

I'm Not Your Loretta Divine

by Dayniah Manderson

All I kept thinking about is that they'd want to cast Ms. Loretta Divine to play me in the part of my love story that included you. Of course, I would never have allowed it because she doesn't have a physical disability, making her an unlikely choice.

The script would get to a point where Divine had found contentment in her grown children and a man who was wholly devoted to her, but who never got her full dosage of romantic love. She would be sitting on her porch telling an entertaining story about one of her children and everyone listening would have their eyes fixated on her. It would be during this animated storytelling that you would be seen walking towards her as a tune fit for a dramatic scene would start playing. Divine would stop mid-sentence, spend a few seconds looking flustered, but would compose herself in a most dignified way by the time you parted your lips to say hello. What she would do in the minutes that passed would be in stark contrast to what I would. I didn't want this to be a typical Loretta Divine part.

But, you were the kind of man that Divine ended up spending most of her life reminiscing about. You fit the role of the elusive romantic who swept her off her feet, kept her suspended in air long enough to feel safe, then slam her happy ass back to the ground before stepping on and over her. You are just the type to show up unannounced expecting to use your charms to make her wonder if you had changed enough to give her heart back to you. You would take her on a walk down Memory Lane, except that your version was edited and you'd be both hero and victim, much like streets get renamed in someone's honor. It would be right after this fantastical tale that you would transition into your woe is me telling of how Karma crept up your ass and turned your life to shit.

Divine would tear up and be swept away by emotions. She would have the viewer at the edge of her seat with great acting. You would count on the ember you had lit a long time ago to spark into love once more. She'd reach out for your hands, squeeze them, and console you with her understanding of how life can force you to make tough decisions. It would all be genuine because she needed to believe that you loved her once upon a time and you really had no choice but to abandon her until this very moment. It wasn't supposed to matter that you came to your realization of how much you missed her at the same moment that you needed her, and it wouldn't matter to her. Instead, it would give her a sense of purpose again. She would allow you to embrace her and weep, blowing snot all over her pretty, silk blouse. Never could I.

So, before it got to any of that, I figured it would be best to interrupt the regularly scheduled programming and revise the script. It won't be the typecast Ms. Divine even though you're exactly like the men who broke her heart. I really should do this in person, but it would take too much energy to cast out the legions of lying demons with narcissistic tendencies that will lash out at me. Let's not make this an exorcism. Truth hurts and hurt people hurt people. So, I may just take that casual stroll down Memory Lane if you'll indulge me by making that right on Elm Street.

I guarantee you won't be shocked to learn that most of the houses on Elm don't look the same as they once did. Beautifully manicured lawns that used to be maintained with quality manure are now patches of brown from neglect. I'll point to the house that once had the expansive pool that we would spend hours in just painting a happy future. It was drained long ago when the clouds interrupted our floating and the rainy season set in for good. We can stop in front of the house where the police interrogated me for hanging out with the likes of you. Remember him warning me that you'd be nothing but trouble? I'll probably sigh when I think about how much more he knew you than I did. You'll ask me what that sigh was about and I'll probably say that we should've never been sitting on those steps in the first place. Yeah, the steps seemed like the problem back then because I loved the likes of you.

I'll shed a tear at the house where the you used a sword to carve the words "fucking cripple bitch" into the heart of the woman you claimed you'd love forever. I always knew you were lying, but you'd convinced yourself it was true and I believed you because I wanted to. There are some lots that we can skip altogether. Those houses were engulfed by fires that could've been put out if only help had come in time. No one ever agrees on how the fires ever got started; everyone points the finger. We can finally stop at the end of the block where the abandoned houses are. I'll picture them as they once were and will never be again. You'll probably consider putting in an offer and renovating it to its former beauty. It "has good bones" is what you're likely to say and I will suggest demolition.

I'm not your Loretta Divine, though. No, I won't let you cry on my shoulder. You won't trip me up with guilt or trick me with your magic. I won't let you cop a feel. Our final scene will not have passionate lovemaking or a toast to us. I won't be understanding of your plight. No. This won't be a divine moment, at least not for you anyway.