

## RAGING HORMONES

by

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*Oh Law, why don't this blamed dress top fit me? Seems like I can't do nothing right no more. I pre-shrunk the material, I used the same pattern I've used for the last two years, and I know I sewed the seams the same as I always do. So what is it? The darts seem like they're too high up for my breasts, I can't button the waist in the back. And, thank You, God, I know for a fact I ain't pregnant.*

Lynn, is that you coming in? Your dad wants you to help him out in the barn, so soon as you put your books down and change out of those school clothes, you get on out there, you hear? *I don't even have to see her face, I can hear what it looks like by the size of that sigh. I'll have to poke and prod at her for the next half hour to get her to do what she couldn't wait to do a year ago. I don't know what's got into that girl.*

Lynn? Come here a minute and help me fit this dress. No, it ain't for you, I'm making me a Sunday-go-to-meeting dress. I ain't had a new one in two years. Something seems to have gone wrong on this one, see if you can button me up the back.

*Okay now Margaret, try to be still. You need this girl's help and you just have to get ahold of yourself. Oh Law, listen to me talking to my own self inside my head. What's next? The men in white coats? God! I wish she'd hurry up!*

What do you mean it won't fit? I am not too fat! I'm just as fat or as thin as ever. I mean I'm the exact same size! Well I am. Give me that tape measure out of the drawer there.

*Who does she think she is calling me fat? I ought to slap her silly. The skinny thing, she's plumb pitiful herself, no wonder she thinks I'm fat.*

What does it say? I can't read those little bitty numbers. Thirty-six? It ain't no such a thing. You must have it turned inside out. Why your own father's waist ain't that big.

*My God, she's right. Thirty-six of the waist? Why that's almost as big as my hips. What'll I do? Oh no, I don't want to cry. Oh what's the use.*

Just leave me alone. I can cry if I please. Get on out and help your dad.

*I'm hot. What's happening to me? I'm flashing, I'm fat, I can't keep myself from crying. I feel mad about half the time and feel like killing myself the other half. I hate my life! It's all Donald's fault! If I hadn't married him I wouldn't be trapped out here on this blamed farm. I'd be living in the city, going to shows, going out dancing, wearing store bought clothes and eating store bought food. I never was fat when I lived in the city! Why do I even try to mess with making a dress? It's stupid! I may as well forget about going to church. Just stay here in my overalls cooking and cleaning and making garden. This dress idea was stupid. I might as well cut it up for quilt pieces. Where's my scissors? There. There. That'll fix you you damned ignorant rag! You call yourself a dress? Ha. You can just be a quilt. Even that's too good for you.*

God Almighty Lynn, you like to scared me out of my wits. What do you want now? Well, I'm cutting out quilt pieces if it's any of your business. Did you help your dad? Uh-huh, well go do your homework. Well then, go peel some potatoes for supper, just go do something and leave me be.

*That girl'll be the death of me. And it's all Donald's fault. He should of stayed a widower and*

*raised those two girls his own self instead of chasing after me and getting me to marry him.*

What do you need a new dress for? It ain't Christmas or Easter and I don't see you ballooning up like a spring pig. A date? Whose date? You ain't old enough to go on no date, you ain't but fourteen years old. Oh he did, did he? Well, your dad don't make all the rules around here, and if he said it was okay with him, I'm certain he meant it was okay with him if it was okay with me, which it ain't.

*Blame his eyes! That man is fool hardy when it comes to his youngest girl. It's plain as the nose on your face that he loves her more than he does me. If he thinks for one minute that I'm going to stand still for this child going out and getting herself pregnant like her sister did -- well.*

We'll just see about that young lady. And you'd better watch your mouth. You go smarting off to me one too many times and I'll knock you upside the head. You ain't too big to whip neither.

*Look at her sulk. Law, I'm hot enough to die! The sweat's just a pouring off my head. I hate when it runs down my side like that too. I'll have to take another bath tonight, and it's only been two days.*

Help me put the washtub on the wood stove, child. Because I said so that's why. Yes, if you must know, I am going to take another bath. Now go get a pail of rainwater from the barrel.

