

From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E.



INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF E.L. KONIGSBURG

Elaine Lobl was the daughter of Jewish immigrants who raised her and her two sisters in a small Pennsylvania mill town. Though she was her high school's valedictorian, Lobl didn't know about scholarships (her school lacked a guidance counselor), so she earned money for college by working as a bookkeeper in a meat plant. There she met her future husband, David Konigsburg, the plant owner's brother. She studied chemistry at Carnegie Institute of Technology (now Carnegie Mellon University) in Pittsburgh, becoming her family's first college graduate. While the Konigsburg children were small, Elaine took art lessons, and once the youngest was in school, she began writing. In her Newbery Medal acceptance speech, she describes her motivation to write as the desire to make a record of suburban America in the "early autumn of the twentieth century," especially the everyday lives of children and families. Growing up, she never read stories about grouchy fathers or headachy mothers or pushy ladies, and she sought to put characters like these into her books. She also wanted to gently show kids that it's okay not to conform. She was awarded the Newbery Medal for *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* and the Newbery Honor for her second book, *Jennifer, Hecate, Macbeth, William McKinley, and Me, Elizabeth*. As of 2021, E. L. Konigsburg is the only author to ever have been awarded both a Newbery Medal and a Newbery Honor in the same year (1968). She was one of six authors to have won two Newbery Medals in their career. (The second Medal was for *The View from Saturday* in 1997.) She also wrote several picture books featuring her grandchildren. Konigsburg's husband died in 2001, and she followed him in 2013.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In her afterword to the 35th anniversary edition of *Mixed-Up Files*, Konigsburg notes that in 1967, when the book was first published, New York City saw many student protests, anti-Vietnam War demonstrations, and race riots. Instead of highlighting historical events like these, she chose to focus on her main character's interior journey toward growing up. However, the novel is still strongly rooted in a specific place—Manhattan and, especially, the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Some of the Manhattan landmarks that feature in the story no longer exist, like typewriter company Olivetti on Fifth Avenue, where Claudia types her letter to the museum. The Metropolitan Museum of Art is certainly still there, though its admission is no longer free, and the restaurant fountain where

the Kincaid kids took a bath no longer exists. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, or "the Met," was founded in 1870 and is housed on Manhattan's Upper East Side, across the street from Central Park. It boasts one of the world's biggest art collections and the largest in the Western Hemisphere, with over two million items in its permanent collections. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the Met received up to 7 million visitors per year. Finally, one of the most acclaimed Renaissance artists, Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475–1564), is best known for sculptures *Pietà* and *David* and for the painted ceiling of the Vatican's Sistine Chapel. The novel's "Angel" statue attributed to Michelangelo, however, is fictional.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Louise Fitzhugh's *Harriet the Spy* is another example of a novel from the 1960s featuring a precocious, resourceful girl who wants to feel different from her middle school classmates. Two other children's books about kids who run away are Christopher Paul Curtis's *Bud, Not Buddy* (1998), about an African American boy searching for home during the Great Depression, and *Maniac Magee* (1990), Jerry Spinelli's story of a warm-hearted runaway orphan. More recently, Alan Gratz's 2017 middle grade novel *Ban This Book* features a fourth-grade protagonist named Amy Anne who starts a banned books library in her locker after her favorite book, *From The Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*, is banned from the school library. E. L. Konigsburg's many other books for children and young adults include *The View from Saturday* (about a group of sixth grade friends and their disabled teacher), *The Second Mrs. Gioconda* (a historical novel about Leonardo da Vinci and the *Mona Lisa*), *A Proud Taste for Scarlet and Miniver* (about Queen of France and England Eleanor of Aquitaine), and *Silent to the Bone* (a YA mystery).

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler
- **When Written:** 1966
- **Where Written:** New York City suburbs
- **When Published:** 1967
- **Literary Period:** Modern
- **Genre:** Children's Fiction
- **Setting:** 1960s New York City (especially the Metropolitan Museum of Art) and Greenwich, Connecticut
- **Climax:** Claudia Kincaid discovers the truth about the angel sculpture in Mrs. Frankweiler's files.
- **Antagonist:** Claudia's parents, the museum guards

- **Point of View:** First Person, Third Person

EXTRA CREDIT

Life Imitates Art. In 1995, an expert in Italian Renaissance sculpture noticed a small marble cupid statue in the lobby of the French Embassy, across the street from the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The expert announced that the cupid was an early Michelangelo. When *The New York Times* ran a story about the cupid, lots of people wrote to E. L. Konigsburg asking if she'd known about the statue when she wrote her book (she hadn't).

Fact and Fiction. Ever since *Mixed-Up Files's* publication in 1967, museum staff have been asked so many questions about the book that in 2001, the Metropolitan's magazine *MuseumKids* published an entire "Mixed-up Files" Issue.



PLOT SUMMARY

The novel begins with a note from Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler to her lawyer, Saxonberg, requesting that certain changes be made to her will. When Saxonberg reads the following account, she promises, he will understand why.

Claudia Kincaid, almost 12, wants to run away from home. She hates being uncomfortable, though, so she chooses a beautiful place to hide: the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. Claudia is running away because of the "injustice" of having to do chores and be responsible for her three younger brothers. However, she decides she'll take along nine-year-old Jamie, the second youngest, because he's "rich" and reasonably quiet. In the meantime, Claudia has to save up enough for round-trip train fare. After her family has "learned a lesson in Claudia appreciation," she plans to return home.

One Monday after school, Claudia reveals her detailed plan to Jamie. They will run away on Wednesday, music lesson day, so that they can pack extra clothes in their instrument cases without anyone knowing. Jamie agrees to the adventure, though at first, he doesn't want to tell Claudia how much money he's saved up—almost \$25. He finally admits that he's earned this money by gambling with his friend Bruce; he always wins.

According to plan, Claudia and Jamie stay on the school bus on Wednesday morning after the rest of the kids have gotten off. After the driver parks and leaves, the kids walk to the train station (Claudia stops to mail a note of explanation to their parents), quarreling on the way. They ride the train from suburban Greenwich, Connecticut to New York City. Jamie isn't thrilled when he learns they'll be hiding in the art museum, but when Claudia appoints him their official treasurer, he cheers up.

When they arrive in New York, Jamie insists that they save money by walking to the museum instead of taking the bus or a

taxi. Once there, they agree on a plan to hide during the museum's opening and closing (by ducking into bathroom stalls until the guards have left), and Claudia chooses an antique canopy bed for them to sleep in. Even though they keep arguing, the pair starts to feel like more of a team.

The next morning, the kids hide their belongings—and themselves—until the museum opens. Then, starving, they leave the museum to buy a cheap lunch, and Claudia decides they should devote themselves to learning as much about art as they can—they'll choose a different gallery to study each day. Jamie chooses the Hall of the Italian Renaissance today, hoping Claudia will get bored and give up. But when they get there, they join a line of over 1,000 people waiting to see a new exhibit. There's even a *New York Times* photographer documenting the event. When they reach the front of the line, they see a small, graceful sculpture of an **angel**. Claudia thinks it's the most beautiful thing she's ever seen.

