

# STARS FOR SYLVIA

by

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## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### IN DEFENSE OF SARAH

MONDAY MORNING, when Nancy came by, Sylvia was full of the conversation she and Claudia had had with Miss Harper. And as she and Nancy strolled toward the school, she told her everything she could remember that had been said.

“How can her dad think of so many questions?” Nancy wondered.

“Miss Harper says it’s that he doesn’t want to believe; because if he did, he’d have to live different.” It made Sylvia feel sad to think of anyone who didn’t believe in Jesus. How empty his life must be! “I added him to my prayer list last night.”

“I must, too,” Nancy resolved.

“Oh, look.” Sylvia nudged Nancy. Ahead of them, she spied a large girl in a grey sweater and a black-and-red plaid skirt. It was Marguerite! Coming back to school at last! “Hi, Marguerite, wait for us.”

“Yes, wait!” Nancy called as she and Sylvia quickened their steps.

The tall, blonde girl waited at the corner until the others caught up with her.

Sylvia exclaimed, “We’re so glad you’re better.”

“It was nothing,” Marguerite belittled.

“It was, too,” Sylvia thought, and noticed that Marguerite had carefully combed her front wave low over her forehead. She was probably trying to hide a scar, but maybe she didn’t want to talk about how dangerous the accident was. She decided she wouldn’t argue with Marguerite about how weak she must be, and the girls walked toward the school.

“We went to see Fern,” Nancy volunteered. “She’s going to be all right, but it will take time.”

“I’d go see her but I don’t like hospitals. But I will hold a good thought for her.”

“Good thought?” Sylvia was puzzled. What good is a thought to a girl in the hospital? “We’re praying for her.”

Marguerite frowned slightly and changed the subject. “It does feel good to be going back to school. I wouldn’t have stayed out this long only Mother insisted. She tries to spoil me because I’m the only one.”

“She knows it will take you some time to get over what happened to you,” Sylvia found herself saying, despite her decision not to discuss the accident with Marguerite.

“I am in perfect health,” Marguerite snapped. Sylvia set her mouth in a straight line. Marguerite got so cross when anyone spoke of her not being well. “I just mustn’t or she’ll get so mad I won’t ever be able to talk to her about the Lord,” Sylvia said to herself.

“I had to make her let me come today,” Marguerite continued. “La Von was over and she told me that the class is going to select the cast for the class play today.”

“That’s right,” Sylvia remembered. She hadn’t been interested in the play and had forgotten all about it.

“She says the play is going to be a modern version of *The Taming of the Shrew*.”

“I guess so,” Nancy agreed.

“And she said there was talk of letting Sarah Bernstein play Katherine.”

Sylvia tried to picture Sarah as Katherine. She wasn’t too pretty and she was plump, but maybe Katherine was, too. She decided, “I think she’d make a good Katherine.”

“But she’s a Jewess,” Marguerite slurred.

“So what?” Sylvia defended, catching the insult in the way Marguerite said the word “Jewess.”

“In the Bible it says there is no difference. God loves both.”

“Besides,” Nancy chimed in, “this is a free country. If she can act and the class wants her, she has as much right as anyone else to play Katherine.”

“Not a Jewess,” Marguerite insisted, her blue eyes flashing. “If we let those Jews get ahead in high school, the next thing, they’ll try to run the country. And as class president, I’m going to put her in her place.”

“I don’t see it that way at all,” Sylvia said firmly. Why, if Sarah was treated unkindly by the Gentiles, she would think they are all alike, and then how can anyone ever win her to Jesus! She must see that, at least, Sarah was treated fairly. “Me, either,” chorused Nancy.

“You will see that the others do,” Marguerite returned, and she walked on ahead.

Distressed, Sylvia remarked, “I hope she doesn’t make trouble for Sarah. It’s hard enough to win a Jew without Marguerite making it worse.”

“But she will,” Nancy replied. “I wish you’d won that election.”

Sylvia thought back to the beginning of the semester and remembered how eagerly she had campaigned to be president and how disappointed she had been when she lost; but now she replied, “It was not the Lord’s will for me.”

“Why not? I think others respect a Christian who is smart enough and popular enough to hold an office.”

“That’s true, but—” She spoke slowly as she tried to put her new thought into words. The Lord was teaching her so much! “It takes time to do things. I know if I were president I’d be busy being that and I couldn’t spend my time trying to win others to Jesus; and that’s forever and far, far more important.”

“I guess you’re right. No one appreciates what you’re trying to do, Sylvia, except me. But it’s the most important thing in the world, isn’t it?”

“Yes,” Sylvia nodded. Again came that hushed feeling that she had whenever she thought of how wonderful it was that Claudia, Nancy and Fern belonged to Jesus. She felt that the sacred memories of the moments when the girls had accepted Him as Saviour would make up for any sacrifice she had to make.

The warning bell rang. Nancy hurried toward her home room and Sylvia to hers. There, Mrs. Stewart curtly told the class that the seniors were not to go to their regular classes but to go to the auditorium to vote for the cast of the school play.

With the others, Sylvia sauntered down the hall, found Nancy and went with her into the auditorium. They found a couple of seats up in front.

Miss Dawson, who was in charge of school dramatics, soon had everyone quiet. Sarah and Craig were the first to try out, playing the courtship scene from “*The Taming of the Shrew*.” Sylvia thought Sarah played her part quite well. Then Dawn and Tom began the scene. Dawn forgot her part and the boys and girls laughed until she refused to go on. But Anita and Claude who tried out last also played their parts fairly well.

Miss Dawson asked the students to show by their applause which couple they liked the best, and they clapped the loudest for Sarah and Craig. With her most patronizing smile, Miss Dawson remarked, “It looks as if Sarah and Craig win the coveted roles.”

Marguerite jumped up and asked, “May I say something?”

Miss Dawson arched her eyebrows and nodded her permission.

“I am your president, elected by a majority vote, and I thank you all for the privilege of being president; but unfortunately the responsibility sometimes includes unpleasant duties. I feel that it is my duty to remind you at this time that we are Americans and that if we are going to keep America safe for Americans, the place to establish that principle is right here in high school. Sarah Bernstein is Jewish. I think we should vote for an American.”

Sarah blushed and looked uncomfortable. Sylvia’s heart ached for her. How could Marguerite be so unkind as to say such things in front of the whole class! A murmur went over the audience.

Shaking, Sylvia stood to her feet. Miss Dawson held up her hand for quiet, and asked, “What do you want, Sylvia?”

Sylvia’s voice quavered but she managed to blurt out, “Sarah is, too, an American—aren’t you, Sarah?”

Calm and composed as always, Miss Dawson murmured, “Were you born in the United States, Sarah?” Almost violently, Sarah nodded. “Yes.”

“Then she has as much right as anyone to take part in the school activities,” Miss Dawson ruled. “We will put it again to a vote.”

The applause for Sarah was even greater than before. Nancy squeezed Sylvia’s hand, and said, “You were grand.”

Sylvia only swallowed hard. Now that she had drawn so much attention to herself, she felt embarrassed and wished she could sneak away. She felt relieved when the rest of the tryouts went on and everyone forgot her.

As she sat there watching, she wasn’t really interested. The class play didn’t seem important to her. She was only sorry that Marguerite had tried to make an issue out of Sarah’s race, and she remembered what she had said to Nancy about being a soul-winner taking all of one’s time. It certainly took all her time, besides calling upon her to do unexpected things. It was more of an adventure than she had ever dreamed!

Then she sighed. The morning might have won her the good will of Sarah, but she was afraid that Marguerite would never be friends again. And that was too bad!

**~ end of chapter 11 ~**

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