



# *Never Too Late*

## *For Love*

By Tabitha Gibson

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He was late again.

After all the years they had been married, she thought that for once, he would be on time. It was after all, their anniversary.

She swore ever year she wouldn't worry, but she did. And when he finally arrived home, they argued. Actually, she argued. He listened. He let her get out all of her frustration before holding her tightly. They she would cry and he would tell her he loved her.

She vowed she wouldn't do it again this year. She would smile at him when he got home, serve him their favorite dinner and invite him upstairs early for bed. She almost grinned at the thought. Boy, wouldn't he be surprised.

She glanced at the clock and pushed away the nagging in the back of her mind that something was wrong. It was a bad habit of hers: the constant worrying.

He would smile some more and tell her how wonderful she was, which made her madder still. The relief in her heart however, seem to balance it out.

Walking into the kitchen, she turned the oven down to warm and checked the rice on the stove. It was ready, but would have to stay on simmer for the moment. She didn't want to have to heat it up in a few minutes when he got home.

Although she struggled against the urge, she peered out of the window, looking for his car or headlights, but there was nothing. She idly picked her nails and paced before almost leaping out of her skin when the phone rang. Her heart sank slightly as she picked up the receiver to find it wasn't her husband, but was grateful at the same time. It was a friend calling to wish her a happy anniversary.

After a few minutes of chatting, she noticed headlights coming down the road and bid her friend goodbye. She hurried back to turn the oven off and pull out the baked chicken.

Taking another quick look out the window, she was dismayed to see that it hadn't been his car. With a deep sigh, she returned the chicken to the oven, then walked out to the living room and sat down.

Emotions chased each other around her heart and mind. Was he hurt? Was he still working? Why couldn't he, for once, be on time for their anniversary? Tears of frustration slipped down her cheeks and she angrily wiped them away. He was really going to hear about it this time!

An hour later, she heard the key in the lock and sprang to her feet. She was ready for the fight. Why not? Wasn't this their yearly tradition? It certainly wasn't him being on time or giving her flowers. She stood a few feet from the door, arms akimbo and waited.

But when the door opened, relief flooded her entire body, which was soon replaced with love. She watched as he shut the door behind him and turned to face her.

Was that a prepared look on his face? Had he been expecting both barrels from her?

Her heart dropped in shame.

Their gazes locked across the few feet that separated them. She felt frozen in place. She was angry, yes, but she realized it wasn't with him. It was with herself. She swore this time, she wouldn't worry but she had.

With slow, sure steps, she walked up to her husband, put her arms around him and held him tightly. He smelled so good and felt even better. It felt right. Tightening her grip around his waist, she was comforted by his returned embrace. No words were spoken as they held each other. This was what was important, what mattered most.

Unconditional love.

Why then, had she always argued with him? She reasoned it was out of love, but it wasn't. It was out of fear. Fear of losing the man who held her heart, the man she exchanged vows with so many years ago.

She chided herself for allowing her insecurities to play on those fears. She made a silent, final promise. She would let them go and trust in their love.

"Sorry I'm late."

She giggled as she looked up to his surprised face. "You're always late."

She melted in his half smile.

"Something smells good."

She nodded and turned to retrieve their dinner from the oven, but found herself swept up into his arms. She gave a slight gasp before succumbing to his soft nuzzling against her neck.

"I wasn't referring to the food in the oven."

A wide smile played across her lips and she circled her arms around his neck. Lifting her chin, pressed closer to him and kissed him. His returned kiss was full of passion and very surprising. They hadn't done this in years. It made her realize how much she missed it - and him.

When he headed for the stairs, she grasped the stair railing, halting his progress. "What about dinner?"

A slow grin split his lips and he kissed her yet again. "What about dessert?"

She giggled.

"I like that," he said, suddenly sounding serious.

"What's that?"

"Your laugh. You don't do it often enough."

Without knowing it, he had tugged at her heartstrings and confirmed her suspicions.

"Well, I plan to change that, along with a few other things," she said and kissed the tip of his nose.

"Such as?"

"I'm not going to worry so much."

He roared with laughter. She playfully pushed at his chest and he gave her another breath-taking kiss.

"You'll always worry."

"And you'll always be late."

They smiled at each other before scampering up the stairs for a special dessert that was long overdue.