The next morning, Claudia finds a copy of the *Times* and reads about the "Angel" statue, which might be one of Michelangelo's early works. It was recently purchased for just \$225 from collector Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler, who bought it in Bologna, Italy before the Second World War. Mrs. Frankweiler, a widow, lives alone on a Connecticut estate. Claudia decides that instead of trying to learn about the whole museum, they should dedicate themselves to learning about this statue and finding out whether Michelangelo really sculpted it. Claudia feels that solving this mystery is somehow important for her future.

The next day, Saturday, Claudia insists on going to the library to research Michelangelo and the Italian Renaissance. The main thing the kids learn is that many of Michelangelo's works have been lost. That night in the museum, they narrowly avoid crossing paths with workers who are moving the angel statue. While taking baths in the museum's restaurant fountain, they pick up almost \$3 in coins to supplement their disappearing budget.

On Sunday, Jamie and Claudia study Angel before the museum opens. They notice the impression of an M on the velvet underneath the sculpture. Later, they look at books in the museum's bookstore and confirm that the "M" is Michelangelo's stonemason's mark. Sure they've found a critical clue, they plan to rent a post office box at Grand Central Station and send an anonymous letter to the museum, sharing their discovery. If the museum writes back asking for help, Claudia and Jamie can become heroes. The next day, the kids look for a visiting school group, hoping they can ask a random student to deliver their letter for them. To their shock, they overhear a group from their own school back in Greenwich. Jamie uses this opportunity to deliver the letter to the museum office himself, pretending he's part of the field trip.

On Wednesday, Claudia and Jamie find a letter in their P.O. box—it's from the museum's Public Relations office. The polite

letter thanks them for their tip, but informs them that the museum has known about the “M” for a long time, and it isn’t conclusive evidence—it could mean that Michelangelo merely designed Angel but didn’t carve it, or even that somebody else used Michelangelo’s mark. After reading the letter, Claudia starts to cry. Jamie asks if this means they should go home, but Claudia says she can’t—she’s realized she wants to go home “different,” and she can’t do that without solving Angel’s mystery. When Jamie insists on buying train tickets home, Claudia interjects that they should go to Farmington, Connecticut, instead. That’s where Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler lives—and Claudia is sure she can answer their questions about the statue.

Later, a taxi drops them off in front of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler’s sprawling mansion. At first the butler, Parks, won’t admit them, but when they explain they’re seeking answers about the Italian Renaissance, Parks finally leads them through antique-filled rooms and into Mrs. Frankweiler’s surprising office. It resembles a laboratory and is filled with rows of **filing cabinets**. Mrs. Frankweiler is a surprise, too—she’s an elderly lady wearing a lab coat and a baroque pearl necklace. When Mrs. Frankweiler finally turns around, she demands to know if they’re the children missing from Greenwich. The kids are flabbergasted. She shows them several newspapers reporting their disappearance but promises not to call the police if they won’t bore her with tedious questions.

Jamie finally stammers that they’re interested in Angel. Claudia says she can’t return home until she knows the truth about the sculpture’s origins. Mrs. Frankweiler says that’s her secret and asks where the Kincaids have been hiding for the past week. When Claudia says that’s *their* secret, Mrs. Frankweiler decides she likes these children.

At lunch, before Claudia emerges from a leisurely bath, Jamie confesses to Mrs. Frankweiler that they’d been hiding in the museum. Later, after Claudia joins them, Mrs. Frankweiler suggests that Claudia doesn’t want to go home because it turns out that running away didn’t change anything: she still had to do all the planning and supervising, just like at home. Claudia admits she’s right. She also says that Angel was her favorite part of running away, but she doesn’t want to explain why—if Mrs. Frankweiler knows their secret, it will feel like the whole adventure is over. Mrs. Frankweiler points out that *everything* ends eventually. Upset, Claudia realizes Jamie already spilled their secret.

Mrs. Frankweiler decides to help Claudia understand the value of their adventure—something that will help her grow up. She takes the children into her office and explains that the filing cabinets are filled with her “secrets.” One of the cabinets contains the secret of Angel. She gives them one hour to find the relevant file.

Claudia makes a list of categories related to Michelangelo and Angel, but after searching the cabinets for almost an hour, they haven’t located the proper files. The kids start squabbling, and when Jamie says, “Oh, boloney,” Claudia suddenly knows where to look. She looks for a folder labeled BOLOGNA—where Mrs. Frankweiler purchased the statue. Inside she finds a carefully preserved sketch of an angel, including Michelangelo’s mark. She bursts into tears.

Jamie wonders why Mrs. Frankweiler never sold the sketch. Mrs. Frankweiler explains that she’s always known Michelangelo sculpted Angel, but she kept the proof to herself—she needed the secret more than she needed the money. However, Mrs. Frankweiler will give the sketch to the Kincaids in her will, on one condition: they have to tell her *their* story. She knows Jamie will keep the secret because of the money at stake, and Claudia will keep the secret because it will make her feel “different”—“on the inside, where it counts.”

Claudia and Jamie agree to record their story for Mrs. Frankweiler. The next morning, Sheldon the chauffeur drives them home. On the way, the kids decide to “adopt” Mrs. Frankweiler as their grandmother and to secretly visit her every time they save up enough money.

Mrs. Frankweiler closes her written account for Saxonberg by insisting that Saxonberg take her to lunch at the Metropolitan’s restaurant; she’ll sign the revised will there. She hopes that Claudia and Jamie will visit her again and adds that she has another secret—that Saxonberg, her lawyer of 41 years, is the Kincaids’ grandfather.



CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Claudia Kincaid – Claudia is the novel’s protagonist and, at almost 12, the eldest of the four Kincaid children. Tired of her monotonous life in Greenwich, Connecticut and the responsibilities of life as the oldest sibling and only girl, Claudia decides she wants to run away to New York City, taking her second-youngest brother, Jamie, along with her. She will return home after the rest of her family has learned to appreciate her and her parents have stopped such “injustices” as making her do chores and giving her a meager allowance. The only problem is that Claudia hates being uncomfortable, so she chooses the Metropolitan Museum of Art in Manhattan as her hiding place. She also loves luxuries like hot fudge sundaes and long baths; she gets cranky when she’s tired, cold, or sweaty. Claudia is a straight-A student and an ambitious girl, taking lots of extracurricular lessons like violin and art appreciation. Besides being intelligent and attentive to detail, she is a meticulous planner who spends weeks researching and preparing for running away. She’s also creative and resourceful, like when she suggests that she and Jamie pack their musical instrument

cases with extra clothing, or when she comes up with the idea to bathe in the museum restaurant's fountain. Claudia tends to correct Jamie's grammar in a teacherly way, provoking arguments. As their adventure goes on, however, the brother and sister bond, and they're good at working together despite their occasional fights. Claudia even stops correcting Jamie so much. Claudia is sensitive to beauty, instantly falling in love with the Metropolitan's new exhibit, the **Angel** statue. After seeing Angel and learning about the statue's mystery—was it carved by Michelangelo or not?—Claudia can't think about anything else. She senses that the statue holds a key to her own future as well. Claudia likes to feel that she can master any challenge, so when it looks like she and Jamie have failed to solve Angel's mystery by examining the statue and doing research, she's devastated—she doesn't want to return home the same old Claudia Kincaid. Then she has the idea to visit Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler, the statue's previous owner, to look for answers. There, she quickly comes up with a system allowing her and Jamie to search Mrs. Frankweiler's mixed-up **files** for clues. After visiting Mrs. Frankweiler, discovering that Michelangelo did, in fact, carve Angel becomes a precious secret that lets Claudia return home to her old life "different"—a step toward growing up.

