

STARS FOR SYLVIA

by

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CHAPTER FOUR

A BIG MOMENT FOR SYLVIA

SYLVIA THREW the dish towel over the rod and took off her blue-checked apron. "Mind if I go over to Claudia's, Mom?"

"Claudia's? I didn't know you and Claudia were chummy," her mother replied as she hung the dishpan under the sink; then she turned toward Sylvia with an expression of love and interest in her hazel eyes.

"We're not. It's just that, well, Friday on the way home from school, I invited her to Sunday school and she asked me some questions I couldn't answer. But Miss Harper told me what to tell her."

"All right, run along. I'd like to see Claudia a Christian, for her mother's sake. She and I used to be close friends."

"I remember." Sylvia kissed her mother's full cheek. She hurried into her room to get her Bible; then she walked onto the porch. There she sat on the swing and moved slowly back and forth.

As she thought of going to Claudia's, several things bothered her.

There was the question of whether she ought to go to Claudia's or Nancy's. Nancy was her best friend. She would hate to lose her on account of Claudia. Nancy had been so put out because she didn't wait for her on Friday. Yesterday, when she went over to Nancy's, she had explained and explained.

Nancy had finally got over feeling hurt and this morning they were as close pals as ever. Nancy had even told her twice that her yellow dotted Swiss dress looked pretty on her. And it did!

Sylvia smoothed the full skirt so it would circle around her. Then she frowned as she remembered how distant Nancy had been the minute she knew Sylvia wasn't coming to her house this afternoon but had planned to go to see Claudia.

Sylvia wondered, Was Claudia worth a fuss with Nancy? She wasn't at all sure Claudia would even listen to her talk about Jesus.

She had gone to Miss Harper's house to find out the answers to Claudia's questions and instead Miss Harper had given her a list of verses to learn. Perhaps they wouldn't answer Claudia's questions.

Sylvia took the slip of paper out of her Bible and studied the first heading:

"For the seeking soul."

Under it, three verses were listed. Sylvia repeated, "Romans 3:23: **'For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.'** There, that one is easy." Then came John 3:16. "**'For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son.'**" She stood up and straightened her shoulders decisively—if Jesus could leave Heaven to die for her, she could risk Nancy's friendship to speak to Claudia about Him.

She glanced at the next reference. "First Corinthians 15:3 and 4. That's a long, hard one. I'll say it as I walk."

She started down the street, slowly repeating, "**'For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.'** There," she sighed, "I suppose that verse explains John 3:16 by telling what one is supposed to believe about Jesus."

Sylvia paused in front of the large apartment building and breathed, "Lord, help me." Then, she skipped up the steps and rang the bell marked "Brown."

In a minute the door opened and Claudia welcomed her with a smile. "I wondered if you'd remember. Come on in." She held the door wide open.

Sylvia entered and, in one glance, she saw that the room was not pretty as her home was. The upholstery was green velour, but the nap was worn thin in places, and the lace curtains hung limp at the windows.

"Dad's out," Claudia told her, dropping into the corner of the divan Sylvia nodded, and sat beside her, putting her Bible between them.

Claudia picked it up, and aimlessly turned the pages. "I told Dad we were talking about the Bible and he said to tell you that the crossing of the Red Sea wasn't a miracle at all; that it was nothing but a strong wind that blew the water back."

Oh, there she went with more questions that Sylvia didn't ask Miss Harper! Then Sylvia remembered. "But that's right. When we studied the crossing of the Red Sea, I remember the Bible said **'The Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night.'**" She took the Bible from Claudia and turned rapidly to Exodus.

But Claudia went right on. “Besides, my dad says that the Bible says that David was a man after God’s own heart, and yet he did awful things like sending that woman’s husband out to battle so he’d be killed.”

Sylvia closed the Bible and slowly nodded her head. “I know. We studied that in Sunday school and the Scripture said that by doing that David had given the enemies of the Lord occasion to talk.”

“Does it? Well, even so, my dad says it’s funny that a religious book tells about everyone’s sins. Why doesn’t it tell about the good things men have done?”

“That’s one of the reasons we know that the Bible is inspired. Men brag about themselves and try to cover their sins; but the Bible tells the truth about them.”

