

# *The Prodigal's Daughter*

**By Steve Stutzman**

**(Story credits James Yoder)**

You have all heard the story of the Prodigal Son, that Jesus told as a parable. This is a made-up parable of the Prodigal's daughter.

Far away in a foreign land, the prodigal son partied. He burned up his inheritance in riotous living, drinking and partying. His wicked lifestyle produced a beautiful, helpless baby girl. He didn't care, and partied on, but word came back to his father, "You have a beautiful grand daughter."

The father wept. . . for his son, and for the beautiful little girl who was also his own. He built her a special room onto his house, and decorated it in special colors. It had a bed, all her own. The dresser had baby clothes for her, clothes she never saw or wore. Every year on her Birthday, the father put special gifts on the bed, gifts that remained unopened. The clothes were updated to match her supposed size. The father inquired of strangers who passed by, had they seen his little grandbaby? He had heard she was called Plona.

Life was hard for the little girl known as Plona. She had no real Daddy to hold her and love her, and she often lacked basic physical needs. She was mocked by those who knew who her dad was. To make things worse, as she grew to be a toddler, wicked people began to molest her. She lost all sense of hope, value, and identity. There was nothing in life, it seemed, but hurt and hopelessness.

Alone and forsaken, Plona stumbled down the road one day. She slept in haystacks and ditches, where ever she could find a shred of safety and warmth. Her clothes were rags from cast-offs, and she was hungry continually. No one seemed to have time to help the little ragamuffin that wondered thru the market, eating scraps, then shuffled out of town down the road to nowhere. Days stretched into months. Loneliness was the only thing that was company to the pain and hunger that Plona lived in.

One day in a far land, many miles from where she was born, a kind gentle farmer saw the girl on the road, and took her to his house for supper. Warm soup and savory bread filled her belly, and she fell asleep by the stove on a pillow. The next day, the farmer and his wife had a conversation with Plona about her life. Aghast, they stared at one another. Could it be? The farmer took her on a walk down the road, around the bend, over a hill. Plona was tired, but he insisted on a continued hurried pace.

Far off in the distance, the father saw them coming. Something deep stirred in him, something of ownership, protection and love. He called out, and began to run. Years of wondering and hope boiled over into a longing he could scarcely express. When he caught up to her, the farmer stood back in tears and amazement. Is it her, the farmer wondered? The girl Plona that the father had sought after for so long? Could this be the long lost daughter?

The father got down on his knee, and looked into the eyes of the young girl. There was no mistake; the eyes, the chin, even through the dirt, grime and pain, yes, it was she.

"Who are you?" he asked. She replied, "Plona."

The father caught his breath. Plona. 'Worless one'. He had heard she was called that, hardly a name for a Princess, an heir. They walked together to the house, silently: the girl wondering who this man was, and what he wanted with her, and if she would be hurt again, the father was wondering how he would break it to her who she

really was. He took her to the servants, and whispered a few orders. She was then hustled off to a warm bath, and a brand new dress. From there, she was taken to the room.

Her favorite colors. Her own bed. A door with a lock. Warm blankets. Presents piled in the corner. Music playing. Hot tea on a silver tray. Clothes to choose from. She stared in disbelief, from the scene in front of her, to the father, and back again.

“Whose are these?” she whispered? “Yours” was his reply.

“You mean, all this is for Plona?” she queried.

The father groaned again, and leaned over, looking deep into the eyes of the little girl. “No,” he said softly. “Not Plona. You are not worthless one. Your name is Sarah. It means, Princess. This belongs to Sarah. All of it. And there is more, much, much, more. We shall talk of it later. But for now, rest. Tomorrow, I will try to help you understand. It is all yours, Sarah. It always was. See, here is the blanket I made for you the year you were born.”

The girl looked again at all the finery, She felt the soft cotton sleeping gown. It felt funny on her skin. Instinctively, she realized that the pain, the loneliness, the fear, the worthlessness she had felt for so long, would not be welcome here. She glanced over at her old rags in the trash can. For a fleeting moment, she wanted to bolt into the closest ditch with the rags that had become such a normal comfort. Then she glanced at the old man, father, and saw the love in his eyes. “Sarah” . . . she whispered the name.

Alone into the dark of the night, she lay awake, hearing only the crackling of the fire. Plona. Sarah. Who was she, really? Loved? Hated? Princess? Worthless? What was her past? Real? A memory? She shuddered at the memories, and burrowed in the covers. In an instant, the father was there, whispering comfort to her, and then he was gone again. The questions came back. Was the future of Plona, or of Sarah? Should she run? Was it safe here? Who was the father? Why did he claim her? Was all this really hers, or was this a case of mistaken identity? Sarah? Plona?

Many of us today identify with Sarah. We spent years in the ditches of sin and religiosity, sleeping in rags and believing we are worthless. (Plona) Our own pain became our comfort zone, and being filthy was our normal. There was no hope or future.

Then the Father comes, and we are found. We are cleaned up and given a new identity, a new appearance, a new reality, hope, future, authority, a purpose, supply, security, and love. It is all so very strange, and sometimes our rags of self-pity, victim and self-loathing look safe again.

This Holiday Season, choose Life. Choose the Father. Choose the Room, and the position. Believe it. Live in it. Talk to the Father, and thank Him. Celebrate Him. And don't forget those of your friends out there, still in the ditches in their rags, without enough to eat. Bring them in to the Father.

***Blessed Christmas from all of us at Strait Paths Foundation.***

Remember us this Holiday season in your prayers, and in the year ahead. May it be a year of new revelation, excitement, discovery and joy in the One Who paid for, and built, our Room in Him!

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