Jamie Kincaid – Jamie is Claudia's younger brother. At nine years old, he is the second-youngest Kincaid sibling. Claudia chooses him to accompany her in running away because he's quiet, sometimes funny, and he hoards his money. He's "rich" because he saves his allowance and rarely buys anything. Plus, he gambles when he plays cards with his friend Bruce on the school bus and, because he cheats, he's saved up almost \$25. Though Jamie doesn't seem to share Claudia's sense of "injustice" about their home life, he is adventurous and agrees to run with Claudia when she reveals her plan to him. Jamie is a clever kid with a precocious dry wit and lively imagination. He enjoys "complications" and even encourages Claudia to make their running-away scheme more complex; his proposed embellishments sometimes clash with Claudia's fussily detailed plans. Because he's so good at handling money, Claudia appoints him treasurer of their trip, a role Jamie relishes. In overseeing their budget, Jamie is especially strict about walking everywhere instead of spending money on bus fare and skipping expensive desserts. By the end of their adventure, however, Jamie has become a little less stingy, just as Claudia has stopped correcting Jamie's grammar so much. Though he and Claudia argue throughout their adventure, the siblings grow closer by the time they return home.

Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler – Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler is a wealthy, eccentric 82-year-old widow and art collector and the story's narrator. In the first half of the novel, her identity and connection to the Kincaid kids remain something of a mystery. Then, after Claudia and Jamie visit the **Angel** exhibition, Claudia learns that Mrs. Frankweiler was Angel's previous

owner. She enters the story personally when Claudia and Jamie travel to her estate in Farmington, Connecticut, seeking answers about Angel. Mrs. Frankweiler's house is filled with ornate furnishings, but her office looks more like a laboratory—and it's lined with **filing cabinets** whose organizational system only she can fathom. While doing "research" (its nature is never exactly described), she wears a white lab coat along with a baroque pearl necklace. She can be imposing and dramatic when a situation calls for it, and the Kincaid kids find her intimidating at first. But she quickly develops a fondness for the spirited kids and wins their trust by taking their adventure in the museum seriously—she doesn't call the police immediately and asks them thoughtful questions. She's also very perceptive, figuring out that Claudia insists on solving Angel's mystery because it turns out that running away didn't change her life as she'd hoped. She wants to help Claudia see the broader value of the adventure, showing that she cares about Claudia's development as a person. In addition, rather than just telling the kids whether Michelangelo carved Angel, she challenges them to find the answer for themselves by searching through her mixed-up filing cabinets. Once they find the Michelangelo sketch that confirms he carved the statue, she makes a deal with them. The sketch will be left to the kids in Mrs. Frankweiler's will, on two conditions: they have to keep the sketch a secret, and they have to tell her the story of their museum adventure. She correctly perceives that Jamie will keep the secret because of what the sketch will be worth to them someday, and Claudia will keep the secret for the sheer delight of *having* a secret, which will let her go home "different." She explains to the kids that secrets—like those she collects and stores in her files—make a person different "on the inside where it counts." Mrs. Frankweiler, who's childless, also expresses that she's always wanted the experience of being a mother, which later leads the kids to decide to "adopt" her as a grandmother, secretly visiting her whenever they can.

Saxonberg – Saxonberg has been Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler's lawyer for 41 years. He doesn't appear in the story directly, but Mrs. Frankweiler addresses the account contained in *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* to him as an explanation for the changes she wants made in her will (namely, to leave the Michelangelo **angel** sketch to the Kincaid children). Mrs. Frankweiler seems to enjoy giving Saxonberg a hard time—telling him he's boring, scolding him for never going to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and insisting that he take her there for lunch someday. At the end of the novel, it's revealed that Saxonberg is the Kincaid kids' grandfather. There's a teasing note to Mrs. Frankweiler's correspondence with Saxonberg which suggests that as much as she pretends to find him annoying and frustrating, she's actually quite fond of him.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Sheldon – Sheldon is Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler's chauffeur.

Kevin Kincaid – Kevin is the youngest Kincaid sibling at six years old. Each of the older Kincaids takes turns being responsible for him after school. Claudia thinks her parents spoil Kevin.

Steve Kincaid – Steve is the second-oldest Kincaid sibling.

Bruce – Bruce is Jamie Kincaid’s friend. They play cards on the bus every day, and Jamie always beats Bruce because he cheats.

Morris – Morris is a guard at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. He is friends with Sheldon.

Parks – Parks is Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler’s butler.



THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don’t have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.



GROWING UP

Sixth-grader Claudia Kincaid, the protagonist of *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*, decides to run away from her monotonous suburban life to glamorous New York City. From the start, the narrator (Mrs. Frankweiler) observes that Claudia is simply tired of being “straight-A’s Claudia Kincaid.” Indeed, Claudia mostly thinks of running away as payback for her parents’ expectations of her as the eldest sibling, finding these unfair. After she and her brother Jamie begin hiding in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, however, Claudia starts to forget about her childish reasons for running away. Claudia becomes obsessed with the **Angel** statue, a new museum acquisition, because it might have been carved by Michelangelo, but nobody knows for sure. Claudia feels she can’t go home to “the same old thing” until she knows the truth about the sculpture’s origins. Eventually, she realizes that what she’s longing for is not simply independence from her parents, but a “way to be different.” She senses that, somehow, the mystery of the angel statue is a key to helping her become “different.” Only once she finds proof that Michelangelo carved Angel does Claudia feel she can go home “different.” Even if life at home is “the same old thing,” she’s no longer the same person. Later, Mrs. Frankweiler remarks that understanding the adventure’s true value will mean that Claudia is “tiptoeing into the grown-up world.” Though the novel doesn’t directly name the adventure’s value, it suggests that growing up doesn’t mean rejecting responsibility, but being brave enough to seek answers about the world and, in doing so, becoming connected to something bigger than oneself.



ADVENTURE, MYSTERY, AND SECRETS

From the *Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* is filled with secrets—from the Kincaid kids’ initial plan to run away from home, their elaborate scheme to stay hidden in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and later, eccentric art patron Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler’s “mixed-up” **files** containing a lifetime’s worth of secrets. The biggest secret, though, revolves around the mysterious **Angel** sculpture on display at the Metropolitan. Soon after arriving at the museum, Claudia Kincaid’s focus shifts from running away and hiding to solving the mystery of the sculpture’s origins. The resolution to the mystery, she feels, will somehow be important for her future as well.

