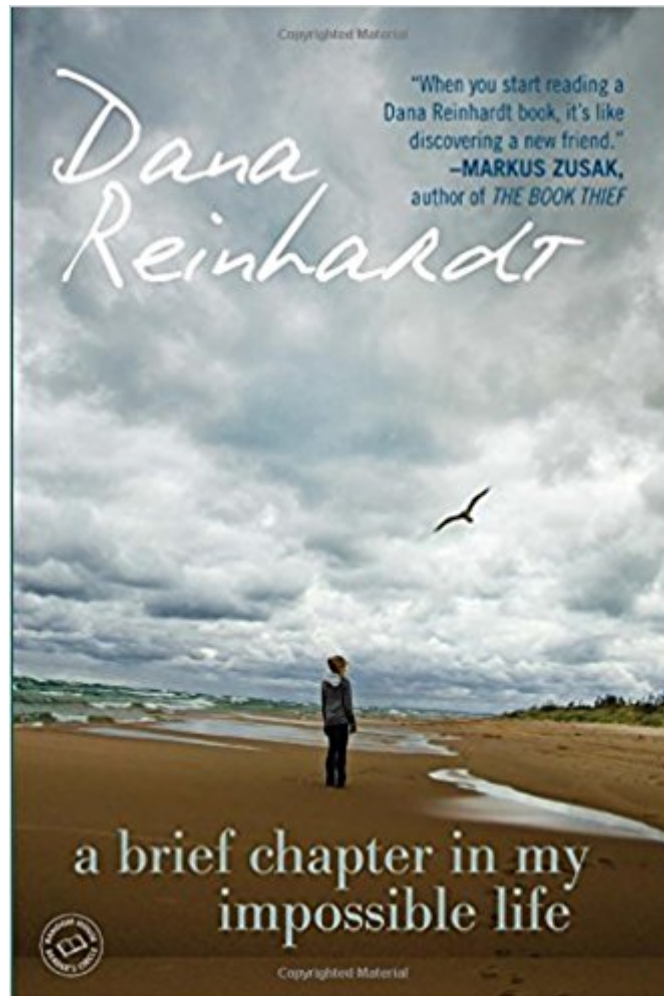




The book was found

A Brief Chapter In My Impossible Life



Synopsis

You can tell what really makes Simone different just by looking at her: she doesn't resemble anyone in her family. She's adopted. She's always known it, but she's never wanted to know anything about where she came from. She's happy with her family just as it is, thank you. Then one day, Rivka calls, and Simone learns who her mother was—*she*—a 16-year-old, just like Simone. Who is Rivka? What does she want? Why is she calling now, after all these years? The answers lead Simone to deeper feelings of anguish and love than she has ever known and prompt her to question everything she has taken for granted about faith, the afterlife, and what it means to be a daughter.

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Grade 7 Up—*Simone*, 16, has always known she was adopted but has never had any real desire to meet her birth mother despite the fact that she knows her parents keep in touch. Her family is perfect the way it is, thank you. Sure, she looks different and has different talents from her parents and younger brother, but that has never mattered. That all changes when Rivka calls and wants to meet her. What had begun as a normal school year changes as Simone must come to terms with who she is and how she fits into both families. When she then learns that Rivka is dying, it becomes a year that challenges her belief in God, a belief she did not know she had. It becomes a year that strains the bonds of friendships and family ties, both old and new. It becomes a year of her first boyfriend, and a year in an impossible life. Reinhardt's first novel is superbly crafted and has compelling and strong characters. It asks the big questions, about love,

about faith, about what it means to be a daughter. It also has strong subplots that deal with friendship; with boyfriend/girlfriend relationships, both good and bad; with standing up for what one believes is right; and with struggling to keep up with academics and fit in at school when things seem to be falling apart on a personal level. The novel deals with big issues without being preachy or sappy. It is a great read.

—Janet Hilbun, Texas Woman's University, Denton, TX

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Gr. 9-12. Olive skinned and dark eyed, Simone looks nothing like her fair-haired family. She is, nonetheless, the beloved daughter of her adoptive parents and enjoys a close and supportive relationship with her younger brother. It therefore comes as a terrible intrusion in Simone's comfortable life when, after 16 years, her birth mother asks to meet her. After some resistance, Simone makes contact with Rivka, a 33-year-old self-exiled Hasidic Jew who is dying of ovarian cancer. Despite a fairly transparent setup, once Simone and Rivka are brought together, their shared story is developed with skill, attention to detail, and poignancy. Both Simone and Rivka are strong, complicated characters who benefit greatly from each other: Simone is gifted with her heritage and history and thus a richer identity, and Rivka is able to leave the world having known her daughter. Some sexual content and strong language in Simone's friendships and school life may make this an inappropriate selection for younger teens, and with a poorly representative cover, the book may require hand selling. Holly Koelling

