

MARRIED *with* LUGGAGE



What we learned about **love**
by traveling the world

WARREN & BETSY TALBOT

SAMPLE

Married with Luggage

What We Learned about Love by Traveling the World

By Betsy & Warren Talbot

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Sneak Peek: Strip Off Your Fear

Authors' Note

The incredible story of love and adventure inside this book almost didn't happen. In 2006, we were ready to throw in the towel, give up on each other, and go our separate ways. The relationship was just too hard, and neither one of us was sure we wanted to put in the work to make it right – or if we even could make it right.

But we did. And what followed was nothing short of incredible.

This book is set up in three sections. First you'll find out what went wrong and how we started turning it around, giving ourselves a fighting chance to succeed.

In the second part, we'll share the funny, embarrassing, and frightening adventures of our first year of travel.

In part three, you'll discover what we call “next level stuff,” the master's lessons on love and communication that can only be forged during extreme situations like erupting volcanoes and storms at sea.

This is our love story, and we reveal a lot of ourselves in these pages. You'll find out what we fight about, what we weigh (or at least what we used to), and the stupidest, wildest, and most hair-raising things we've ever done together – all in the name of love.

The story is ours, but to make it easier to read it's written in Betsy's voice.

We hope you enjoy this peek into a love story that almost didn't happen, and that it inspires a reawakening in your own relationship.

Because in the end, all we're left with is love.

Betsy and Warren Talbot

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Lubrin, Spain

PART I: UNPACKING OUR EMOTIONAL BAGGAGE

The Worst Experiences Make the Best Stories

We woke up in the middle of the night covered in a layer of grit. I blinked my eyes a few times, trying to orient myself. Then I remembered: we were camping on the southern coast of Turkey. My next thought: "Is the air this salty near the Mediterranean Sea?" It took only a second more to realize the grit wasn't salt but sand. The tiny grains covered my face and lay in a fine coating over my sleeping bag. Dirt blew underneath the flysheet and into the mesh-covered door of our tent from the wind raging outside. I was wide awake.

I rolled over on my left side and saw my husband Warren's profile. When he turned toward me I could almost make out the whites of his eyes in the dark.

"I think one of the ties has come loose," he said. He sat up in his sleeping bag and reached for his clothes.

"Do you need my help?" I asked, knowing the answer. It was a one-person job and safer to have the weight of a human being inside to hold the tent down in case everything came loose. Neither one of us had to say it out loud.

Warren donned his headlamp and knelt by the front door of the tent. We executed our well practiced "mosquito maneuver," a quick in and out of the tent while the person inside zips up quickly. We developed this technique in Scotland to keep the swarming biting flies called midges out. I never dreamed we'd be using it to fight blowing sand in a storm at the edge of a cliff.

Warren used a rock to hammer the stake in deeper and retie the flysheet over our tent. The wind was so strong I could barely hear him pounding the stake outside, but I could see the light from his headlamp. His light bobbed as he walked around the tent checking all the stakes and ties and placing big rocks over them. Satisfied, he called to me that he was coming back in. After a reverse mosquito maneuver to re-enter the tent, he gave me the rundown on the situation outside.

The wind was strong, and we had little protection from it in our current location. With the tent cinched down as tight as it could be, we had to hope it was enough. We lay back down and listened to the storm outside, wondering if we'd get any more sleep that night.

Our little analog travel clock sat in a mesh pocket on the inside of the tent. We'd purchased it on our honeymoon in Paris back in 2004. I remembered the rainy day we bought it, after a lazy afternoon

of wine, cheese, and sex. We needed to get up early the next morning to catch a flight home, and the room in our quaint hotel didn't have an alarm clock. I flashed back to the feeling of those soft sheets on my skin, the sweet exhaustion of new love, and the comfort of that hotel bed. The grit in my sleeping bag ended the memory and brought me back to the harsh reality of the present. We were a long way from romance in that moment.

The glowing arms showed the time as 12:10 a.m., still a long way from sunrise. Neither of us expected to get any sleep, but fatigue won and we dozed off. The time was 1:30 when we woke up again, this time to the sound of rain pelting the tent. The storm was growing.

