

# • MARIA REICHE •

ARCHAEOLOGIST

In a small house in a Peruvian desert, there lived an adventurous German mathematician called Maria Reiche.

Etched into the dry desert rocks were hundreds of lines. No one knew what they were for, or why they were there, or even how old they were.

These mysterious lines, called *Nazca lines*, became Maria's passion. She flew planes and helicopters to map the lines and—when there were no planes to fly—she just climbed the tallest ladder she could find to observe the lines from above. Some lines had been covered by dust so she used brooms to clean them. She used so many brooms that some people thought she was a witch!

As she studied the lines, she discovered something incredible. Those were not just random scratches: They were enormous drawings—made by the people who lived there thousands of years ago. There was a hummingbird! Intertwined hands! Flowers! A gigantic spider! All sorts of geometrical shapes!

Why would these ancient people create drawings that could only be seen from the sky? What were they? It was a mystery she was determined to solve.

She found that the lines corresponded to the constellations in the night sky. "It's like a giant map of the heavens," she said.

When Maria moved from Germany to Peru, she wasn't looking for giant mysterious drawings. But when she found them, she knew she would spend the rest of her life trying to figure them out. She became known as "The Lady of the Lines."

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GERMANY



ILLUSTRATION BY  
GAIA STELLA

"WHEN I FIRST CAME TO PERU  
BY SEA, THE SHIP PASSED  
THROUGH THE CENTER OF FOUR  
CONSECUTIVE RAINBOWS: FOUR  
ARCS, ONE INSIDE THE OTHER."

