

BY LYNDA ALLISON DOTY

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# Larissa's Song

# LARISSA'S SONG

by Lynda Allison Doty

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Printed in the United States of America



WORD AFLAME PRESS  
8855 Dunn Road, Hazelwood, MO 63042  
[www.pentecostalpublishing.com](http://www.pentecostalpublishing.com)

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## Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Doty, Lynda Allison,  
Larissa's song / by Lynda Allison Doty.  
p. cm.  
ISBN 0-932581-74-9  
1. Doty, Lynda. Lisa said no. II. Title.  
PS3551.L456L37 1990  
813'.54--dc20

90-12755  
CIP

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# 1

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## The Mysterious Guest

This was the seventh time in one day that the little group had gathered outside. Lisa didn't know what to do about it. She had tried talking with the leader of the group and was rewarded with a tomato—an actual rotten, squishy tomato—splashing across her face.

Maggie Brown pulled the soft lace curtain back with nervous fingers and peered outside. She was Lisa's receptionist and secretary, the only volunteer who had not quit. Maggie's usual calm demeanor was swallowed up now by apprehension. Her lips glistening, she dropped the curtain and turned to face her boss. "Why don't we call the cops?"

*Cops.* Lisa's heart always skipped a beat whenever the police were mentioned. It made her think of Wally. She blinked back unshed tears and turned to look at Maggie. The two women were in the front waiting room of the place Lisa had founded eight years ago, The Pregnancy Center. Decorated in shades of rose and blue with a hint of Victorian, it was a warm and comfortable room.

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The Pregnancy Center occupied the front corner office of a small medical complex. It was an older building, but the owner had allowed Lisa to paint and paper to suit herself. In the beginning, donations had been generous, providing lovely furnishings throughout the Center. "Let's call the cops," Maggie said again, more insistent this time. "Let's get Wally."

"They have the right to be out there," Lisa said. "You know that."

"Maybe so, but not to be violent—like those broken windows!"

"True." Lisa pursed her lips. Prank phone calls. Demonstrations. Throwing rocks. Rotten tomato juice on all the windows.

"Well, I don't know about you, but I think I'll go home. It's almost four and deader than a doornail."

"Sure. Go ahead. But go out the back."

Maggie sat there for a few minutes just looking at her boss. Lisa looked tired, with squiggly little lines around her eyes. Maggie knew Lisa had not been sleeping well. All of this harassment was taking its toll on her. "Can I get you something before I go?"

Lisa shook her head, blew a kiss, and motioned for the younger girl to leave. Maggie had no sooner left by the back door than there was a firm knock on the front door. Without hesitation, Lisa flung the door open. There stood a woman about forty-five, well-dressed, maybe a professional of some kind. She was an attractive woman, a little on the heavy side, with an unusual combination of raven hair and pale gray eyes. Almost silver. They looked shrewd, haunted, piercing.

The older woman spoke. "Are you Mrs. Swenson?"

“Yes.”

“Are you alone? I have to talk to you.” Her voice was barely more than a whisper. Raspy.

“Sure. Come on in.” Lisa tried to ignore the strange aura that seemed to surround her visitor and indicated the soft, comfortable love seat in front of the window.

After they were settled, Lisa asked, “That mob out front didn’t scare you off?”

The trace of a smile played around the older woman’s lips. Her eyes bore into Lisa’s like hot coals. “Should they have?”

Lisa was uncomfortable. “What do you want to talk to me about?”

“My name is Jennifer James. I am an attorney. My office is over on Tenth Street.” By way of introduction, she withdrew a business card from the pocket of her blazer and handed it to Lisa. “I thought you might be able to use my assistance.”

A volunteer? Lisa’s face brightened. “That sounds great. What’s your background?”

“I got my juris doctorate from a small school back east about ten years ago.”

“Where back east?”

“Georgia. Atlanta.”

“And you’re prolife?”

“To the core.”

Jennifer James’ words sounded fine, but somehow Lisa had a feeling that the woman was not telling the truth.

“And you wanted to talk about being a volunteer?”

“Oh no, not exactly. But I have come as a friend, to warn you—”