this, please let us know immediately. We loved Devon, too," Santino says as Charmaine exits the office.