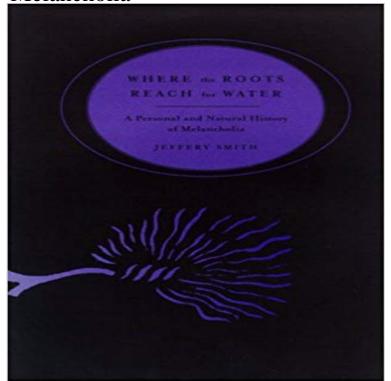
Where the Roots Reach for Water: A Personal & Natural History of Melancholia



Jeffery Smith was living in Missoula, Montana, and was into his eighth year as a psychiatric case manager when his own struggles with clinical depression began. all his Eventually, prescribed medications antidepressant proved ineffective. Unlike many such personal accounts, Where the Roots Reach for Water describes what happened after Smith decided to give them up. Trying to learn how to make a life with his illness, Smith sets out to get at the essence of--using the old term for depression--melancholia. What he learns utterly transforms his life. Deftly woven into his personal history is a natural history of this ancient illness-a natural history that surveys, as we might expect, recent neurobiological research and speculation about depressions evolutionary purpose. But Smith also draws on centuries of art, writing, and medical treatises inspired by the illness and its very near kin, melancholic temperament. the imaginative natural history of melancholia touches on mythology, anthropology, religious history, love and sex, philosophy, and our relationship with landscapes. In addition, Smith tells numerous instructive stories of the men and women--from commoners to artists, from scientists to saints--who fitted their lives to melancholia before the advent of seratonin reuptake inhibitors, twelve-step groups, or talk and he contemplates therapy, contemporary America has become the Prozac nation. In describing the contours of melancholias landscape, Smith poignantly finds his place within it. His attempts to forge a meaningful life within the confines of his seemingly invincible illness also take us across a number of vividly rendered physical landscapes, from the Appalachian foothills of Ohio and West Virginia, where he was born and raised, to the American West, where most of this narrative unfolds. In the process, he abandons his mental health career. A

lifelong cynic, he finds faith and struggles to sustain it. He mends fences with his family. He falls in love, and for the first time stays there. Where the Roots Reach for Water is a provocative and highly original memoir that recovers for us a trove of stories and ideas that, while long obscured, can teach us how we in this new Age of Depression might acclimate ourselves to melancholias sundry lives.

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