

STARS FOR SYLVIA

by

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CHAPTER TEN

A VERSE FOR MR. BROWN

SYLVIA DRIED the last pan and swung her dish towel over the rack. Her mind was full of the beautiful lesson Miss Harper had taught the girls that morning at Sunday school on the second coming of Christ! It was wonderful to think of His coming. If only He would come today, this afternoon, soon! But she sighed as she remembered the friends she still hoped to win to Him.

She walked into the living room, humming "*Some Glad Day*," and glanced around. Her mother, with an absorbed expression on her face, was reading her Bible. Her dad was stretched out on the divan, taking a nap. And Ted was sitting in front of the radio with a gospel program turned on low.

Such a peaceful-looking family! Maybe she ought—

The doorbell rang.

"I'll go." She nodded to her mother and crossing the room, she opened the front door.

Claudia stood there. She had on the same pastel striped dress she had worn to Sunday school, and there were pink velvet bows in her blonde hair, but her blue eyes were troubled.

"Hi," she mumbled, and then over Sylvia's shoulder she called, "Hi, Mrs. Ingle. Hi, Ted."

"Dad's asleep," Sylvia warned.

"I hope I didn't wake him," Claudia replied in a tone of regret; then she whispered, "I want to talk to you, alone."

"We can sit on the steps," Sylvia suggested and closed the door behind her. "It feels good in the sun." She sat on the top step and Claudia dropped beside her.

"It's about my dad," Claudia began.

"I thought so." Sylvia nodded. The minute she had seen the troubled look in Claudia's eyes, she knew it must be something about her dad that was making her unhappy.

“Today, when I got home from Sunday school, I was so excited about all Miss Harper had told us about the Lord’s coming again that I couldn’t keep it to myself. I tried to tell him, but he only laughed and said it was foolishness for me to believe such talk. He said that ever since he could remember, people had talked about the second coming of Christ as if it would be tomorrow, and He hadn’t come yet and He never would.”

“But we know He will, some day,” Sylvia exclaimed enthusiastically. Her heart knew He would come! Hadn’t He come once, and promised to return? She recalled, “Remember the verse, **‘If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again’?**” (John 14:3)

“I know. I believe. But how can I make my dad believe?”

Sylvia leaned against the post and thought of her list of verses, but she couldn’t think of any special verse to use with those who didn’t believe in the second coming of Christ. She admitted, “I don’t know what to say, but maybe Miss Harper is home. Let’s go and ask her. There must be a verse for your dad.”

“Let’s.” Claudia jumped up.

“I’ll tell Mom where we’re going.”

Sylvia went in the house and told her mother where they were going, and in a few minutes the girls were walking up Miss Harper’s rose-bordered front walk. The sweet fragrance filled the air. “Aren’t they beautiful?”

“Just lovely.” Claudia nodded.

The girls stepped on the porch. Sylvia hesitated a minute. After all, she hadn’t been to Miss Harper’s home since she had given her the verses. But they had to know what to tell Mr. Brown! She gave the bell a light, quick ring.

Sylvia heard the radio go off and then Miss Harper opened the door. She smiled at the girls and said in her low, musical voice, “Hello, girls. Won’t you come in?”

Sylvia stepped into the sunny living room, paused a moment, then crossed the room and sat in the corner of the floral-covered divan.

Adele Harper dropped gracefully into an easy chair and with a wave of her hand, said, “Claudia, why don’t you sit with Sylvia? Then I can see your faces as we talk.”

“You like to do that, don’t you?” Sylvia asked.

“I suppose being a teacher has made me used to looking directly at the one to whom I am talking.”

“I suppose so,” Sylvia murmured and thought Miss Harper was pretty to look at. Her dark hair, with its one streak of gray, was combed in soft waves, and her rose-colored dress with the full, graceful skirt was so pretty. Sylvia only hoped she would be that attractive when she was old as Miss Harper.

They talked for a few minutes of the different girls in the class; then Sylvia blurted out, “Miss Harper, we’ve a problem.”

“I thought perhaps you did, but I didn’t want to rush you. Now, tell me and I’ll help you if I can.”

“I know you can,” Sylvia said with confidence.

“It’s about my dad,” Claudia told her. “I tried to tell him about the lesson this morning and he says that Jesus is not coming again; that people have talked about it as long as he can remember and it never has happened.”

“Isn’t there a verse for him?” Sylvia insisted.

“There certainly is. It is, **‘There shall come in the last days, scoffers . . . saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were’** (II Peter 3:3). I am certain that it would surprise your father to learn that he is one of the sure signs of the second coming of Christ.”

“That is a help. But, Miss Harper, he says other things against the Bible. He bothers me.”

“I know how you feel,” Miss Harper said sympathetically. “I’ve been through an experience somewhat like yours. I grew up in a devout Christian home and when I went to college, I met questions and doubts for the first time. At first I was actually sick, but I clung to what faith I had and in time I learned the answers to the different objections. People make surprisingly few objections. Most of them are stock questions. I think it is because if they believed, then they would have to obey the Bible and quit their evil ways. They are afraid it is true! It is as the Word says, **‘Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you’**” (Isaiah 59:1, 2)

“But my dad doesn’t sin. He’s a good man,” Claudia defended.

“Don’t forget ‘all,’” Sylvia reminded.

“Maybe, sometimes,” Claudia backed down.

“It sounds to me as if your father’s sin might be pride. After all, that is one of the most common sins, and the sin of the devil.”

“How did the devil sin?” Sylvia asked with sudden interest.

“God’s Word says of the devil, **‘Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created’** (Ezekiel 28:15); but then he boasted, **‘I will exalt my throne above the stars of God’** (Isaiah 14:13). That was Satan’s sin and his downfall.”

“How interesting!”

“But my dad—” Claudia persisted. “How can I tell him these things? Will he ever believe?”

“You can’t force your father to believe if he sets his will not to believe. He saw the testimony of your mother’s life, and I know you are living a Christian life before him. God’s Word says, **‘If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine’** (John 7:17). God has given everyone a free will, and He wants us to believe in Him because we love Him.”

“Then isn’t there any help for my father?” Claudia asked in a sorrowful voice.

“Isn’t there a verse for Mr. Brown?” Sylvia asked anxiously.

“Certainly. There is always hope. **‘His hand is stretched out still.’** The thief on the cross repented as he was dying. There have been any number of men and women, boys and girls, who have prayed for their loved ones year after year and finally the unsaved one accepted the Lord. I will give you a verse on which to base your prayers. **‘The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much’** (James 5:16).”

“You mean that if I pray and pray and pray, Dad will believe?”

“Yes, Claudia, that is what I mean.”

“And I will pray with you,” Sylvia promised. “And Nancy, too.”

~ end of chapter 10 ~

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