

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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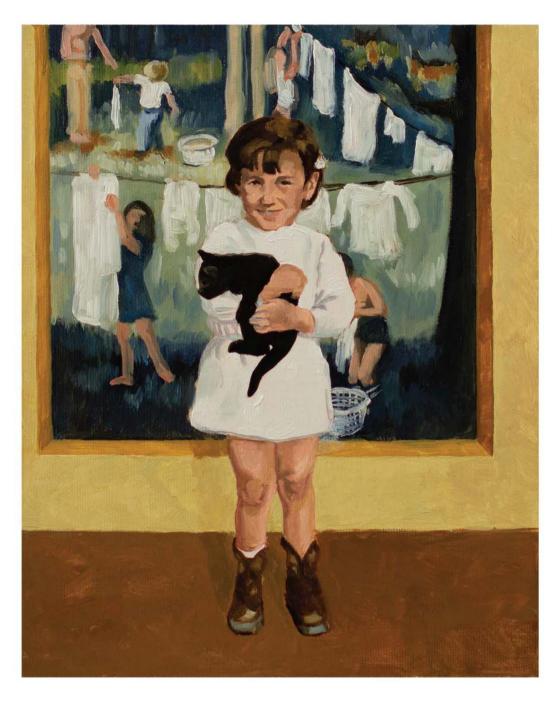
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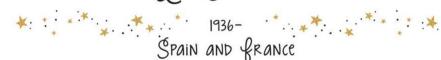
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#### Qida Stevenson



NCE UPON A TIME, there was a little girl who could draw before she could walk. In her native country of Spain, Aïda spent hours sitting on the sun-warmed pavement drawing with chalk. When Aïda 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 Aïda and her mother to stay in their home. The French man told Aïda's mother that his wife had also always wished for a sister, so Aïda and her mother were welcomed as family.

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

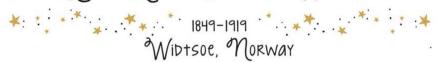
pel, and she welcomed their teachings into her heart. "When we pray, we can speak to Heavenly Father." the missionaries said.

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

While Aïda 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, Aïda 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."



## 'NNA Karine Gaarden Widtsoe



NCE 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 neighbors 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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