After Claudia and her brother Jamie’s attempts to prove that Michelangelo carved the statue end in disappointment, Claudia is devastated, deciding the entire museum adventure has been a waste of time. But after meeting Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler and finding proof in a 400-year-old sketch that Michelangelo was the statue’s artist, Claudia is unexpectedly overjoyed. Claudia is now happy to keep her findings a secret, not just because Mrs. Frankweiler will bequeath the sketch to her if she does, but because keeping the huge secret will let her return home “different.” Perceptively, Mrs. Frankweiler points out that Claudia doesn’t like adventure for its own sake; she likes the kind of adventure that secrets offer, because secrets change a person “inside where it counts.” And even if Claudia doesn’t get to stun the world by publicly solving the statue’s mystery, this secret will let Claudia be “a heroine to herself.” Through Claudia’s runaway adventure and her efforts to solve the statue’s mystery, the novel suggests that the best secrets are not the ones that are meant to shock or impress others, but those that help a person gain a sense of purpose and confidence in themselves.



FAMILY

Claudia Kincaid feels that her family doesn’t appreciate her—she’s forced to do chores that her younger brothers get out of, and she’s always expected to be responsible and a role model. By running away for a while, she hopes to teach her family “a lesson in Claudia appreciation.” Claudia initially chooses her nine-year-old brother Jamie as her running-away companion because he’s “rich” (he’s saved up almost \$25 from gambling with a friend) and sometimes funny. Throughout their adventure, Claudia and Jamie squabble at the least provocation. Jamie is a tightfisted money manager and argues with Claudia over every penny spent. In turn, Claudia has a habit of picking on Jamie’s informal grammar, getting them into needless quarrels. But their adventure also forces them to become a team. To an extent, their teamwork develops from simply spending more time together and having fun. When Claudia finds a fancy bed for them to sleep in at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, she wins

over Jamie by pointing out the bed's gruesome history (a murder allegedly took place in it). The narrator (Mrs. Frankweiler) observes that the two had "always spent more time with activities than they had with each other," but that their adventure is changing that by closing the distance between them.

Indeed, Claudia and Jamie are forced to lean on each other's strengths more than they resent each other's weaknesses. Though Jamie finds Claudia too meticulous sometimes, he comes to appreciate her thoughtful plans that help them avoid discovery. And though Claudia grumbles when Jamie won't let her buy bus fare or dessert, she knows if it weren't for him, she would have run out of money long before the trip ended. Though the novel doesn't show their reunion with their family in detail, it's hinted that their appreciation for their parents—especially Claudia's—will be stronger after their adventure, too. Overall, the Kincaids' adventure suggests that although family members will always have to tolerate one another's weaknesses, it's important to encourage one another's strengths and support one another.



INDEPENDENCE, CAPABILITY, AND CREATIVITY

In some ways, the Kincaids' running away from home and hiding in the Metropolitan Museum of Art is childish, and their motivations are decidedly mixed. Jamie, for instance, relishes the chance to wear sneakers instead of school shoes, and he wants to be free of schedules and the obligation to study and learn. And Claudia, for her part, seems oblivious to the fact that running away causes their parents a great deal of distress. In other ways, the Kincaids' adventure showcases how creative and capable kids can be: for example, Claudia anticipates that running away will require a lot of foresight and planning. She plans the best time for them to leave—music lesson day, so that they can pack their instrument cases with extra clothes and nobody will notice. Claudia even figures out how to outsmart adults, like dodging the museum guards during closing and opening. Even though Jamie is clearly less mature than Claudia, he is smarter with money and successfully stretches their meager budget for days. Finally, instead of giving up when their investigation doesn't reveal the **angel** sculpture's origins, Claudia insists they visit Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler, the statue's previous owner. And when Mrs. Frankweiler challenges the kids to find hidden evidence, they quickly figure out a system for searching her messy **files**. Thus, while the novel makes it clear that running away isn't a wise thing for children to do, it does suggest that if kids use their talents and work together, they can do amazing things.



ART, BEAUTY, AND WONDER

When hiding in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Claudia Kincaid decides she and her brother Jamie should devote themselves to learning everything they possibly can about the museum, choosing one gallery to explore each day. But her plan is quickly derailed when she falls in love with the newly exhibited **Angel** sculpture, deciding it's the most beautiful thing she's ever seen. After learning it might be an early work of Michelangelo, she insists on doing exhaustive research about the Italian Renaissance, and when they spot the impression of an "M" underneath the sculpture, Claudia is sure they've found proof. When it turns out that experts already knew about this evidence, Claudia is crushed, but she feels too connected to Angel to give up. She then decides to visit the statue's former owner, Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler, on a "hunch." Arguably, Claudia's determination to solve the mystery isn't logical—she's just a kid, not an art historian, after all. But by pursuing her love for the statue, Claudia eventually discovers its exciting history. Mrs. Frankweiler's refusal to sell her Michelangelo sketch—proof that he carved Angel—also seems irrational on the surface; she argues that experts would "make a science" of what she simply knows in her gut to be true. But through Claudia's and Mrs. Frankweiler's instinctive love for this work of art, the novel encourages readers not just to learn facts about art, but to embrace the wonder art can inspire.



SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



ANGEL

The angel statue symbolizes Claudia's desire to figure out who she really is. After running away from her monotonous home life where she's always been "straight-As Claudia Kincaid," Claudia sees a newly acquired sculpture on display in the Metropolitan Museum of Art—a small angel with folded arms. Immediately, she can't stop thinking about the beautiful statue. And when she learns that "Angel" might be an early lost work of Michelangelo (a question debated by art experts), she's determined to find out the truth one way or the other.

Claudia identifies strongly with Angel, though she's not sure why. At one point, she even hints to Jamie that she thinks the statue resembles her. As she and Jamie conduct library research and study the statue for possible clues, she realizes that the statue's mystery has become more important to her than her original goal of simply running away and hiding. In the long term, the runaway adventure won't matter as much as "Michelangelo, Angel, history, and herself": somehow, Angel

holds a clue to why Claudia ran away in the first place. That's why she refuses to go home until she discovers Angel's history. If she goes home *without* knowing, that will mean she's returning home as the same person she's always been, and the whole adventure will have been a failure. She won't know the truth about where Angel comes from—or, implicitly, about who she is.

When Claudia and Jamie's research fails to solve the mystery conclusively, Claudia insists that they visit Angel's previous owner, Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler, to seek answers. Among Mrs. Frankweiler's mixed-up **files**, the kids finally find a 400-year-old sketch proving that Michelangelo *did* sculpt Angel. Claudia is overjoyed and intends to keep the discovery secret—such a secret makes her different, not in an outwardly obvious way, but “on the inside where it counts.” Mrs. Frankweiler perceives that by running away, Claudia was really seeking to become “different” all along. Moreover, the determination and resourcefulness it took to solve the mystery is what changed Claudia—and such inner change is a step toward Claudia growing up and becoming fully herself.



