

Famous: Carol Reid

Francie carefully placed the bookmark – anything can be repurposed, even a shop receipt – and closed the book. What a remarkable woman, she thought; Queen of the desert indeed, but who knew of her now? How unfair! Everyone knew of T.E. Lawrence, Lawrence of Arabia. She sighed; history is written by men. Gertrude Bell, a true polymath – explorer, mountaineer, landscape gardener, author, cartographer, archaeologist, spy, linguist, poet, the shaper of Iraq, a Person. That's a life worth living, worth celebrating, not like today's influencers or reality TV stars, who are made of straw. Or even film stars, larger than life just because their faces are on a big screen. Sure, they can learn some lines, make people laugh or cry, escape their mundane lives for a bit, but isn't that rather shallow? Is it any better than the instagrammers?

She thought of Marlon Brando in 'On the Waterfront', sitting in the back of the cab, bewailing his fate 'I could'a been Somebody.' Gertrude Bell wanted to be a Person with a capital P, and she was. Brando, as Terry Malone, wanted to be a Somebody, but wasn't, because that was how Hollywood did things, well, in a 1954 drama, anyway.

You want a happy ending, try a musical or a romcom. So, what was she, Francie Ellich? No one even knew that name, it was hidden behind so many walls that even Francie could barely find it anymore. Her phone pinged. Francie gave herself a shake back to reality, jumped up, and with head down, made her way to the door. Only a few minutes late, they'd wait for her. The flashes blinded her momentarily, then, instinctively, she smiled at the paparazzi as she hurried away.