Spotlight
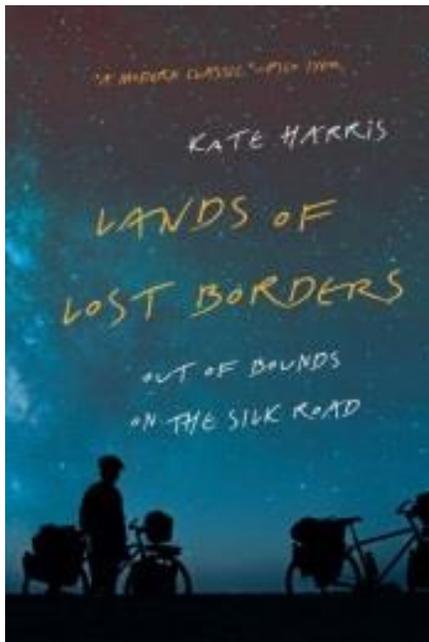
The allure of the unfettered explorer crisscrossing the world in search of the deeper truths discovered only in face of hardship – environmental, physical, and mental – is what pushed Kate Harris to doggedly pursue her goal of travelling to Mars. When she realized a journey to the Red Plant would entail a frightening sterile physical experience of staring at the new world through inches of protective clothing she turned from one frontier to another, the Silk Road. Seeking adventure and the wisdom and perspective gained from a hard road travelled she packed up her bicycle, convinced her equally daring friend Mel to join her, and left behind a budding academic career (the Rhodes Scholar had spent time studying at Oxford and MIT).

Lands of Lost Borders is a book that defies boundaries in the same way the road Kate and Mel travel does. The Silk Road is an ancient pathway whose trail is complicated by layers of history that includes mass migrations of people, the rise and fall of countries, and geo-political conflict pushing to this day against the spectacularly desolate and extravagant landscape. Likewise, the book refuses to be contained by one story or one place. Instead, the reader is taken on a journey through the drama of the Silk Road, the complicated history and philosophy of exploration, and Harris' own journey to discovering who she is and what type of life she wants to live. The poetic depth of Harris' writing combined with thoughtful and precise research into the various regions the road crosses (which includes Turkey, Kazakhstan, Nepal, India, Tibet, among others) makes this book a stand out example in the travel memoir genre. It is a careful and complicated study of exploration that reveals the rich and insatiable curiosity of its author. *Lands of Lost Borders* is a travel book that will take you far and deepen your appreciation for what it means to explore this magnificent and mysterious world.

Megan Clark
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