*Like pulling teeth to get her to do anything. Used to be so easy when she was little. She was so loving and sweet. Poor little thing lost her mama when she wasn't bigger than a minute. I loved her little high voice calling me Mother. Reminded me of when my own daughter was little. Of course, Gladys didn't live with me that much. But now when Lynn says "Mother" she says it like she was talking to the devil himself. Maybe I should let her date. Maybe she'd get knocked up and leave home.*

Pour that right in the washtub there. Good. Now do what I told you awhile ago. Get in there and start some supper. Yeah, well, I'm sick of potatoes, gravy and biscuits every night myself. You want to go kill a chicken and fry it up? I didn't think so. Well, I don't either. I don't live to cook and clean and sew new dresses for you, you know.

*What do I live for? Why the impudence of that girl. I oughta ....*

There! You been needing that for a long dang time. Go on! Go run to your father, see if I care! Shoot! Blame it! Oh God why did you let me do that? I didn't mean to hit her Lord. I swear I didn't. Oh God, now Donald is going to have a fit. If I was going to hit her I shoulda put her over my knee, not slapped her across the face like that. Shoot. My hand stings. Look at it. Red as a beet. She'll be swole up for sure. Donald's going to spit nickels. Oh God. I'd better pray. Dear God, Father in Heaven, forgive me for hitting that child. I don't know what's come over me God. I'm not myself. I cry, I get mad, God, I even think of suicide and I know that's one sin You can't forgive. God help me not to be in too much trouble with my family. They're all I've got besides You God, and I can't even visit Your house because I don't have a dress to wear and I've cut my material into quilt pieces. I'm sorry. God, please help me stop crying and being such a fool. Please God. Oh no. Here comes Donald. No, it's Lynn again.

Lynn child, come here. Oh Lynn, I'm so sorry. Let me see your poor face. Darling, I am sorry, I am truly. Let me bathe it for you, here, let me see.

*Oh no. It's going to be purple there on her cheek. Thank you God for placing a visible reminder of how sinful I was to hit this young girl.*

You're going to have a bruise there, Lynn. I'm sorry. I shoulda turned you over my knee for

sassing, but I shouldn't of ever lost my temper and hit you in the face. That was very wrong, and I don't blame you if you're mad at me. Are you? I thought so. Well, I don't blame you. What did Donald say?

*She didn't tell him?*

Why not? I thought you'd run and tell on me. I see.

*She's right, she's no tattletale. Maybe she's not such a child as I thought.*

Well, I'll tell him what I did. I'll tell him why, too. But first I think the three of us ought to talk about this dating business.

*Look at the hope on her face. Oh the innocence that she owns. Dear God, thank you for sending me this child. For giving me another chance to raise a daughter. Help me become a better mother before it's too late.*

Alton is his name? I like that name. It's a good clean name. What kind of boy is he, anyhow?

*Wonder what a dress would look like made out of quilt pieces? On somebody thin like Lynn it might look kinda cute. I could make a solid bodice, maybe use that peach color I've got set back for curtains. And then I'll set to work on a dress for myself. Maybe there's enough of that peach material to make a whole dress for me plus a bodice for Lynn. Probably is if I cut careful.*

Well, he sounds real nice. Your dad and I oughta meet him.

*Look at her blush. I guess her woman feelings have started up already. And it ain't been two years since she got the curse. Her just starting, me being about through. Guess there's woman feelings on both ends of the deal. Only hers are fresh and eager, mine are wore out and mad most of the time. This too shall pass, I need to remember that.*

Remember child, this too shall pass. The embarrassment, the shyness, the being upset with grownups -- that'll all pass away. Just like for me, I have to remember the anger will pass away.

We're more alike than either one of us realizes. Oh now, don't get that look -- I know you're different from me. But we're both of us women and we're blessed and cursed with all that means.

Now let's get supper ready before Donald comes in here and wonders what his women-folk been up to all day.

*Oh Law, here comes another hot flash. Hang on Margaret, this too shall pass.*

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