

STARS FOR SYLVIA

by

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CHAPTER NINE

SECOND TRY

SYLVIA AND NANCY were hurrying down the school corridor between class periods when Sylvia spied La Von. She called, "Did you hear how the kids were?"

La Von stopped and with a sad smile, answered, "I talked to Mrs. Wilcox this morning. She says Knox is better, and that Marguerite left the hospital; but poor Fern'll be there for a long time."

"I'm sorry."

"So am I."

"She wants me to go to see Fern, and I will. I can't forget that I might have been lying in a hospital, too. And oh, how I hate to be still!" La Von wiggled even as she said it.

"I guess we could go with you," Nancy offered.

Sylvia smiled and gave Nancy a little squeeze. Even though it had only been a couple of days since she had accepted the Lord, she was different already and thoughtful of others!

"We could go tomorrow," La Von suggested. "I know Fern will enjoy seeing you girls. I'm afraid that slap-happy gang we used to run around with think they're much too busy to go to the hospital to see anyone."

"Probably."

The bell rang, and the girls scattered to their classes. But the next day, after school, they met in front of the auditorium. Sylvia had told Miss Harper that they were going to see Fern, so she had picked a beautiful bouquet of different colored roses and given them to Sylvia for Fern. Sylvia handed the flowers to La Von and said, "You give them to Fern. You're her best friend."

"If you say so," La Von agreed.

The girls boarded the streetcar and rode to the hospital. It was a tall building, with a broad walk leading up to it. Inside, the girls were impressed by the quietness.

Both Nancy and La Von nudged Sylvia, so she asked the nurse at the desk for Fern. The nurse, with a face as blank as her uniform was white, directed the girls to Fern's room. They walked down the hall, subdued by the stretch of white walls and assorted antiseptic smells.

They tiptoed into room 130 and Fern looked up. Her face brightened and she exclaimed, "La Von. Sylvia. Nancy! How dear of you girls to come see me!"

"We brought you some roses from Miss Harper's garden." La Von held out the flowers.

"How heavenly! Here, put them on the table near me so I can smell them." She took the box of tissues and a book off the table and put them on a shelf underneath. "When the nurse comes in, she'll put them in water."

"Miss Harper has the prettiest roses," La Von remarked as she put them on the table.

Nancy went around and sat on the straight chair on the other side of the bed, and Sylvia leaned on the foot. She knew the lump under the covers must be the cast on Fern's leg. Then she studied Fern's face. She had never been a close friend to Fern. She had often seen her on the grounds, usually talking excitedly to some boy; she had thought that when Fern was called on to recite, she was more interested in how she looked than in what she said. Today, her auburn hair was brushed off her face and her green eyes were like pools of still water. She seemed so quiet!

"Did you feel dreadful when it happened?"

"I don't know. I think it was shock, mostly. Why, one minute we were all laughing, then there was an awful moment which seemed to last forever as the car went off the road. Then Marguerite screamed and screamed and my leg felt as if it had been cut off. Knox just groaned. I don't know what would have happened if a passing car hadn't seen us and stopped. Charlie had been thrown clear, so as soon as his head cleared, he helped the man pull Marguerite and me out of the wreck. But they couldn't move Knox."

"Yes, I know," Sylvia murmured.

"I fainted from the pain about then and didn't know anything more until I woke up here. Mom was crying, and the doctor says I've got to stay here for a while until he sees if my leg is going to heal all right. But that's enough about me. Tell me all the news."

La Von chatted, telling her bits of news about their different friends, and Nancy added a word here and there; but Sylvia didn't say anything. She was wishing she could speak to Fern about the best Friend of all, but she didn't know how to start.

"I'm just missing everything," Fern said regretfully.

"I guess you'll be well soon." Nancy tried to cheer her.

“And when you’re well, you’re going around with us and stay out of accidents. La Von’s decided we’re not so hard to take and is going to Sunday school with us, aren’t you?”

“Yes.” La Von nodded.

“Why not! After my horrible example!” Fern put in tersely.

“Oh, that’s not exactly the reason,” La Von fumbled.

“You needn’t try to explain. I understand, far too well.”

“But we do hope you’ll come with us,” Sylvia urged, thankful that if she couldn’t tell Fern about the Lord, she could encourage her to come to church.