FILES AND FILING CABINETS

Files and filing cabinets represent the enriching details a curious person can collect throughout life, and more importantly the wisdom they can accumulate in the process. Claudia and Jamie encounter Mrs. Frankweiler's files and filing cabinets at the end of the novel, when they visit her office in search of answers about the **Angel** statue. Mrs. Frankweiler explains that her overflowing, mysteriously organized filing cabinets are a collection of “secrets,” and that the value of such secrets is not the fame or wealth they could potentially bring the holder, but the fact that they make a person different “on the inside where it counts.” This is why Mrs. Frankweiler doesn't share or sell information from her files to just anyone—keeping secrets is more precious to her than the money or status she could get otherwise. After the kids successfully search her files and discover the sketch that proves Michelangelo sculpted Angel, they, too, share in one of Mrs. Frankweiler's “secrets” and the sense of difference that the secrets bestow.

Seeing her crazy filing system, Jamie observes that if secrets make a person different on the inside, then Mrs. Frankweiler must have the most “mixed-up” insides anyone has ever seen. He means this as a compliment, and indeed, Mrs. Frankweiler's sense of humor, generosity, and perceptiveness about people suggest that her accumulated secrets have helped make her a delightfully rich and layered person. By implication, a person *can* collect secrets for their own gain—but in so doing, they miss the secrets' true value. By navigating her filing system and finding their own cherished treasure within, the story suggests, the kids might become happily “mixed-up” people in Mrs.

Frankweiler's style.

The novel itself comprises items from Mrs. Frankweiler's mixed-up files—the account of Claudia and Jamie's adventure that Mrs. Frankweiler writes for Saxonberg, as well as various attached items, like the Metropolitan Museum's letter to the Kincaids and Sheldon's report about the kids' behavior during their chauffeured trip home. So, the novel's very structure invites readers into Mrs. Frankweiler's “mixed-up files,” encouraging readers to become good collectors of secrets not just within the story, but in their own lives, too.



QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Atheneum Books for Young Readers edition of *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* published in 1998.


To My Lawyer, Saxonberg Quotes

☝ You never knew that I could write this well, did you? Of course, you don't actually know yet, but you soon will. I've spent a lot of time on this file. I listened. I investigated, and I fitted all the pieces together like a jigsaw puzzle. It leaves no doubts. Well, Saxonberg, read and discover.

Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler

Related Characters: Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler (speaker), Saxonberg

Related Themes: 

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 4

Explanation and Analysis

This note, addressed to a character named Saxonberg by another named Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler, appears at the very beginning of the novel. At this point, readers know almost nothing about the characters, and the note plunges them into the aftermath of an unspecified event that prompted Mrs. Frankweiler to modify her will (a task that will fall to Saxonberg, since he's her lawyer).

Mrs. Frankweiler's note serves as a prologue to the story, which is framed as having been written by Mrs. Frankweiler in order to explain the revision of her will to Saxonberg. She describes the attached story as a “file” that she's put a lot of effort into compiling, by listening, investigating, and fitting pieces together. At this point, it isn't clear to readers what Mrs. Frankweiler means by a “file,” but readers do get the sense that the story will involve some sort of mystery that

Mrs. Frankweiler found worth pursuing. And if the outcome of that mystery led Mrs. Frankweiler to change her will and go to the trouble of writing a detailed account, then it must have been personally significant. Her invitation to Saxonberg to “read and discover” invites readers, too, to keep reading and find out who Mrs. Frankweiler is and what this mysterious “file” contains.

Chapter 1 Quotes

☛ Claudia knew that she could never pull off the old-fashioned kind of running away. That is, running away in the heat of anger with a knapsack on her back. She didn't like discomfort; even picnics were untidy and inconvenient: all those insects and the sun melting the icing on the cupcakes. Therefore, she decided that her leaving home would not be just running from somewhere but would be running to somewhere. To a large place, a comfortable place, an indoor place, and preferably a beautiful place. And that's why she decided upon the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City.

Related Characters: Claudia Kincaid, Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler

Related Themes:     

Page Number: 5

Explanation and Analysis

This quote opens the main part of the story, after Mrs. Frankweiler's prefatory note. It introduces the protagonist, sixth-grader Claudia Kincaid, who has apparently made up her mind to run away from home.

It's not yet clear *why* Claudia wants to run away from home. Interestingly, though, Claudia seems to have the luxury of choosing the manner in which she wants to run away (not in a spontaneous huff, but after careful deliberation) and where she wants to go (someplace “comfortable” and “preferably [...] beautiful”). The fact that Claudia has options suggests that, regardless of her reasons for running away, her situation at home isn't truly dangerous or otherwise intolerable. So, even if she has legitimate complaints about home, it seems like they can't be *that* much worse than a picnic with bugs and melted cupcakes.

In addition, Claudia's desire to run away in comfort, instead of “the old-fashioned kind of running away,” suggests that she's not a typical sixth-grader. Instead of following the clichéd pattern of running away hastily with a knapsack, she'll do it in her own way. Her choice of destination—the

Metropolitan Museum of Art—further hints that Claudia is atypical, as she doesn't just want a place to hide, but to hide in a place of style and culture.

☛ She was the oldest child and the only girl and was subject to a lot of injustice. Perhaps it was because she had to both empty the dishwasher and set the table on the same night while her brothers got out of everything. And, perhaps, there was another reason more clear to me than to Claudia. A reason that had to do with the sameness of each and every week. She was bored with simply being straight-A's Claudia Kincaid. She was tired of arguing about whose turn it was to choose the Sunday night seven-thirty television show, of injustice, and of the monotony of everything.

Related Characters: Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler (speaker), Claudia Kincaid

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 6

Explanation and Analysis



Earlier, it was revealed that Claudia wants to run away, and this quote reveals her reasons for doing so. Claudia's expressed reason for running away is that she feels she suffers “injustice” at home. To Claudia, it's “unjust” that she's expected to do more chores than her younger brothers, and she assumes she's burdened with these responsibilities because she's both the oldest and the only girl. It could be true that Claudia's parents make unfair demands of her while letting her brothers off the hook. At the same time, most older siblings probably feel that the younger ones “[get] out of everything,” and the book doesn't give clear evidence either way. Readers have to take Claudia's word for it that she's being treated unjustly.

Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler suggests that there's a deeper reason Claudia wants to run away—a reason that Claudia lacks the maturity to clearly express. Claudia, she thinks, is simply bored with the “monotony” of everyday family life. She's also tired of filling an expected role—being the high-achieving, responsible eldest. Claudia's dissatisfactions with life suggest that she's growing up and wants to explore who she might be besides “straight-A's Claudia Kincaid.” This desire, more than any particular “injustice,” is what prompts Claudia to run away from her predictable life.

“I’ve picked you to accompany me on the greatest adventure of our mutual lives,” Claudia repeated. [...]

Despite himself, Jamie felt flattered. (Flattery is as important a machine as the lever, isn’t it, Saxonberg? Give it a proper place to rest, and it can move the world.) It moved Jamie. He stopped thinking, “Why pick on me?” and started thinking, “I am chosen.” He sat up in his seat, unzipped his jacket, put one foot up on the seat, placed his hands over his bent knee and said out of the corner of his mouth, “O.K., Claude, when do we bust out of here? And how?”

