

# THE PRODIGAL DAUGHTER



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*"The Literary Queen  
of Domestic Fiction"*

Reader's Digest

**THE PRODIGAL DAUGHTER**

**BY**

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## Chapter 1

### Beautiful Freedom

It is Christmas. The weather is cold and snow covers everywhere. No one thinks about going to see a friend, and neither is there anyone with the lingering thought of walking through the freezing cold outside. Betsy, on the other hand, reclines on the lemon-green leather sofa beside her boyfriend, Mich. They both watch her favourite TV episode of *Tyler Perry*. The lovebirds eat pizza and stare at the traditional oven that warms the whole room. The sparking sound from the burning woods makes the English setting classic. Betsy's happiness is borderless. Nothing is more important than her love for him. Her obsession for Elvis Presley's records only swells her love for Mich. It is evident that she will give everything to have him.

With over 15 years' difference between the duo, Betsy finds him more attractive than the guys her age. Age is no determiner of whom is to be loved. Mich knows how to take care of a lady. To her, the guys her age are babies. They are lofty and loose. Mich isn't fragile; he knows what he wants and grabbed it the day she was introduced to him as 'Betsy William-Williamson' at a party close to the town's mall. It was love at first sight for Betsy and the genesis of something big to come.

*How can these boys understand love since they have no idea of what love is and how it can best be expressed?* Betsy enquires, introspectively, as she walks right into Mich, who is quick to ask after clearing his throat:

"Have you been able to talk to your dad?"

A fog of silence overhauls the room for some minutes before Betsy snaps back to reality.

"Yes, I have. I spoke to him and he said he needs some time to think about it."

"Some time! Didn't you tell him how urgent this is?"

"I did. But he needs time . . .," she replies, as she heads for the kitchen.

Two months ago, Mich told her he had secured some business in the Middle East, with a tech business worth millions of dollars. Betsy feels the success of the business in his choice of luxuries, many of which are located at the outskirts of the town. His wealth is real, alongside his hustle. He had hardly been around since then until he came back a few days ago to inform her about his need for money. He explained to her

that the poor exchange rate negatively affected his business and the establishment is at the brink of liquidating.

For love sake, Betsy sees no crime in helping him raise funds despite her unawareness of what his business is in reality. She sometimes wants to ask him about his business but, each time she does, he has something more urgent to talk about. So she has let her suspicion slide and hopes that one day she will know all she needs to.

This hope launches her into another round of questioning. She thinks about the possibility of him choking her with debt. Recently, he has been consistently demanding thousands upon thousands of dollars—all in the name of saving one business deal or another.

“Is he trying to do what any typical man will do to anyone he finds vulnerable? Or is he actually in need of this money?” She lets her mind run wild until Mich’s voice jolts her back to the room.

“I really want you to help me. I need to pay my staff and get some equipment to support the daily productions. I will pay you back. I will, Betsy.” He ends his plea in a relaxed voice.

“It’s okay. I will talk to my dad. I will talk to him about how urgent this is but one thing! He’s been asking about what I need such huge money for and I seriously don’t have answers for that. This must be why he hasn’t given me the money,” she says, as she sips the remaining orange juice in her glass.

Mich upturned her drive to acquire an advanced education aside from her GCSEs. This level of education is her father’s priority. She also agrees with him that education remains the best legacy and empowerment, but loving Mich requires more than pursuing her desire. It is exhausting and attractive at the same time. He is all she has despite his frequent trips from one country to another. He is always on the go and she has never once come across any document relating to his tech business. Neither has she seen any evidence concerning his travels to the Middle East. Even after many pleas to accompany him on some of his numerous trips, he is too quick to make light of her requests. There is always some high-profile meeting or conference he has to attend. All he does is buy her things whenever she requests. He never hands cash to her.

Snapping out of her worries, Betsy hears the doorbell rings. At the same time, Mich beckons at her from the open space between the brown synthetic wine cellars.

‘What does he need this time?’ Betsy quizzes herself as she heads for the door.

“Oh, who is that? I’m coming ... I am coming.”

