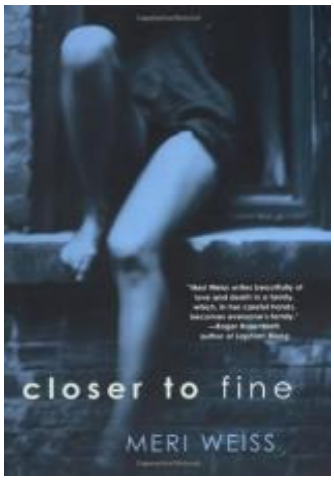
Closer to Fine

by Meri Weiss



About the Book

In this luminous debut novel about a young woman putting her life back together after the death of her brother, Meri Weiss explores hope after heartbreak, and the myriad ways that those we love can make us whole again?

Growing up, Alexandra and her older brother Ashley were never close. Her decision to move in to Ashley?s Upper West Side apartment to care for him during his final months surprises herself as much as anyone, but it can?t erase the guilt Alex feels at the years they wasted. Now, four years after his death, with a bout of depression and a suicide attempt behind her, Alex feels fragile but no longer broken. As for normal --- only with her roommate and best friend Jordy and their gay friend Jax can she feel anything close to that.

Then Alex?s therapist, Sam, bequeaths her a cryptic message that changes everything. The note reads simply, ?You?re missing a piece of yourself.? At Sam?s funeral, Alex meets Tucker --- the charming, cute son of one of New York?s wealthiest businessmen. As their romance deepens, Tucker tries to draw Alex out of her safety zone. But is Tucker the key to Sam?s riddle, or is the real answer still waiting to be found?

At once humorous and heartbreaking, and peopled with deftly rendered characters, **Closer to Fine** is an exquisite first novel about love, loss, and self discovery, written with uncommon verve and grace.

Discussion Guide

1. There are a lot of songs discussed and/or played throughout the story. What role do you think music plays in the novel?

2. Do you think **Closer to Fine** is an appropriate title for the book? Why or why not?

3. Both Alex and Jax seek refuge in huge, loud dance clubs. Why do you think they find comfort in dancing? What is it

about the gay club culture that they connect with?

4. Alex ignores the inheritance from Ashley for four years. Why doesn?t she access his money earlier? What does the money symbolize to her?

5. What hints does the author give about ?the missing piece?? Did you notice any of the hints as you read? What is the significance of the iceberg poster?

6. Alex is very much a New Yorker, yet she appears to be fulfilled and energized by her short trips to Washington, D.C., Lenox, the Hamptons and Cooperstown. Why do these trips reinvigorate her? Have you ever taken a physical journey that led to an emotional journey?

7. Family discord and conflicts with parents are important themes in the novel. Do you think this is a generational issue? Alex and Jax have both spent a lot of time in therapy --- do you think this affects how they relate to their parents?

8. Carchie is much more than an uncle to Alex. Why are Alex and Carchie so close? What does Carchie offer Alex that no other character does?

9. Why is Tucker so certain he can fix Alex? Does Alex need to be fixed? How has Tucker?s mother?s suicide affected him? Do you think he and his father can repair their damaged relationship? Why or why not?

10. Do you think Tucker and Alex will remain friends? Why or why not?

11. Jordy has been in love with Alex for a long time, while Alex just realizes her love for Jordy at the end of the book. Do you think Alex and Jordy will last? Have you ever loved someone from afar for an extended period of time? Did you ever tell that person how you felt? What happened?

12. Alex and Jax have had a strong, supportive friendship since childhood. What does Alex learn from Jax throughout the novel? Does Jax learn anything from Alex? Why does their friendship work so well?

13. Alex seems to be acutely self-aware of her personality quirks and issues. Do you think this helps or harms her?

14. At the end of the novel, do you think Alex has made peace to Ashley?s death? Is it possible for anyone to recover from the death of a sibling?

15. The book is full of both drama and himor. How does the author juxtapose solemn scenes with amusing scenes? Is the balance of light and dark movement effective?

16. Who is your favorite character in the novel? Why?

Author Bio

Meri Weiss was born and raised in New York. She graduated from the University of Michigan with a Bachelor?s degree in English; she holds a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing from Long Island University and a Master of Arts in Literature from SUNY New Paltz. Meri has been a college English instructor and freelance writer for the past seven years. She currently lives and teaches in New York City. Visit her website at: www.meriweiss.com.

Critical Praise

"In her debut novel, Weiss deftly explores complex issues surrounding friendship and familial ties. This story of a woman wedged between layers of guilt and loss trying to make her way back to feeling normal the best way she knows how is a winner. This search for meaning leads her on a path of self-discovery --- and to a place that's unexpected yet fulfilling."

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Publication Date: July 1, 2008
Paperback: 304 pages
Publisher: Kensington
ISBN-10: 075822690X
ISBN-13: 9780758226907