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3.5 of 5 stars Simone has always known she was adopted, but she's reluctant to meet her birth mother, despite her parents encouragement. She calls Rivka, who is a very religious, Jewish woman, a stark contrast to Simone's liberal, atheist parents. Why did Rivka contact her now, and what is she, and her parents hiding. I'd read and loved Dana Reinhardt's other books, though not her first, *A BRIEF CHAPTER IN MY IMPOSSIBLE LIFE* (ABC). The writing is crisp, clear and spot on. Reading the words Reinhardt put on paper (actually Kindle), was more enjoyable than most YA novels. Simone's first person voice is funny, sarcastic, and ironic, the kind of person I would befriend in real life. Simone was a little too perfect to be completely realistic. Most of the time when she did and said everything a perfect daughter would do, I wondered where's the limit testing, where's the normal teenage rebellion. Likewise, her parents, brother and birth mother were too stereotypically perfect, all very likable, but lacking depth. ABC is more character than plot driven and

I was able to stop and start without feeling like the world stopped until I finish. In my opinion Reinhardt focused too much on Rivka and others explaining Jewish tradition, things that weren't essential to the plot of characters. I almost felt like the book was part religious education through literature, rather than tidbits sprinkled here and there as part of the plot. I think there could have been a better way to show Rivka's beliefs and Simone's interest without almost saying "this is the spot where we explain this prayer or this holiday for all the people who don't know." I recommend ABC, as a unique voice and mutual respect between atheists and Jews. People of any belief or non belief will feel like their POV is respectful. This isn't a religious or preachy book, religion is more an element of some characters', and not always textbook or stereotypical.

Dana Reinhardt out does herself with this book, truly amazing, would recommend to anyone who liked *The Things a Brother Knows*.

An excellent first novel. Easy reading plus gaining insight into different cultures and lives. Would recommend this for all ages. Lovely, entertaining, understanding prejudices, and finally love.

A Brief Chapter in my Impossible Life by Dana Reinhardt is about a young teenage girl who seems to have her whole life together. Wendy Lamb Books published this book in New York in 2006. I recommend this book to high school girls because a lot of them can relate to the problems that Simone goes through. *A Brief Chapter in my Impossible Life* is about a young girl, Simone, who thinks her life is all in line. She has awesome parents, who support her in all of her decisions, she has a cool younger brother who seems to be growing up into a man, a small super supportive friend group, and she is doing well in school. As she prepares to take her SAT she is also joining the Atheist Student Alliance and having fun while she is young. One of the big reasons I recommend this book for teenage girls is because they can really relate to what Simone goes through in high school. Simone is the main character in this book. She is an independent girl who has a small friend group, and is not very in touch with school activities. She is another boy obsessed teenage girl, who also happens to love to party; a lot of things a typical high school girl would be into. Simone has a lot of ups and downs as she goes throughout her life in high school, which you can learn all about in this book. I would say this book is a fairly easy read, which may also make it good for an eighth grader, but no younger as there is some language in it. I am obsessed with the show *Pretty Little Liars*, which is very similar to this book. The show is about four teenage girls, just trying to make their way through high school with all the ups and downs and drama that comes with being a high

school girl. That being said, I recommend that if you like Pretty Little Liars or shows related to it, that you read this book. A Brief Chapter in My Impossible Life by Dana Reinhardt is about a teenage girl, Simone, making her way through her roller coaster ride called high school. She has obstacles thrown at her from every which way from family, to boys, to parties, to throwing up all over boys at parties. Simone doesn't have it coming easy for her. For more on the crazy life of Simone, and her high school journey, I recommend you read A Brief Chapter in My Impossible Life.

I received this book from my aunt a few years back and hadn't read it until this year. I have to say, I'm glad I did. While I found it far from perfect and perhaps even a bit whingey at times, I did enjoy the story and can see why it got recognition in the Jewish YA publishing community when it came out. In the story, Simone, must come to terms with her birth mother and her previously unknown (and ignored) past. With a few twists and turns along the way her story has much of the drama we have come to expect from YA novels, including complex family relationship and a cute boy. While Reinhardt's depiction of Simone is fairly realistic, I found it sometimes tended towards an overly indulgent egocentric teenager who is more fitting as a cliché than an actual character.

I chose this book because I liked the cover. I know they say you shouldn't do that, but I find that covers generally do provide a reliable clue about how much one enjoys a book. This story centered around a teen meeting her birth mom for the first time had just the right amount of pathos, humor, and properly interesting supporting characters. Everything was kept real and I loved how no clichés were relied upon to deliver a well told story. Simone seemed like a teen any adult would enjoy knowing, as did her small circle of friends. Since I hadn't known this was a YA novel when I started reading it, I think that helped my enjoyment of it. No mean girls here or any other unpleasant drama to get in the way of the main story. I would recommend this book to teens and adults.

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