

STARS FOR SYLVIA

by

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CHAPTER SEVEN

BAD NEWS!

THE BIG HALL was filled with teen-agers gathered for the youth rally. Sylvia waved to some of her friends and found seats near the front for Claudia, La Von, and herself. She did enjoy being there. The fast, peppy choruses matched her enthusiastic spirit; and then, when everyone grew quiet and hummed "*Spirit of the living God, afresh on me,*" she felt so solemn. It was beautiful.

The young evangelist, Jud Dunbar, prayed; then a girls' trio sang "*Nothing between my soul and the Saviour.*" Sylvia thought it was just perfect!

Every fiber of her being responded to the message. She felt as if she wanted to go all the way for Jesus. Once or twice she glanced at Claudia and could tell from the flush on her face and the glow in her eyes that she felt the same way.

But La Von looked bored. She swung her feet and fussed with her red belt. How could she sit there, not even interested!

When the altar call was given, young people streamed down all the aisles, but La Von didn't move. Sylvia prayed, but La Von only fidgeted from one foot to another. Finally the benediction was pronounced and the girls left the auditorium.

They walked along the quiet streets. Almost fearfully, Sylvia asked, "Did you like the meeting, La Von?"

"Oh, the speaker was all right, but I couldn't help wondering if Fern and Marguerite were having a keen time. I hope I can go to the Shore Club some other time. Religion may be all right for you and Claudia, but I want a good time while I'm young."

"**Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth,**" Sylvia repeated.

"There you go again with that verse!"

Without another word, the girls walked to the corner. There La Von said, "See you Monday."

“Good night.” Sylvia watched as La Von, with her quick light step, disappeared into the darkness; then she walked on with Claudia.

“I enjoyed the meeting. The speaker made Christ seem so real,” Claudia murmured.

“Yes, he did,” Sylvia answered fervently.

“Will you come by for me Sunday morning?” Claudia asked when they reached her house. Sylvia could see the light in the window and while she was glad that Mr. Brown had waited up for Claudia, she hoped that he wouldn’t say anything to take the edge off her joy.

She waited until the door closed behind Claudia; then she walked slowly toward her own home, wondering. Claudia was so happy in the Lord, but La Von wasn’t interested at all. Sylvia had thought when Claudia accepted the Lord as Saviour so quickly that it was going to be easy to win her other friends. But it looked as if it wouldn’t be. She wondered what made the difference between the girls.

She prayed about both La Von and Claudia that night before she went to bed. Next morning she was too busy to think about either one of them. Saturday was work day at the Ingles’ household. Sylvia’s mother did her extra weekend baking, and Sylvia’s job was to vacuum and dust the front room. Sylvia was carefully dusting the tops of the pictures when the front door-bell rang.

She gave one look of regret at her soiled pink dress but called, “I’ll go, Mom.” She put down her dust cloth, opened the front door, and exclaimed, “La Von!”

“Did you hear?” La Von cried, her heart-shaped face chalk white and her deep blue eyes sunk in their sockets.

“Hear what?” Sylvia asked with a feeling of alarm. “Oh, there was an awful accident last night! As they were coming home. I . . .”

“Here, sit down and tell me,” Sylvia gently pushed La Von onto the swing and sat beside her. “I suppose something has happened to Fern and Marguerite.”

“Yes,” La Von gulped. “Fern’s mother phoned me this morning. It seems that on the way home the four of them crowded into the front seat. Of course Fern had to sit beside Knox. And Marguerite wouldn’t sit in the rumble seat because she said the wind would blow her hair. And then, Charlie wouldn’t sit back there by himself. It was his fault, really.”

“How?” Sylvia urged.

“Oh, he coaxed Knox to go a little faster and a little faster until, when they rounded a turn, with Fern sitting so close to him, Knox couldn’t turn the wheel fast enough. The car went off the road, and turned over.”

“How awful! Were they badly hurt?”

“Bad enough. Lucky for them some people in another car saw the accident. One of the men stayed with them and the other went for help, and they were taken to the hospital. And that’s all I know.”

Sylvia could just see them all, hurt and suffering. And as far as she knew, none of them was saved! She just had to know how seriously they were hurt. She jumped to her feet. “Let’s phone Mrs. Wilcox again. I’m sure she knows.”

“You phone. I feel too bad.”

“All right,” Sylvia nodded.

The girls went into the house. La Von curled up in the big easy chair while Sylvia stepped into the kitchen to tell her mother of the accident. Then she phoned Mrs. Wilcox and talked a long time to the excited, sobbing mother. When she finished, she went over and sat on the arm of La Von’s chair.

“I got all the details. She says Fern’s leg is broken and that she’s to have it in a cast. She will have to stay at the hospital for some time. She asked me to go see Fern, and I told her we all would.”

“And Marguerite?”

“She wasn’t hurt as bad as Fern, but bad enough. She was pretty badly bruised, and her face was cut by flying glass.”

“And the boys?”

“Charlie was thrown clear and suffered only bruises. They’ve already sent him home, but Knox is hurt pretty seriously. His ribs were crushed by the steering wheel.”

“It’s often worse on the one who’s driving,” La Von nodded knowingly. Then she looked up at Sylvia, with tears in her eyes. “Oh, Sylvia, if I hadn’t been with you at that meeting, I’d have been with them and hurt, maybe even worse than the others.”

“No!” Sylvia protested. It was bad enough to have four of her friends hurt without thinking how close La Von had been to going with them.

“Yes, I would have. I was just aching to go, but—” She set her pointed chin. “I’m never going on dates like that one—ever. Ever since I talked to Mrs. Wilcox, I keep hearing that verse you told me. **‘Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.’** See, I can repeat it and I never even studied it. And tomorrow, I’m going to church with you.”

“La Von, I’m so glad!” She clasped her friend’s hand in hers and thought, “Miss Harper is right. **It is the Word of God that convicts. It isn’t anything I said or even that the preacher said last night, but the Word of God that La Von remembers.**”

“Is it hard to be a Christian?” La Von asked.

“You come and see,” Sylvia encouraged. For a moment she thought maybe she ought to try to talk to La Von as she had to Claudia, but as long as La Von was willing to go to Sunday school she decided she had better let Miss Harper talk to her about the Lord.

“I’d better go now.” La Von stood up, giving her red skirt a straightening tug. “Will you and Claudia come by for me?”

“Yes, and I hope Nancy will be with us. She always goes.”

Sylvia hopefully remembered her friend. Surely Nancy couldn’t hold a grudge when it was time to go to church! “We’ll be there about a quarter after nine.”

“I’ll be ready,” La Von promised. Then with a relieved smile, she left.

Sylvia closed the door, leaned against it and prayed:

“O Lord, now that she is ready to listen, please show her how to be a Christian and how to live for Thee. In Jesus’ name. Amen.”

~ end of chapter 7 ~

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