



A story about learning to embrace
uncertainty, of both destination and self.

Breaking *the* Fourth Wall

An Uncertain Journey
on Turkey's Lycian Way

Michelle Sevigny

Breaking the Fourth Wall: An Uncertain Journey on Turkey's Lycian Way
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DAY 0

Arriving in Ovacik

TWO BANGS ON THE DOLMUŞ signal the driver to brake, horns rebel. My stretch to the side door frees my bulging backpack to pick a fight with one passenger and high-five another. After fiddling too long with the handle, I yank open the sliding door and city noise surges in. But my senses narrow onto the teenage girl in a head scarf who holds out a small flat item with a broken, dangling strap. Hiking poles flail like first-time chop sticks as I slap my left hip, right hip. Really? Mine? How? With no idea how to pronounce the 14-letter thank you, I clap my palms together and bow. Somebody slams the door as I reunite with my over-the-shoulder, wallet-purse in a two-handed squeeze—cell phone, cash, bank card, credit card, passport and all the emergency photocopies. Impostor syndrome explodes and my eyes hide as we bounce along, like a dozen eggs in a shopping cart driven by an eight-year-old boy.

Why am I here?

I have no fucking idea.

Wait, that's not true.

Fifteen months ago, my ten-year-old Rottweiler, heart-dog and business partner, died of bone cancer. Eight months ago, I stood for the first time at a Mexican intersection where my mom had been killed in a cycling accident seven years earlier. The next day my apartment sold back home. And the day

after that, my dad's wife was diagnosed with brain cancer. Six days later, we drove across the Mexico-USA border, and I flew into Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, just hours before she died. Decluttering had already started, but during the next month, I sold or donated almost all of the rest of my possessions. Leaving two free patio chairs on the front lawn, I boarded a two-hour ferry and settled into a basement suite ten minutes from my dad's house.

Then I wanted everything to stop.

I wanted to catch up. I wanted to sprawl on the forest floor for maximum grounding. But a tiny part of me needed something else. And as I ran solo along Willow's Beach at sunrise, I heard it: *Do more of this*. More of what?

"Want to hike the Rockies?" my hiker friends had asked over the years.

"Nah, I don't like hiking."

"Want to hike the Peruvian highlands?" asked others.

"Nah, I don't like hiking."

"Want to hike the West Coast Trail?" asked my sister a few years ago.

"Nah. Wait, coast?"

Within hours on the trail, I realized it wasn't hiking that I didn't like, it was hiking inland. I always chose coastal countries when travelling and adored the freedom of independent road trips and the slow speed of cycle-travel. But long-distance coastal hiking demanded a deeper simplicity and reimbursed with greater self-awareness. I was hooked.

I searched for them—the Camino de Santiago del Norte, the California Coastal Trail, the Wales Coast Path and the Lycian Way.

Maybe it was the photo my dad took of my then-29-year-old mom in front of a Turkish mosque during a three-month European road trip while I waited at home for the letters. Maybe it was the Turkish Tourism Board map dotted with red triangles for camping—requested and received by mail, 15 years ago.

I invited friends, my sister, but no one could come. I don't even know why I asked. I knew this was meant to be a solo adventure. Was it for a final healing or for something I wouldn't fully understand until it was over? Either way I needed to do it. Otherwise, I'd procrastinate from work, reading about people who'd done it. I'd drink too much to fill a void that could only be filled by hiking it. And my next dog would not find me until I'd done the thing that needed to be done without a dog.

But I still created reasons why not:

You don't have the money.

Your business needs you.

You haven't exercised in months.

And who do you think you are to go on such a journey?

But with the sale of my apartment, I had the money. With self-employment, I had the time. And with seven months, I could get physically fit again.

But why was I still hesitant?

I'd solo travelled before—cycled the Greek Islands, bussed through Ecuador and motorcycled across Northern Ireland.

Why did this feel so different?

Wild camping. Alone.

Navigating. Alone.

Losing my way in the Turkish mountains. Alone.

Then seven months later, a snapshot moment in the Istanbul airport bathroom had reminded my jetlagged brain that I was 9000 kilometres from home. A woman on my left in a pink head scarf, jeans and high heels spoke Turkish to the woman on my right, who was dressed in all black, head scarf, long-sleeves and floor-length skirt. I stared straight ahead at the sign above the triple sinks—a drawing of a foot in a red circle, slashed by a red line. No feet in sinks. What were those cleansing rituals again about washing body parts before prayer time? I regretted not studying more about Muslim customs instead of worrying about maps and solar batteries.

I follow two people off the bus and they point up the street to the Green Peace Hotel. After 27 hours of flying and layovers, an overnight stay in Antalya, and four-and-a-half hours of bus travel, I'm here in Ovacik. Tomorrow is Day One of the Lycian Way, the Likya Yolu in Turkish, and despite hundreds of YouTube videos—how-to tie knots, how-to read a compass, how-to use GPS on a cell phone—I am still in kindergarten. First day of kindergarten. Before recess.

Who am I to go on this journey?

I don't have that answer yet.

A Note from the Author

Merhaba! Thank you for reading the first chapter of my book, *Breaking the Fourth Wall: An Uncertain Journey on Turkey's Lycian Way*. This journey didn't take me where I planned but as I camped in the wild, got lost without water and confronted charging sheepdogs, the path guided me to exactly where I needed to be. *Breaking the Fourth Wall: An Uncertain Journey on Turkey's Lycian Way* is a story about learning to embrace uncertainty, of both destination and self, and discovering an answer to the universal question: who are we?

Want to join me on the journey?

— Michelle Sevigny www.michellesevigny.com

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