“No, thank you. It’s all right for La Von, but I couldn’t become one of you,” Fern returned flatly. Sylvia bit her lip and said nothing else. She didn’t know what to say and was sorry that Fern took such an unfriendly attitude.

The girls talked for a few more minutes and then left. They said little on the streetcar. Sylvia was relieved when La Von reached her corner and she was alone with Nancy. She exclaimed, “What a flop our visit was! I wanted to speak to Fern about the Lord. She needs Him. But somehow I couldn’t.”

“She seemed so unhappy.”

“Didn’t she! I think it was La Von’s being along that made me feel self-conscious. After all, just because she’s begun going to Sunday school doesn’t mean she’s a Christian.”

“No more than I was.”

“I didn’t mean that,” Sylvia excused quickly.

“I know you didn’t, but I don’t forget so easily.”

“Anyway, let’s go see Fern tomorrow.”

“No, I don’t think that the two of us going would be any better than it was today. You go and I’ll stay home and pray. It seems to me that you have to be alone with a girl before she’ll tell you what she’s really thinking.”

“All right. We’ll try that.” Sylvia agreed, but that evening and the next day, she wondered if her visit would amount to anything! After all, she was not one of Fern’s special friends. Fern might not let her talk to her about anything as personal as her relationship to the Lord Jesus.

Only the knowledge that Nancy was going to pray gave Sylvia the courage to return to the hospital.

This time she did not even speak to the nurse at the desk, but walked directly down the corridor to Fern's room. Then, wondering how Fern would take her coming again, she paused in the doorway.

Fern looked up, and welcomed, "Sylvia! You've come to see me again."

"Yes," Sylvia gulped, pleased that Fern was friendly. She sat on the straight chair beside the bed. "I came back because yesterday you seemed so unhappy. I couldn't say much with the other girls listening; but I thought, perhaps, if I came alone and talked to you, I might be able to help you."

Fern shook her head and closed her eyes. "Thanks, but no one can help me. You don't understand how terrible a girl can feel when she realizes she's no good." A tear trickled down her face.

Sylvia folded Fern's cold hand in her warm one, and knowing that the Lord could help anyone, told her, "You're right. No girl can help you. But Jesus can!"

"Jesus! He wouldn't want to help a girl like me." Fern pulled her hand away and wiped her tears with the edge of the sheet.

"But He would. Why, what makes you think He wouldn't?"

"Just look at everything I've done. I used to go to Sunday school, but I decided I was too old to go and quit. That hurt Mom and she argued, but still I wouldn't go. I wanted to have a good time. I wouldn't even study. And now, I'm getting so far behind that maybe I can't graduate and Dad will feel so bad about that. He was set on all his children graduating from high school."

"But—"

"That isn't all. My brother Ben was going to college, taking a special engineering course; but now, because of the expense of the hospital, Dad told him he would have to quit and go to work. I've spoiled the life of everyone I love. There, now you can see why even the Lord doesn't want me." She buried her head and sobbed.

"I know things are a mess, but the Lord can make them all come out all right. And don't say that the Lord doesn't want you, for He does. He really does. That's why He died on the cross—for sinners. The Bible even says, '**Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow**'" (Isaiah 1:18).

"Does it?" Fern lifted her head and stared anxiously at Sylvia.

"Yes, it does, and it tells about some real bad sinners that Jesus saved. Paul persecuted the Christians, put them into prison, even caused the death of some of them; but the Lord saved him. Paul said he had done so much wrong that he was the chief of sinners, so you can't be that. Fern, we're all sinners!"

“What did you ever do that was wrong? You always seemed like a good girl to me,” Fern asked, with a woebegone expression on her face.

Sylvia flushed. She didn’t like it when girls asked her what she had done that was wrong. She didn’t like to think of her sins, but she explained, “Everyone sins. No one is as good as he ought to be. But Jesus says, **‘Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out’**” (John 6:37).

“Does He say that?” Fern’s face grew a little softer. Seeing that Fern was interested, Sylvia rushed on.

“Yes, He promises **‘If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness’**” (I John 1:9).

“Confess them to whom?”

“To Him. Fern, you will, won’t you? All you have to do is tell Him that you know you’re a sinner and that you know He died on the cross for your sins, and He’ll save you; and then—then you can live for Him.”

Fern’s face glowed, and she breathed, “I will. I need Him so.”

~ end of chapter 9 ~

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