

No Ordinary Victorian

The year is 1923. Surrounded by sand dunes, the Lake of the Crescent Moon – a sparkling oasis – glistens blue under the burning sun of northern China.

Beyond the lake, a figure sits down at the peak of a vast sand dune to catch their breath. Is it a Mongolian tradesman, carrying sacks of camel wool to sell? No. An American explorer, scribbling sketches and maps? No. In fact, it is an English woman armed only with a canvas tent and a bag of Bibles. She is wearing Chinese clothes woven in blue cotton – her favourite colour. She has suntanned skin and blue eyes, and her name is Mildred Cable.

There are two other women with her: Eva, who is dressed in grey and has sparkling eyes full of mischief, and Francesca, who has frizzy hair and a kindly face. The three ladies have flopped down at the top of a sand dune, panting. They have spent the morning clambering up the steep sand – and it is a long way down.

There is a twinkle in Mildred's eye. 'Perhaps it would be quicker if we slide down?' So the three ladies tumble all the way down the mountainous dune and collapse in a sand-covered heap of laughter.

Then, shaking the sand out of their sleeves, they walk towards the jewel-blue lake to share their Chinese Bibles with the people of the Gobi Desert.

Mildred Cable, the lady in blue, had been born in 1878 and raised at the height of Queen Victoria's reign. As a shy little girl, her childhood had featured seaside holidays, strict governesses and tightly laced boots. However, following some extraordinary encounters in her teens, Mildred realised that God was calling her to serve Him as a missionary in China – and this news made her respectable English relatives raise their eyebrows and choke on their sugared tea.

Forget the elegant teacups and high fashion of Victorian England: Mildred and her two friends were adventurers. During their years in the Gobi Desert, there were times of quiet happiness as they lay back in their cart – listening to the rumbling wheels and the snorting mules – and gazed at the vast, starlit sky. There were times of high adventure: together, they braced themselves against sandstorms, faced injuries and illness far away from any hospital, and pitched their tent in a raging blizzard. They were even taken captive by a rebel general!

Mildred Cable was certainly no typical Victorian – and yet, just like you and me, she was also a very ordinary person who knew laughter and loneliness, joy and pain. And just as God used her, He can use you too.

In the following pages, you'll discover why Mildred Cable gave up her respectable life in England to serve God in a vast, dangerous, unpredictable and beautiful desert.

Meet the Blue Lady.