



Above the Thunder

©2009 eNotes.com, Inc. or its Licensors. Please see [copyright information](#) at the end of this document.

Anna Brinkman has always been lonely, quietly disappointed by her life, and hugely disappointed in her daughter Poppy. A supposedly ideal marriage stuck her with a baby she did not want and a “second best” career as a medical technician. She lost her daughter to cocaine and mental illness, and her husband to cancer. Two events shake her out of low-level gloom: her ten-year-old granddaughter’s arrival at her home, and Jack’s intrusion into her life.

Jack, an investment broker and bon vivant, formerly led a charmed life. An HIV- positive diagnosis activates his inner rage and cutting sarcasm. When they first meet in a self-help group he lashes out at Anna. Amazingly, the two soon mend fences and become friends. Jack ends up sharing her house while coping with a daunting array of medications and attitude adjustments.

Anna’s granddaughter Flynn ends up there because of blood ties and, perhaps, Anna’s lingering regrets about failing Poppy. Flynn is a strange child, obsessed with ghosts, dreams, and reincarnation. Yet she needs love, and Anna seemingly can meet this need.

Anna becomes the center of an intentional-family-by-accident. Jack’s partner Stuart, Anna’s friend Greta, and Flynn’s artist father Marvin circle on the periphery, with each duo adding to the complexity of the whole. All this shatters one wintry evening during a party. Anna ends up alone as she was before. Whether by malign fate, chance, or subconscious choice, the reason is left to the reader to decide.

Renee Manfredi’s first novel is full of sharp, brilliant images and small epiphanies. A story of character and connection, it leaves some questions open. Is it about love’s power to ennoble lonely lives? Or is it simply a tale of emotionally needy people huddling together for comfort? Either way, *Above the Thunder* is an unusual and strangely compelling story.

Copyright Notice

©2009 eNotes.com, Inc.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

No part of this work covered by the copyright hereon may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping, Web distribution or information storage retrieval systems without the written permission of the publisher.

For complete copyright information, please see the online version of this work:
<http://www.enotes.com/above-thunder-salem>