Related Characters: Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler, Claudia Kincaid, Jamie Kincaid, Steve Kincaid, Kevin Kincaid (speaker), Saxonberg

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 9

Explanation and Analysis

When Claudia decides to run away from home, she chooses her second-youngest brother, nine-year-old Jamie, to accompany her. She shares this news with him on the school bus on their way home one day.

At first, Jamie isn’t thrilled with Claudia’s request—more like *demand*—that she join him, because he feels like his older sister is just “[picking] on” him. But Claudia shows that she understands how her little brother thinks by appealing to flattery and sibling rivalry. As Mrs. Frankweiler points out in her side comment, flattery “can move the world” by motivating people, and the tactic works on Jamie; his change of perspective is comically sudden. Instead of feeling like Claudia is being mean to him, Jamie quickly changes his mind to decide that, in fact, she’s singling him out because he’s more special than his brothers Steve and Kevin. This pleases him so much that he immediately shifts from put-upon little brother to eager co-conspirator.

The siblings’ exchange shows what their dynamic is like at this early point in the novel. They seem to have the basis for a strong partnership, but at this point, it’s based more on self-interest (Claudia thinks Jamie will be useful; Jamie enjoys being flattered) than friendship.

Chapter 2 Quotes

“And in the course of those miles Claudia stopped regretting bringing Jamie along. In fact when they emerged from the train at Grand Central into the underworld of cement and steel that leads to the terminal, Claudia felt that having Jamie there was important. [...] And his money and radio were not the only reasons. Manhattan called for the courage of at least two Kincaids.

Related Characters: Claudia Kincaid, Jamie Kincaid

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 26-27

Explanation and Analysis

As Claudia and Jamie travel from suburban Connecticut to New York City by train, Claudia’s feelings about running away shift slightly. Up to this point, Claudia has been thinking of Jamie in mostly self-interested terms. Jamie hoards his allowance and gambling winnings and is good at budgeting, so Claudia figures he’ll be useful to have along. His transistor radio might come in handy, too. But he’s also an argumentative little kid whose poor grammar drives Claudia crazy, and she starts wondering if it’s worth it.

As the Kincaids get farther away from home, however, Claudia changes her mind. The transition from the “underworld of cement and steel” to the bustling Grand Central terminal is uncanny and jarring. Though Claudia doesn’t directly say so, her sudden gratitude for Jamie’s presence suggests that as they arrive in Manhattan, she realizes that running away is a bit scarier than she’d counted on. And though she values her independence, Claudia also realizes that it’s good to have a sibling at one’s side during a scary adventure. She’s starting to think of Jamie not just in terms of what advantages he might bring (like his money and radio), but also as her companion and co-adventurer.

Chapter 3 Quotes

“(You’ve missed all this, Saxonberg. Shame on you! You’ve never set your well-polished shoe inside that museum. More than a quarter of a million people come to that museum every week. They come from Mankato, Kansas where they have no museums and from Paris, France, where they have lots. And they all enter free of charge because that’s what the museum is: great and large and wonderful and free to all. And complicated. Complicated enough even for Jamie Kincaid.)

Related Characters: Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler (speaker), Saxonberg, Claudia Kincaid, Jamie Kincaid

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 31

Explanation and Analysis


After the Kincaid kids arrive at Manhattan’s Metropolitan Museum of Art in Mrs. Frankweiler’s account of their

adventure, Mrs. Frankweiler takes a moment to scold Saxonberg for failing to appreciate this wonderful museum. These parenthetical remarks make up one of several sets of pointed side comments to Saxonburg throughout the book. It's interesting that Mrs. Frankweiler cares enough about Saxonburg's activities to bother scolding him for this supposed oversight; most people, even eccentric elderly ladies, probably don't say "Shame on you!" to their lawyers. Her scolding suggests that, just maybe, she likes Saxonburg and therefore enjoys giving him a hard time.

Mrs. Frankweiler's broader point, though, is that the Metropolitan Museum is a wondrous place. The facts included here, like a quarter-million weekly visitors and free admission, reflect the time the book was written in the mid-1960s. But the museum's vast collections and global appeal endure to the present day. By highlighting these details, the author establishes the fascinating, "complicated" setting for Claudia and Jamie's adventure. More than that, she encourages readers to take an interest in the museum's offerings and perhaps even visit it themselves someday.

☝ What happened was: they became a team, a family of two. There had been times before they ran away when they had acted like a team, but those were very different from *feeling* like a team. Becoming a team didn't mean the end of their arguments. But it did mean that the arguments became a part of the adventure, became discussions not threats. To an outsider the arguments would appear to be the same because feeling like part of a team is something that happens invisibly. You might call it *caring*. You could even call it *love*. And it is very rarely, indeed, that it happens to two people at the same time—especially a brother and a sister who had always spent more time with activities than they had with each other.

Related Characters: Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler (speaker), Claudia Kincaid, Jamie Kincaid

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 38

Explanation and Analysis



Claudia and Jamie have just been scoping out a place to sleep on their first night in the museum. When Jamie is reluctant to sleep in the boring antique canopy bed Claudia has chosen, she points out that, according to the museum label, a murder allegedly took place in this bed. This instantly brightens Jamie's mood, and he tells her that she isn't so bad "for a sister and a fussbudget." She replies that he isn't so bad "for a brother and a cheapskate."

Later, the kids feel that something hard to describe occurred in that very moment. Mrs. Frankweiler explains what it was. To an outsider, it wouldn't be obvious, since Claudia and Jamie continue to squabble with each other like they did before. But now, their squabbles become part of the adventure itself. Mrs. Frankweiler hints that this happens because the kids begin to appreciate each other. Without this mutual caring or love, she suggests, it's not possible to fully be a team. She further suggests that it took time for the Kincaids to become a team because they're simply not used to spending time together—instead, they spend time taking lessons, playing sports, and pursuing other extracurricular activities. Mrs. Frankweiler subtly critiques this sort of childhood, hinting that when kids spend more time doing activities than playing with their siblings, they miss out on something precious—like the connection that Claudia and Jamie experience here.

Chapter 4 Quotes

☝ "Manning their stations" meant climbing back into the booths and waiting during the perilous time when the museum was open to the staff but not to visitors. They washed up, combed their hair, and even brushed their teeth. Then began those long moments. That first morning they weren't quite sure when the staff would arrive, so they hid good and early. While Claudia stood crouched down waiting, the emptiness and the hollowness of all the museum corridors filled her stomach. She was starved. She spent her time trying not to remember delicious things to eat.

Related Characters: Claudia Kincaid, Jamie Kincaid

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 44

Explanation and Analysis



As Claudia and Jamie settle into life at the Metropolitan Museum, Claudia thinks of everything, including a plan to keep herself and Jamie hidden during the museum's opening and closing. At those times, it could be especially easy for the kids to be noticed by staff. The central part of the plan involves crouching inside a bathroom stall so that security guards won't spot them.

