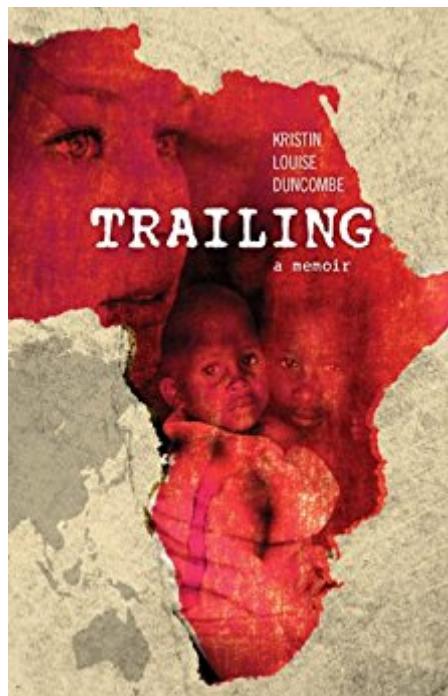


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Trailing: A Memoir



Synopsis

Something unexpected occurs when Kristin Louise Duncombe moves to New Orleans to begin her adult life as a psychotherapist: She falls madly in love with a Médecins Sans Frontières doctor, abandons all of her plans, and follows him on a medical mission to East Africa. Faced with the dual culture shock of Kenya and life with the MSF team, Kristin struggles to craft a new existence in a context of mishap, witchcraft, and the life or death stakes of the MSF world. Just when she has managed to establish a life for herself in Nairobi, a violent carjacking catapults her into a state of acute post-traumatic stress, and her life thereafter devolves into a world of intense anxiety that permeates every aspect of her existence. Forced to examine questions about her relationship, career, and personal identity, she struggles to save her marriage while facing the most difficult fight of her life: saving herself. Duncombe's debut, as humorous as it is harrowing, provides an insider's view of an MSF marriage and the humanitarian crisis in East Africa. Probing deeply into her tumultuous search for identity, she captures the essence of the experience with extraordinary authenticity and honesty. An altogether life-altering journey to the core of the human soul, *Trailing: A Memoir* is a compulsive page-turner, as fascinating as it is life affirming.

Book Information

File Size: 570 KB

Print Length: 227 pages

Publisher: CreateSpace (May 20, 2012)

Publication Date: May 20, 2012

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B008CS1H1S

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #228,768 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #9

in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Nonfiction > Travel > Africa > Kenya #32 in Books >

Travel > Africa > Kenya #323 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Biographies & Memoirs >

Customer Reviews

Ms. Duncombe has managed to tell a tale that melds entertainment with reflective introspection. The storytelling is superb; page turning is compulsive. You'll wake up with it on your chest in the morning! All women struggling with identity issues alongside a spouse whose shadow looms over them, will find something positive to take away. As well, Kristin gives us an insider's glimpse into the world of foreign service with poignancy, honesty and humor. Fantastic read.

A wonderful memoir about the experiences of an intelligent, accomplished woman dealing with an identity crisis when she accompanies her physician spouse to Africa - he has an exciting life and career as an MSF physician, whereas she finds herself stuck and personally and professionally stagnating by virtue of having her life defined by and in many ways dictated by the needs of her husband's career. The story of her life is interesting, but what really makes this book shine is how insightful, honest and even-handed the author is about what she was going through and the ensuing difficulties in her life and marriage. Duncombe is sympathetic and believable because she lays bare her own role in her personal and marital problems, so that the reader celebrates all the more when she is able to find her own path and in doing so, rejuvenate her family life. Highly recommended.

Some might find "Trailing: A Memoir" depressing, but I found it thought-provoking and very inspiring. In a nutshell, "Trailing" is the story of Kristin Louise Duncombe, who as a young wife gave up plans of her own professional life to follow her husband, a Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) doctor, to East Africa - first Kenya and then Uganda. To anyone who has followed a spouse to an overseas assignment and put their own career on hold, or even gave up on it altogether, this story will ring very true. It doesn't matter where you've been posted to - although, having lived in Africa as a trailing spouse myself, it was particularly vivid for me. The issues so grippingly described in "Trailing" - of losing your identity, not knowing your purpose in life, and dealing with an evolving relationship that by necessity gets refashioned in every new place you live - will speak to anyone who has hitched their wagon to someone else's ambition. If you've made it your main purpose in life to stay home and raise a family while lending support to a spouse who is the main breadwinner and whom you therefore follow from assignment to assignment, no questions asked, you will find something of yourself in Kristin's saga. In some stretches Kristin sounds a bit whiney: She was not every open-minded towards her new home, was too readily spooked, and might have made things

much easier by being less self-absorbed. At least that was my impression. But then again she was only in her twenties and newly-married. In any case, even if you feel like you might not have made the same choices in Kristin's situation, her story still speaks powerfully to anyone who's ever doubted their own choices regarding career, marriage, and child-rearing. You don't even have to move abroad to wonder where your life has led you and whether you've become what you wanted to be.

I bought this book back in early 2015, but lost it on my Kindle! I will admit it started a tad slow for me, but quickly gained speed. It became very interesting and very suspenseful after the first chapter. I learned a lot about MSF while reading this book. I had no idea of the horrors these people face on a daily basis. The author recounts her "growing up" process as she moves along with her husband in Africa and eventually finding the courage to move on to shape her own future. I highly recommend this memoir that reads like a novel!!

The book is beautifully written and intensely gripping. With excellent pacing, it hits an ideal balance between action and introspection. I don't want to post "spoilers," but the story is full of Hollywood-worthy catastrophes, and they are all chillingly true. And each of these dramatic highlights (or low lights) plays out against a constant backdrop of poverty, sickness, death and despair. There is no sugar coating to this memoir. The story is never slow, but neither is it ever fake or forced. Often new writers will swing for the fences and metaphors or descriptions will fly foul or worse just strike out. That never was the case here. Descriptions were balanced, but not sappy or heavy. Metaphors were warranted and appropriately subtle. The writing shows the confidence of a seasoned author. I was also struck by the conversational tone. So many books by mental health professionals -- and I've read a few -- come off as academic or preachy. There might be a chapter of narrative, then heavy dollops of psycho-babble, pounding out the meaning and the lessons learned. Kristin's "Trailing" story was just that, an excellent story that stands on its own without overt analytic footnoting. Finally, MANY times throughout the book I said to myself, "My God, this is very brave." Not so much in response to what the narrator was doing -- although just visiting some of those devastated African villages or walking into a MSF quarantine tent required bravery that I know I don't have. The bravery, I thought, was in the author's willingness to honestly share what she was feeling at the time knowing now that it doesn't paint the most flattering self portrait. This aspect more than anything, may be what will make this book resonate with other trailing spouses, and I am one. It will help them in knowing that what they feel isn't wrong or even unique. Nor are their feelings

something to be ashamed of nor are they stumbling blocks that cannot be overcome. It's a wonderfully successful first book. And it's a meaningful story that all "trailing spouses" -- no matter whom they are trailing or where they are trailing to -- will benefit from reading.

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