

Bedtime
STORIES
for GIRLS
of DESTINY

45 Tales of Extraordinary
Latter-day Saint Women

Written by
Raeleigh Wilkinson

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“To the women who inspire me and the
girls who will change the world.”

-Raeleigh

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Lucille Bankhead, United States.....	43
Kelsey Nixon, United States.....	45
Lidia Zakrewski, Poland.....	47
Liriel Domiciano, Brazil.....	49
Lucy Mack Smith, United States.....	51
Maria Teresa Toro Valenzuela, Chile.....	53
Mary Elizabeth Rollins, United States.....	55
Mary Isabella Hales Horne, United States.....	57
Maud May Babcock, United States.....	59
Mei-Lin Liu, Taiwan.....	61
Mere Mete Whaanga, New Zealand.....	63
Minerva Teichert, United States.....	65
Noelle Pikus-Pace, United States.....	67
Olga Kovářová Campora, Czech Republic.....	69
The Otavaleñas Missionaries, Ecuador.....	71
Priscilla Sampson-Davis, Ghana.....	73
Reyna I. Aburto, Nicaragua.....	75
Rosemary Card, United States.....	77
Sahar Qumsiyeh, Palestine.....	79
Sveinbjörg Guðmundsdóttir, Iceland.....	81
Thi Thu Ha, Vietnam.....	83
Tina Haskin Reisner, United States.....	85
Tsune Ishida Nachie, Japan.....	87
Vaikato Tāvutu, Tonga.....	89
Complete Sources.....	90
About the Artists.....	94
About the Author.....	96

ARTWORK



BROOKE BROWN

Aida Stevenson	VIII
Cohn Shoshonitz Zundel	14
Mary Isabella Hales Home	56
Sahar Qumsiyeh	78

ESTHER HIILANI CANDARI

Astrid Tuminez	4
Mere Mete Whaanga	62
Vaikato Tāvutu	88

SARAH HAWKES

Gladys Knight	28
Gladys Nang'oni Nassiuma Sitati	30
Juana Bautista Zúñiga	36
Minerva Teichert	64
Noelle Pikus-Pace	66
Reyna I. Aburto	74

VICTORIA-RIZA HYDE

Caroline Kwok	6
Claire Teriitehau Manea	12
Edith Russell	18
Esohe Frances Ikponmwem	24
Julia Mavimbela	38
Lidia Zakrewski	46

Maria Teresa Toro Valenzuela	52
Priscilla Sampson-Davis.....	72
Sveinbjörg Guðmundsdóttir.....	80
Tsune Ishida Nachie	86

Samantha Long

Anna Karine Gaarden Widtsoe	2
Chieko Nishimura Okazaki	10
Emily Bates	20
Irma de McKenna	34
Kelsey Nixon	44
Lucy Mack Smith	50
Mary Elizabeth Rollins.....	54
Maud May Babcock.....	58
Mei-Lin Liu.....	60
The Otavaleñas Missionaries	70
Rosemary Card	76
Thi Thu Ha.....	82

Brookynne Noe

Reeve Nield, Lorette Maritz, Cecilie Lundgreen	8
Emma Hale Smith.....	22
Florence Chukwurah.....	26
Haju Julloh	32
Lucille Bankhead	42
Liriel Domiciano	48
Olga Kovářová Campora	68

Ellie Osborne

Edith Florence Papworth Weenig Tanner	16
Laura Asioli.....	40
Tina Haskin Reisner	84



Aida Stevenson

1936-
Spain and France

CONCE UPON A TIME, there was a little girl who could draw before she could walk. In her native country of Spain, Aida spent hours sitting on the sun-warmed pavement drawing with chalk. When Aida was only three years old, she and her mother fled to France because of the Spanish Civil War. They found safety in a refugee camp in Toulouse, France. One day, a French couple who had always wanted a daughter invited Aida and her mother to stay in their home. The French man told Aida's mother that his wife had also always wished for a sister, so Aida and her mother were welcomed as family.

On her first day of school in France, Aida was overjoyed with her desk full of crayons and paper. She loved to sing and play with her new classmates, but mostly she loved stories. In no time at all, Aida was reading and writing in French. When her father escaped from Spain a year later and joined the family, he made it his mission to also teach her to read in Spanish.

When it was time for Aida to go to college, she decided to study painting. After she graduated, Aida and her sister traveled to Switzerland to teach French. One day, Aida saw a sign advertising an English class. Aida had always wanted to learn English, so she and her sister attended the class. There, Aida met the missionaries from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The missionaries began to teach her about the gos-

pel, and she welcomed their teachings into her heart. "When we pray, we can speak to Heavenly Father," the missionaries said.

"I know!" said Aida. "I speak to Him every day!" Aida was soon baptized and spent much of her time helping the missionaries until she met her husband.

While Aida raised three children, she taught French, painted, and wrote and illustrated children's books. "We are, above all, creators," she said. In her later years, Aida lost most of her sight, but she still found happiness in a summer breeze and the tiny footsteps of her grandchildren. She said, "Even if I could no longer write, if I could no longer speak, I could always hold others in my arms."





ANNA KARINE GAARDEN & WIDTSOE

1849-1919

& WIDTSOE, NORWAY

CONCE UPON A TIME, there was a woman in Norway who received a secret message in a shoe. The message was about the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, and it came from shoemaker Johnson of Trondheim.

"What is the meaning of this?" Anna asked.

"You may be surprised to hear that I can give you something more valuable than soles for your child's shoes," the brave shoemaker replied.

Anna was curious, but when she heard that he was a "Mormon," she bolted from the shop, horrified. There was strong prejudice in Norway against this new religion, and Anna was a well-educated and respected widow of an accomplished teacher with two sons to support. She couldn't have her community turn against her! Nevertheless, Anna's curiosity eventually led her to a meeting in the upper floor of the shoemaker's house, where she gained a testimony of the truth of the restored gospel. On a chilly April day after many months of searching and pondering, Anna was baptized in the icy Trondheim fjord. Despite the Arctic water, Anna felt nothing but warmth.

After Anna's baptism, she was banished from her community and rejected by her family. Although she was hesitant to abandon her homeland, her sister Petroline, and her husband's grave, she longed to join the community of Saints in Utah and enter the temple to be sealed to her husband. Anna gathered her courage and made the long journey with her young sons to Logan, Utah. In Utah, Anna ensured that her sons received the best education possible. Some of Anna's neigh-

bors questioned her commitment to their schooling, but Anna was determined that her sons' education would be a tribute to their father's life's work. Anna's sons both became university presidents, and her oldest son, John Widtsoe, became an apostle.

Anna was sealed to her husband by proxy on a joyful day shortly after the Logan Utah Temple dedication. To add to her joy, her beloved sister, Petroline, joined the Church in Norway and announced her plans to immigrate to Utah. Anna, missing her homeland dearly, asked Petroline to bring as many Norwegian flowers as she could.

A few years later, Anna and Petroline returned to Norway together as some of the first single sister missionaries in the Church. They served together for four and a half years, preaching the gospel and destroying the rumors that had previously made Norwegians suspicious of the Church.

Anna lived the rest of her years in Utah with her sister, tending to her flowers, writing beautiful poetry in her native Norwegian tongue, and cherishing her grandchildren. Before she died, she told her son, "The most glorious thing that came into my life was the message delivered to me by shoemaker Johnson of Trondheim. The restored gospel has been the great joy of my life."



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