This plan shows how capable Claudia is. Unlike many sixth graders, she doesn't just think of the fun and adventure of escaping from normal routine. She recognizes that to avoid getting caught, she and Jamie have to adapt to the museum's routines, even when that means long stretches of

tedium and discomfort. Following through on the plan also highlights just how unpleasant running away can actually be. In particular, hiding and waiting in the morning makes it impossible for Claudia to ignore her hunger (they can't sneak out of the museum for breakfast until after visitors start arriving). In a subtle way, the kids' challenges in the museum show readers that running away isn't all fun and that unless they're willing to plan as meticulously as Claudia does (and be hungry in the process), then they probably shouldn't consider it for themselves.

Every day they would pick a different gallery about which they would learn everything. [...] Jamie considered learning something every day outrageous. It was not only outrageous; it was unnecessary. Claudia simply did not know how to escape. He thought he would put a quick end to this part of their runaway career. He chose the galleries of the Italian Renaissance. He didn't even know what the Renaissance was except that it sounded important and there seemed to be an awful lot of it. He figured that Claudia would soon give up in despair.

Related Characters: Claudia Kincaid, Jamie Kincaid

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 49

Explanation and Analysis


While living in the museum, Claudia is determined that she and Jamie have an excellent educational experience. After all, when will they have an opportunity like this again? Her plan to study every gallery in the museum fits with her overachieving character, and it's also another hint that Claudia's motivation for running away has less to do with her home situation and more to do with her desire for something new and different in her life.

Humorously, Jamie resists Claudia's plan, showing how different they are. To him, running away is about having fun, and that *doesn't* include studying art. His choice of the Italian Renaissance is not just funny (he figures the size of the galleries is too much for even Claudia's ambition), but ironic. As readers will soon find out, the Italian Renaissance section houses the statue that will become pivotal to the book's plot. So on one hand, Claudia *will* give up on her unrealistic idea to study the entire museum's contents, but she'll do it because of a particularly wondrous artwork, not because of despair.

Claudia was lost in remembrance of the beautiful angel she had seen. Why did she seem so important; and why was she so special? Of course, she was beautiful. Graceful. Polished. But so were many other things at the museum. [...] And why was there all that commotion about her? The man had come to take pictures. There would be something about it in tomorrow's paper. They could find out from the newspapers.

Related Characters: Claudia Kincaid, Jamie Kincaid

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 52-53

Explanation and Analysis

Claudia and Jamie have just seen the museum's popular new exhibit of an angel statue for the first time. Claudia is trying to make sense of what she just saw and why she's reacted to it so strongly.


Claudia has always been sensitive to beautiful things—her choice of the museum as a hiding place and the antique bed as a sleeping spot, have already demonstrated this. So, it's not all that surprising that she's drawn to the beautiful little statue. However, there seems to be more to Claudia's feelings than just an admiration of aesthetic beauty. Angel stands out from everything else at the museum, and Claudia can't stop thinking about it. This hints at the fact that the angel statue will eventually lead Claudia to a deeper understanding of herself and the entire running-away adventure.

In addition, the media excitement surrounding the statue suggests that Claudia isn't the only one who finds the exhibit special. Claudia doesn't yet know why a *New York Times* photographer was taking pictures of Angel, but her determination to find out builds suspense and hints at the mystery that will unfold through the rest of the novel.

“A museum spokesman said yesterday, ‘Whether or not conclusive proof will be found that this was the work of Michelangelo, we are pleased with our purchase.’ Although Michelangelo Buonarroti is perhaps best known for his paintings of the Sistine Chapel in Rome, he always considered himself a sculptor, and primarily a sculptor of marble. The question of whether the museum has acquired one of his lesser known masterpieces still awaits a final answer.”

Related Characters: Claudia Kincaid

Related Themes:    

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 59-60

Explanation and Analysis

The day after Claudia first sees Angel in the museum, she finds a newspaper so she can read the article about the exhibit. This excerpt from the article reveals why Angel is attracting crowds of admirers, reporters, and photographers. The statue, it turns out, might have been sculpted by one of the most renowned Renaissance artists, Michelangelo. But art experts don't yet know that for sure. Michelangelo was prolific, but not all of his works have been decisively identified. This uncertainty regarding Angel's origins adds to the sense of mystery and excitement surrounding the sculpture.


Claudia had already felt strangely pulled to Angel, and reading this article deepens her excitement and her resolve to learn more about the work of art. This speaks to Claudia's appetite for adventure and her strong sense of initiative, too. Most kids Claudia's age probably wouldn't find this article interesting. Claudia, though, not only reads it over and over, but she also becomes convinced that she is capable of answering the question that art experts haven't solved (whether Michelangelo carved Angel or not). Though Claudia's optimism is naïve, it further suggests that she's interested in more than simply running away—she's ready to push herself to have new and challenging experiences, too.

Chapter 6 Quotes

☝☝ Claudia didn't think about their close calls. They were unimportant; they wouldn't matter in the end, the end having something to do with Michelangelo, Angel, history, and herself.

Related Characters: Claudia Kincaid, Jamie Kincaid

Related Themes:    

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 94

Explanation and Analysis

On Sunday in the museum, Claudia and Jamie narrowly avoid being caught by a security guard while they're hiding

in the exhibit hall where the Angel statue is displayed. Afterward, though, Claudia isn't concerned about the close call. This is notable because, until now, all of Claudia's planning and strategy have gone into making sure that she and Jamie remain undetected.

Claudia's focus shifts because of Angel. The statue caught Claudia's fancy the moment she first saw it, though she didn't understand why. Besides being a beautiful sculpture, it felt meaningful to her in a way that she couldn't describe rationally. Angel's draw even leads Claudia to take risks she wouldn't have considered a couple days ago, like hiding under the statue's display pedestal. This is because “the end”—the point—of her adventure is no longer simply running away. Now, the point has to do with Angel and its history (specifically, whether Angel was indeed carved by Michelangelo) and also with Claudia herself. This shift demonstrates a step toward maturity in two ways. First, it shows that Claudia is becoming less focused on “injustices” (real or imagined) at home as her motivation for running away and more focused on the sort of person she wants to be. Second, it shows that Claudia is becoming more intuitive. Though her obsession with rational planning remains, she's also gaining a broader focus on what “[matters] in the end,” even if that “something” is a matter of personal growth that she can't yet see or define.

☝☝ *Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of their party;*


Dear Museum Head,

We think that you should examine the bottom of the statue for an important clue. The statue we mean is the ocn you bought for \$225.00. And the clue is that you will find Michelangelo's stone mason's markk on the bottom. If you need help about this clue, you may write to us at Grande Central Post Office. Box in Manhanntan.*

Sincerely, Friends of the Museum

Related Characters: Claudia Kincaid, Jamie Kincaid

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 98-99

Explanation and Analysis

After Claudia and Jamie notice the imprint of an “M” underneath the Angel statue, they believe they've discovered an important clue—proof that the statue was

indeed carved by Michelangelo. So, they go to the Olivetti typewriter store, and Claudia uses a model typewriter to craft an anonymous letter informing the museum of their finding.