I pulled in our bags of food and hiking boots from the outer vestibule of the tent, further crowding our small space. My go-to move when I'm nervous is to nest, to pack myself in with my necessities as I face a problem. As I rearranged our space, we evaluated our situation. Our tent was perched on a cliff jutting out toward the Mediterranean Sea on the coast of Turkey. The wind was so strong it could blow our tent out to sea if we tried to take it down. The nearest shelter was in the village we passed late the day before, at least a mile away uphill and over rocky terrain. The rocks on the cliffside trail were already slick from rain and would be dangerous to walk in the moonless and stormy night. Even if we did make it to the village, we didn't speak more than a few words of Turkish. How would the residents react to our late-night request for help? Perhaps the most distressing bit of news: no one knew where we were, and we didn't have a phone. We had no way to reach the outside world thanks to our desire for an "off the grid" experience.

The night hadn't started that way. We arrived at our scenic camp spot shortly before sunset after a full day of walking along Turkey's famed Lycian Way. Fellow walkers touted this route to us as one of the most beautiful in the world, and it was living up to the hype. The azure blue of the Mediterranean Sea sparkled as we hiked along the rugged cliffs, enjoying the occasional respite from the heat in the pine forest areas. The packs we carried were 30 pounds each, loaded down with a tent and gear to go the full distance of 300 miles over the next few weeks. We'd planned this trip for months, and it was turning out even better than we hoped.

Earlier that afternoon we enjoyed a meal with two university students we met while walking. These first-time backpackers from the bustling city of Ankara chose to rent a room at a pension for the night. Warren teased them for carrying tents they didn't plan to ever use during their weeklong hike.

After goodbyes all around, we walked down the hill toward the sea, looking for a flat area to camp. As we rounded one of the hairpin turns on the rocky trail, we spotted a flat circular area surrounded

by rocks overlooking the sea. It was beautiful. Our perfect little spot was just big enough for a tent and gave us a front-row seat to the setting sun over the Mediterranean.

It didn't take us long to set up our tent, change out of our sweaty walking clothes, and ease our feet out of our boots and into our flip-flops. We high-fived each other for scoring such a great location, feeling a little bit sorry for the university students we left in the pension. Were they going to see a magnificent sunset over the Mediterranean? No way. And they were paying for a night in a cramped room while we were sitting in the lap of Mother Nature for free. *Suckers.*

We perched ourselves on a boulder with our legs swinging off the side of the cliff, eating our bread, cheese, and olives for dinner. Our night's lodging was the best we'd ever had, anywhere in the world, and we knew it. As the sun set, we talked about our hike, our life, and the grand adventures we'd have before it was over. Little did we know the adventure would escalate that night.

At 1:30 in the morning, we began discussing our situation, neither one wanting to express just how scared we were. It was like two strangers making small talk about the weather in an elevator. *Can you believe this storm? Yeah, crazy isn't it?*

"I think we should pack up our bags now on the off chance the storm gets worse and we need to leave in a hurry," I said. Part of me wanted to hear Warren call me a worrywart and reassure me that I was overreacting as usual. Instead he agreed, reaching down to the foot of his sleeping bag to get his backpack. We took turns packing, since the tight confines of the tent didn't allow us enough elbow room to do it at the same time. While focusing on the task at hand, we spoke quietly, as if there was someone sleeping next door. I'm not sure why.

"We should sleep in our clothes, just in case we need to get up in a hurry," Warren said. We changed into what we planned to wear the next day and placed our rain jackets on top of our backpacks at the foot of our sleeping bags. The walls of the tent bowed in from the wind and the rain was pouring down, but we were optimistic that we'd ride out the storm. Against all odds, we fell asleep again.

At 3:20 a.m., I woke to a gentle caress on my cheek. I opened my eyes to discover the wall of the tent pushing down on my face. The wind was raging, and the aluminum poles in our tent bent at an unnatural angle. The rain pelted our tent so hard I thought it was going to break through the fabric. Lightning flashed over the sea, casting an eerie light in the tent every few seconds. The face we each saw in that greenish light was scared to death. It was well past time to pack up and get the hell out. But where? And how?

The storm in 2013 was a perfect parallel to where our marriage was just eight years before. Back then we couldn't even navigate our way through a regular weekday in the US together, much less a violent storm on the edge of a cliff in Turkey. Our relationship was on the brink of breakup. At first we tried to ignore the dark clouds gathering over our relationship. But over time the storm grew too large to ignore, just like this storm in Turkey. We could either find a way to safety together or let the storm destroy the relationship we built.

We chose safety.

We chose togetherness.

We chose to make our marriage work, and this is the story of how we did it.

To continue reading about Warren and Betsy's adventures and relationship, purchase your copy today:

<http://www.marriedwithluggage.com/thebook>