



A Tiny Piece of Something Greater

Jude Sierra

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Jude Sierra's *A Tiny Piece of Something Greater* is a sweet, sexy romance about learning to love while navigating the complex terrain of mental illness.

Reid is twenty and looking for space. His relationship recently ended; his family doesn't fully understand his struggles. He also has cyclothymia, a mood disorder that leads to rapid fluctuations between mania and depression.

Reid sets off for his grandmother's condo in Key Largo. There, he meets twenty-two-year-old Joaquim, a diving instructor. Sparks quickly fly, and the two begin a romance that challenges them as much as it excites them.

The novel subtly and convincingly portrays the difficulties of openness and trust in the context of mental illness. Reid knows what he must do to cope with cyclothymia and has a therapy group to support him, but communicating his history to Joaquim is terrifying and painful.

Joaquim is open to learning about Reid's past, but he struggles to understand experiences very far from his own. Reid's mood swings and his history of cutting bewilder Joaquim even as they evoke compassion. That Reid comes from Wisconsin and Joaquim is Brazilian only adds to the tension.

The restaurants, shops, beaches, and open waters of the Florida Keys come to life as Reid and Joaquim explore their surroundings. Their deepening romance and irresistible sexual tension come alive on the page. Sex scenes are steamy. Convincingly drawn minor characters add to the richness of their developing relationship.

Pacing lags as characters repeatedly cover the same emotional ground. The obstacles that separate the lovers—misunderstanding, impatience, fear—are both true to life and lacking in drama. What the novel lacks in forward momentum, however, it makes up for in emotional resonance.

Jude Sierra's romance *A Tiny Piece of Something Greater* is a tender, compassionate look at learning to love another person and oneself at the same time.

REBECCA HUSSEY (May/June 2018)

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