



Trailing: A Memoir

Kristin Louise Duncombe

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Trailing: A Memoir was VOTED ONE OF THE BEST INDIE BOOKS OF 2013! 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 Medecins Sans Frontieres 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.

Trailing: A Memoir Details

Date : Published May 2012 by Create Space

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Author : Kristin Louise Duncombe

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From Reader Review Trailing: A Memoir for online ebook

Alison says

kindle -This memoir chronicles Kristin's experiences becoming a __trailing spouse__ and following her Médecins Sans Frontières husband to the front lines of disaster and disease in East Africa. A trauma of a carjacking in Nairobi, turns her time in Africa into a state of acute post-traumatic stress, and her life thereafter devolves into a world of intense anxiety that overtakes every aspect of her existence., which also effects her marriage, as her husband is often off working in a remote location. It is fascinating to see, both how she works through her problems with identity for one and the serious health issues her husband is dealing with. There is a lot more to the story which I won't divulge here.

Barbara Mulvey-Welsh says

I heard about this book when a friend (a relative of the author) sent me an email and asked me to help promote the book via Facebook and Twitter. I subscribe to the idea that a candle loses nothing by lighting another candle, so I jumped in with both feet.

Trailing: A Memoir written by Kristin Louise Duncombe is a brutally honest retelling of her thoughts and actions, of her fears and insecurities, and of her struggle to find her identity and path while living in East Africa with her husband, a doctor with Médecins Sans Frontières. Ms. Duncombe pulls no punches with herself or her reader and that takes real guts and is at times painful to read.

While the focus of the book is on her personal journey it does delve into the lives of the people in East Africa that she worked with. She details these interactions in a thoughtful and sensitive manner describing their struggles without patronizing them or reducing them to stereotypes. I had to keep reminding myself that the people she describes are not characters in a story, they are real and she treats them with dignity and respect which made me like her even more.

If I had to attribute a moral to this book it would be that while life can be hard, you need to work hard for the life you want. The book, at its heart, is one of hope and fighting for what's important to you.

Karen Frazier says

A very interesting read, that covers a lot of terrain skillfully. I disagree with some of the more critical reviews that say the book is just negative. It is a story of a woman who survives an act of violent crime and has to pick up the pieces in a context (marital and geographic) that is really quite isolating. The book is also full of information about health problems in Africa. I really enjoyed learning about the work of Doctors without Borders and diseases such as cholera, ebola, AIDS as well as the disease that the author's husband discovers a cure for. This is not the sort of information I would have sought out so the fact that a fast paced story could also teach me so much impressed me. I would recommend this book.

Lizzie Harwood says

Well written great read.

Cynthia F Davidson says

Even if you're not planning to relocate to East Africa, or Paris any time soon, this memoir of a 'trailing' spouse who made moves like those, is well worth reading. Its' inspiring life lessons, like the development of a modern woman's self-reliance, can be applied anywhere.

Published via Amazon's Create Space, this book is so new I had to enter it into the Goodreads system, a first for me. My daughter, who goes to university in Paris, told me about this book. And, in the interest of full disclosure, I must admit, that Mme. Duncombe has been her therapist for the past three years. She's done a wonderful job helping another young woman growing up in a foreign environment, so she practices what she preaches. And that's probably the highest praise for a memoirist!

Meg Bortin says

Kristin Louise Duncombe's `Trailing' tells the story of a young woman's journey into her personal heart of darkness - not just her move to Africa, where she accompanies her husband, a dashing Argentinian doctor with Medecins Sans Frontieres, but also her plunge into the dark night of her soul as she struggles, against hugely intimidating odds, to become the woman she wants to be. Duncombe's plucky and occasionally graphic account of this globe-trotting struggle takes us to Nairobi, where she and her husband are assaulted by gun-wielding carjackers, to Mombasa, where she witnesses an encampment of people desperately ill with cholera (it's like a hospital scene from `Gone With the Wind'), and on to Kampala, where she finds work as a public health counselor. Tough questions pepper this account of a trailing spouse, all of them colored by the fact that her husband is devoting his life to saving the poorest of the poor, a factor that makes it hard for her to contest his choices and consider her own. Is it because he is working so hard that he is insensitive to her distress? That their marriage becomes increasingly rocky even as she gives birth to their first child, a beloved daughter? As Duncombe faces life-and-death challenges practically on a daily basis, she slowly gains understanding of her own strengths and abilities, and learns how to forge a satisfying life in her own right. But will the couple make it? Read the book to find out.