She opens the door and there is a crowd before her, who hold her gaze with their dry and plump smiles. Two men within the group are in starched blue T-shirts with brownish pants. The only woman is the light of the team. Her smile is infectious and each word she speaks deposits a spit of saliva on Betsy’s face. The two boys and three girls that hold the tracks are innocent and, for a moment, Betsy wishes she is their age again.

“Yes? I don’t know you, and it’s cold outside. I really don’t expect you all to risk your health just to knock on a stranger’s door. Who are you and how may I help?”

“They are Jehovah's Witnesses,” Thomas, a skinny neighbour, shouts as he shovels a path towards his garage.

One of the men interjects. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him ...”

“In who?” Betsy stops him, as her attention catches the struggle of a misplaced dog scampering for food in the trash cans.

“Okay. You know what? You can go. I am busy and don’t have time to talk about your Jesus,” she says as she slams the door.

Another knock on the door and this time it is one of the boys in the group. Betsy, still furious about the earlier incident, opens the door but instead of screaming into the face of the man who talked to her about Jesus, she puts on a smile.

“How may I help you?”

The innocent boy, without any words, tries to hand over a leaflet to her. While she is about to collect it, the shortest of the Jehovah's Witnesses asks her if she has given her life to Christ.

“Mich! Mich!” Betsy shouts, as she stomps into the house.

The crowd, interpreting her anger for something disastrous, quickly runs off with just one of them returning to the door to drop some leaflets. By the time Betsy comes outside to check the crowd, she finds the leaflets and grudgingly picks one up, which she later drops on the window ledge.

Back on the sofa, she rests her shoulder on Mich. They are almost done with the episode of *Tyler Perry* and Mich’s movie is next. He is a big fan of James Bond so the next movie will be a *Bond* movie. While

they see the stunts displayed by the cast she feeds Mich popcorn from a paper bucket. For her, love is good when she has Mich somewhere close. He is everything she cannot do without.

By evening, the weather improves with the snow subsiding. A premature ray of sunlight is visible and this means the couple can steal some time to be outside the house. They both take a walk around the river bank meters away from their street. It is strange for her to have forgotten that she is just five months away from clocking 18 years. Mich had already made her a grown-up woman by encouraging her to leave her parents three weeks after her last birthday.

She finds all her dream man should have in him and she is ready to let go of whatever it is that can deny her this. Mich is one of the biggest boys in town. He is a dedicated fashionista, a well-built guy, and the man of every moment. He knows who needs to be known; therefore, she has nothing to worry about.

Aside from this, what she spends her sanity on is how she can be of help to his business. This is more germane to her than Mich because it feels like helping him out might bring her fully to the apex of his trust in her. It is not her first time trying to rescue his business but this is the biggest of all. She believes saving him this time will inspire him to believe that she, too, deserves to know about his business—since they will be spending their life together afterwards. She had put a call through to her dad like she had done a number of times while trying to save Mich's start-ups.

Her request to her dad is that she needs money urgently, but she refuses to let him in on what she needs the money for.

Betsy's favourite line to her dad is, "I'm working on some project".

Prince William-Williamson gets so worried for his daughter but, over time, has grown to believe her lies that she is working on some project. He is so confident in her managerial and entrepreneurial skills due to the ties in the family.

Betsy, on the other hand, never stops downing her allowances on Mich's business. The more she does this, the more he keeps promising her that he will reimburse her when he is back on his feet. For months, now, he has not been back on his toes. He is neither rich nor poor. His expensive lifestyle hasn't changed a bit but Betsy's has. She has become financially debased and now looks forward to her inheritance as her saving grace—something she can only access in a few months when she

turns 18. This is the family's tradition. Every Williamson is entitled to a huge sum of money and properties for him or herself and, with this, it is expected that the inheritor begins life on his or her terms.

In less than two months, she will be 18 years old and she will have to leave on her own terms. The many family talks about her leaving the house immediately after her GCSEs to live with Belinda will be forgotten. She will be free and independent. She will live with the man central to her life. He is all she has now; therefore saving his business with this inheritance is part of what she needs to do to keep what she wants. But Mich has got better plans for her inheritance. All he is waiting for is the perfect time to strike.