“But my dad—”

“Claudia,” Sylvia interrupted, “you keep saying ‘my dad says.’ Did you ever read the Bible for yourself?”

“Why, no, I—”

“Then how can you know what it says?” Sylvia felt it was a waste of time to argue with Claudia when she really didn’t know what was in the Bible, and decided to go on to the really important part of it all. “Don’t you want to be a Christian?”

“Why, what do you think I am?” Claudia flared up, her fair skin turning a deep pink. “A Jew, like Sarah Bernstein?”

“Of course not. Just because a person isn’t a Jew doesn’t mean she’s a Christian.”

“Then, what is she?”

“A person who is not a Jew is a Gentile. That’s a matter of race,” Sylvia answered, glad she knew the difference. She decided to ask her question another way, and said, “Claudia, don’t you want to be saved?”

“Saved?” Claudia repeated, a blank look on her face.

Sylvia had the feeling that she was talking Greek to Claudia, but she reworded her question to “Don’t you believe Jesus saves?”

Claudia leaned back and her blue eyes clouded. “Sometimes I don’t know for sure what I believe. Sometimes I think there is a God who cares for me and sometimes I don’t know. Once when I was out in the car with my dad, he’d been drinking and was driving real fast and we landed in the ditch.

“It wrecked the car but we were both saved from being hurt, so if that is what you mean, why, yes, I believe God saves sometimes.”

“The Lord does help that way,” Sylvia answered, promising herself she wouldn’t ever ask another girl if she wanted to be saved. If a girl didn’t know she was lost, how could she want to be saved? She was quiet several minutes as she thought of what to say next. Finally, she blurted out, “Don’t you believe in Jesus?”

“Jesus! Mom used to talk to me about Him, lots. Only—well, it seems like a long time ago.”

She crossed the room, picked up an easel frame from the table and passed it to Sylvia. “This is the only picture I have of Mom.”

Sylvia studied the picture of a pretty young woman with light hair in a long bob, and serious blue eyes. She could see that Claudia looked like her mother.

Claudia dropped back onto the divan and continued, “Mom taught me to pray, and used to read me Bible stories. Dad used to laugh and say it was all right for women to believe; then Mom was so sick, and after she died, Dad said it was mean of God to take Mom when we loved her and needed her so much. Since then, he says he doesn’t believe in anything. And I don’t know what I believe.”

“I’m sorry that the Lord took your mother. I know you miss her. But that’s where we have to trust, and figure God knows best.”

Sylvia tried to comfort Claudia, thinking how sad she would be if the Lord took her own mother. But too, she knew that if He did, she would go to Heaven and that was a beautiful place. She went on, “And if you believe as your mother believed, then someday you’ll meet her in Heaven.”

“That’s right. I must believe like Mother,” Claudia almost whispered.

Sylvia drew in her breath, and with a prayer went on. “Then you must do as the Bible says. It says, ‘**All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.**’”

“Sinned?” Claudia raised her head defiantly.

“All,” Sylvia repeated. “All.”

“I know I do wrong sometimes. I suppose I ought to obey Dad better. But what’s that got to do with my seeing Mom?”

“Because, before Jesus can help you, you have to know you need help. You have to know you’re a sinner. Then God will help you because He ‘**so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that who soever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.**’”

“Believe what?” Claudia questioned.

Afraid she didn't know the verse perfectly, Sylvia turned quickly to First Corinthians and half-read, half-repeated, “**How that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day—**’ Don't you see, God sent His Son to die on the cross for your sins and mine? Don't you believe that?”

“Yes,” Claudia slowly nodded her head. “I believe that. Now, what do I do?”

Sylvia gasped! What did she do next?

“Oh,” she stammered, “why, I think you'd better kneel, and pray and tell Jesus you believe He died for you, and that you want Him to come into your heart.”

Claudia knelt in front of the divan and Sylvia knelt beside her, feeling the same awe in her heart as when she had told the Lord she believed in Him as Saviour. The room was so still! Sylvia prayed anxiously, “O Lord, be sure she does it right.”

Slowly, falteringly, Claudia prayed, all that Sylvia had told her to say. Tears came into Sylvia's eyes—she had won her first soul to Jesus!

~ end of chapter 4 ~

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