Sarah says

I bought this book after hearing Kristin Duncombe speak at an event for Anglophone therapists living in Paris. As a person who was raised moving from one country to another, a (somewhat) trailing spouse and someone who is trying to be a therapist in Paris there were many reasons why I could really relate to her experiences and the feelings of loss of sense of self when the choices you make don't feel like your own. Also unlike what another reviewer said, I don't think that this book is meant to be a description of how awful it is to live in East Africa, but rather an account of how one's mental state and feeling about their own identity colors every experience you have. This book also highlights the importance of caring for one's own

mental health particularly when your work is to care for others. I read it in an hour and a half on the plane without stopping because it was so easy to read.

Ruth Dugdall says

TRAILING a memoir

By KRISTIN LOUSIE DUNCOMBE

Sometimes the hero in a book is not the obvious one and many books recently have explored the supportive and often forgotten woman behind famous men. In her memoir Kristen Duncombe does something similar when she describes her own life trailing her husband, a doctor with Medecins Sans Frontieres. In describing Kenya, then Nairobi, Duncombe shows us a stark world, lacking food and medicine, where witchcraft and violence thrive. It is evident that Duncombe sees her husband, with his vital role and vigour, as the hero of the narrative. However, it is her own story that moves, this woman who abandons her own career path for love, and ends up struggling, battling depression and anxiety before emerging as a woman who has learned to re-define herself and her life on her own terms.

TRAILING is wonderfully written; I read it in one sitting. It speaks not just of coping with adapting to alternative cultures (something many YLC readers will identify with) but about the responsibility we need to take for our own lives, even if the parameters are set by other people.

I was fortunate enough to hear Kristin Duncombe's book talk at Chapter 1 bookshop in Bel Air. She was engaging and funny and read several passages from TRAILING. The audience was rapt; mainly ex-pats, these were also women who had moved country to support husbands and were now re-defining their own careers.

A perfect novel for ex-pats, or for any woman who is seeking a sense of purpose.

Dick Whittington says

Fast, easy read about life as a trailing wife following her husband as he pursues his career in developing countries of East Africa. Can't relate to this life or these experiences. Don't know why anyone would endure this as a career choice for themselves...let alone drag their partner along and try to raise a child in this type of environment. For me it was just okay, but not really anything special or a book I would recommend. Overall pretty depressing. Just glad they all lived to talk about it and enjoy life after.

Joy says

I read this book because it was free on Kindle. I finished it in under two hours. It's not my normal genre but it was very interesting and held my attention the whole way through.

The main character marries a doctor who goes over to Africa to work. The book deals with her struggles with being isolated, the threats of violence, depression, having a child and trying to find work. It is based on some of the experiences that the author had as a wife to a doctor in Africa which made all the events believable.

and real.

Nancy says

Fascinating exploration of personal crisis set amidst humanitarian crises.

Liz says

Oh man, I enjoyed this book. It is a very fast read and she writes in a very simple style, but I found it utterly engrossing. It's definitely written for a niche audience -- if you are not a woman who has lived in a foreign country for the sake of your male partner's job, this book is probably not for you. Still, I would highly recommend it. I definitely came away from this book thinking, 1- Africa is a crazy place, 2- Thank god I don't work in international aid, 3- Thank god I don't have a boyfriend who works in international aid!! 4- It takes a lot of self-analysis to understand the reasons why "trailing" behind your partner may seem so appealing. ***** SPOILER ALERT*** I also did not think that their marriage would survive all the craziness they went through. I was shocked to reach the end of the book and find out they are still together!! It just goes to show, it takes all kinds of things to make a relationship work in the long-term.

