



Passionate Nomad: The Life of Freya Stark (Modern Library Paperbacks)

Jane Fletcher Geniesse

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Freya Stark—traveler, explorer, Arabist, and woman of letters—began the extraordinary adventures that would glamorize her—and would catapult her into public life for the next sixty years—in 1927. And with the publication of *The Valley of the Assassins* in 1934, her legend was launched.

Leaving behind a miserable family life, Freya set out, at the age of thirty-four, to explore remote and dangerous regions of the Middle East. She was captured in 1927 by the French military police after penetrating their cordon around the rebellious Druze. She explored the mountainous territory of the mysterious Assassins of Persia, became the first woman to explore Luristan in western Iran, and followed ancient frankincense routes to locate a lost city. Admired by British officialdom, her knowledge of Middle Eastern languages and culture aided the military and diplomatic corps, for whom she conceived an effective propaganda network during WWII.

But Stark's indomitable spirit was forged by contradictions, her high-profile wanderings often masking deep insecurities. A child of privilege, she grew up in near poverty; she longed for love, but consistently focused on the wrong men. This is a brilliant and balanced biography—filled with sheikhs, diplomats, nomad warriors and chieftains, generals, would be lovers, and luminaries. Author Jane Geniesse digs beneath the mythology to uncover a complex, quixotic, and controversial woman.

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