Makenzie says

This was my first venture into memoirs, and I thought it was wonderful. A depressing and heart-wrenching, though beautiful story of a trailing spouse in East Africa. It was hard to read the downward spiral of Duncombe's life and experiences, yet all the time, I was pulling for her to come out of it (alive - though clearly she did to write the book), and to finally find some happiness and meaning in her life. Perhaps I connected so much because I've struggled myself with my purpose in life.

The memoir also brings home some of the reality of what is going on in some of the poorer countries in the world, the never-ending famine and disease. We see commercials asking for us to donate and sponsor children across the globe, and yet, Duncombe is able to bring forth a simplistic, yet saddening picture of life in these countries.

I applaud Duncombe for finding the strength and courage to write this memoir, plastering her life, marital problems and all, for everyone to see...and from which to learn.

I enjoyed the straight-forward writing style, and overall really enjoyed this memoir.

Liralen says

Easily one of the better self-published books I've read. Duncombe describes moving to Kenya, and later Uganda, as the wife of a doctor with Médecins Sans Frontières. She struggles to find a place for herself—and then, following a carjacking, struggles to battle an undiagnosed, untreated case of PTSD.

Duncombe is unflinching in her assessments: of her husband, of the way the MSF team works, of what it's like to be a 'trailing' spouse, and, perhaps most importantly, of her own reactions/decisions/emotions. She doesn't try to paint herself as either saint or victim, but rather as someone who was truly struggling and sometimes did better than other times in managing...and was sometimes more sympathetic than other times.

She has an interesting background, one not unconnected to her life as an MSF spouse—as the daughter of a U.S. Foreign Service officer, she had spent much of her childhood abroad. Her mother, too, had been a trailing wife. But diplomacy and humanitarian response are two different beasts, and—though Duncombe does not speculate, here, on struggles her mother may have had—she finds herself unprepared.

Satisfying for the messiness of the situation and characters and the thoughtfulness with which it's all put together.

Wendy O'connell says

Kristin Louise Duncombe's *Trailing* tells the story of a young woman's discovery of herself while being married to a Médecins Sans Frontières doctor, a man who puts his own life behind saving people in poor countries. It would seem being married to a 'saint' should be any woman's dream, but not true. Her husband is very self-absorbed, and displays little understanding of Kristin's inner turmoil, even after the pressing fear she experienced when attacked by armed carjackers.

At first I became angry towards the husband, and then pitied Kristin. Later, I found myself seeing both sides. The husband started to be not a heroic doctor, but just an idealist who felt he had a calling of goodness, unfortunately these type of individuals often forget about the people who love them the most. Kristine was a woman in love, put on the back burner. Like her husband she too was self-sacrificing, but hers was never acknowledged.

The idea of moving with your husband to East Africa took a lot of guts, staying took even more. It took Kristin awhile to find herself in a foreign country in the midst of being alone and forgotten so often, and yes, sometimes she whined – so what, she's human, and the important issue to remember is Kristin didn't continue to whine. She persevered. Anybody with a need to be a strong independent individual, only to have that need challenged, well, you'd expect a gripe or two.

Emily Dickinson said, "People need hard times and oppression to develop psychic muscles."

I believe this is true for Kristin. She dealt with the difficulty of finding a job over and over; settling for cleaning toilets over her true occupation for a time. She dealt with her fears after being attacked in East Africa by armed men. She dealt with Cholera, witnessing a whole camp full of sick people, seeing her husband work mercilessly, disregarding his self in the process. It's hard to hate a guy like that, despite his flaws.

It is through all of this Kristin finds herself and answers to her marriage. This is an amazing memoir of self-discovery, its not about the explicit details of Africa and all of the problems they face each and every day. If your looking for that, then, your looking for the wrong book. This book is about real people, facing real struggles, and that is what every book should have at the heart of it.

It is well-written, and flows easily from one idea to the next. I read it in two days. It's one of the first

memoirs I've seen that doesn't bombard you with exposition, but breaks it up with dialogue, and into a real story in a linear structure.

I hope to see more of Kristin Louise Duncombe's works, because now I'm trailing behind her words of wisdom to women everywhere.