The letter is unintentionally funny for a number of reasons. First, its opening line is a sentence that was used at the time for typing lessons. This means that someone already typed it on the paper, and Claudia, not knowing what it meant, chose to leave it there to add to her letter's sense of gravity. Second, it's filled with typing errors because Claudia presumably doesn't have a lot of typing practice. Finally, the whole letter is a bit endearingly naïve. Claudia and Jamie both assume that the museum experts haven't examined the statue's bottom and aren't aware of the stonemason's mark. This doesn't seem very likely, nor does it seem likely that the "Museum Head" will seek the kids' help with this "clue," but it's a plausible belief for two excited kids who are eager to solve a mystery. Despite its obvious flaws, the letter also demonstrates the Kincaids' creativity and initiative as they explore the statue's past.

she focuses on the idea of dress—it's an obvious way that a person can either blend in or stand out.

Of course, style of dress is a pretty superficial characteristic. It can mark a person as being culturally different from the people around them, like the Indian guide in New York City. But clothing only reveals a limited amount about a person: there are many ways in which the Indian guide probably *isn't* that "different" from someone born in Greenwich, Connecticut. And any two people born in Greenwich, or in India or anywhere else, will differ from one another in many profound ways. But by grappling with the idea of being "different" this way, Claudia is beginning to consider the kind of person she wants to grow up to be. The guide's sari provides an opportunity for Claudia to think about what makes an individual person unique in both obvious and deeper ways, and to think about how *she* wants to be unique.

Chapter 8 Quotes


☛☛ Thus, when the tour was finished, Claudia was no expert on the United Nations, but she had discovered something: saris are a way of being different. She could do two things, she decided. When she was grown, she could stay the way she was and move to some place like India where no one dressed as she did, or she could dress like someone else—the Indian guide even—and still live in an ordinary place like Greenwich.

☛☛ "Yes," Claudia sighed. "Just a week. I feel as if I jumped into a lake to rescue a boy, and what I thought was a boy turned out to be a wet, fat log. Some heroine that makes. All wet for nothing." The tears flowed again.

"You sure are getting wet. You started this adventure just running away. Comfortably. Then the day before yesterday you decided you had to be a hero, too."

"Heroine. And how should I have known that I wanted to be a heroine when I had no idea I wanted to be a heroine? The statue just gave me a chance ... almost gave me a chance. We need to make more of a discovery."

Related Characters: Claudia Kincaid, Jamie Kincaid

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 112


Explanation and Analysis

One day while they're in New York, Claudia and Jamie take a break from the museum and decide to take a tour at the United Nations headquarters instead. During the tour, Claudia is inspired by their guide, an Indian woman who's dressed in a traditional sari.

Claudia is so fascinated by the beautiful guide's dress and accent that she doesn't remember much of the tour's content. Instead, she becomes intrigued by the idea of being "different." The guide's sari symbolizes this idea in her mind. To Claudia, being "different" appears to mean distinguishing oneself from one's environment—standing out. That's why

Related Characters: Claudia Kincaid, Jamie Kincaid (speaker)

Related Themes:    

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 118

Explanation and Analysis

Claudia and Jamie rented a post office box at Grand Central Station so that they could correspond with museum officials about the Angel statue mystery. A couple days after sending their anonymous letter to the museum, they receive a polite reply explaining that art experts are already familiar with the stonemason's mark on the statue. Claudia cries as she processes this unwelcome news.

Claudia compares this experience to thinking that she was rescuing a drowning kid, only to find out she'd "rescued" a



log. In other words, she feels like she's taken a risk and poured her energy into something totally useless. Far from being a "heroine," then, she's actually made a fool of herself.


When Jamie points out that Claudia didn't set out to be a hero, but simply wanted to run away, he highlights the big change that has taken place in Claudia. It's true that initially, Claudia was only interested in escaping her monotonous life. But after running away and encountering Angel, she realized she was actually seeking something more. By "heroic," Claudia really means that she wants to do something unique, to make a difference that nobody else can. The mystery of Angel's origins seemed to give her that chance, so the museum's reply makes her feel incredibly deflated. Significantly, though, Claudia doesn't *stay* discouraged: she quickly pivots to seeking "more of a discovery," suggesting that she's grown in confidence and resilience. Her determination also suggests that her adventure isn't just about running away *or* about a specific work of art, but about figuring out what she's capable of.

Chapter 9 Quotes

☝☝ They walked behind Parks through my living room, drawing room, and library. Rooms so filled with antique furniture, Oriental rugs, and heavy chandeliers that you complain that they are also filled with antique air. Well, when a house is as old as mine, you can expect everything in it to be thickened by time. Even the air. My office surprised them after all this. It surprises everyone. (You once told me, Saxonberg, that my office looks more like a laboratory than an office. That's why I call what I do there *research*.) I suppose it does look like a lab furnished as it is with steel, Formica, vinyl and lit by fluorescence. You must admit though that there's one feature of the room that looks like an office. That's the rows and rows of filing cabinets that line the walls.

Related Characters: Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler (speaker), Saxonberg, Parks, Claudia Kincaid, Jamie Kincaid

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 126-127

Explanation and Analysis

Prompted by the *New York Times* article Claudia read earlier, Claudia and Jamie travel to Farmington, Connecticut to find Mrs. Basil Frankweiler and any clues she might have about Angel. This description of Mrs. Frankweiler's mansion and

office establish the setting for the last part of the book and also prepare readers to meet Mrs. Frankweiler herself (so far, she's only shown up as a narrator).

At first, Mrs. Frankweiler's house seems like a typical mansion, filled with obviously costly antiques, rugs, and furniture. These details fit with the impression the kids have of Mrs. Frankweiler already—that she's old, wealthy, and possibly rather stuffy. That's why the Kincaids are so surprised when they walk into her office—it totally undercuts their expectations. Instead of a sedate room filled with a writing desk and lots of books, they find evidence of some mysterious ongoing "research," more like a scientist's lab than an elderly woman's study. This incongruity immediately gives them, and readers, the sense that there's more to Mrs. Frankweiler than meets the eye. The nature of her "research" isn't yet clear, but the rows of filing cabinets suggest that she collects *something*, and that she considers that thing very important indeed.

☝☝ I was sitting at one of the tables wearing my customary white lab coat and my baroque pearl necklace when the children were brought in.

"Claudia and James Kincaid," Parks announced.

I allowed them to wait a good long while. Parks had cleared his throat at least six times before I turned around. (Of course, Saxonberg, you know that I hadn't wasted the time between Parks's announcement that Claudia and James Kincaid wanted to see me and the time they appeared at the office. I was busy doing research. That was also when I called you. You sounded like anything but a lawyer when I called. Disgusting!)

Related Characters: Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler (speaker), Saxonberg, Claudia Kincaid, Jamie Kincaid, Parks

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 126

Explanation and Analysis

When Parks (Mrs. Frankweiler's butler) brings Claudia and Jamie into Mrs. Frankweiler's office, the book's implication that Mrs. Frankweiler is an unusual person is quickly confirmed. This is obvious from her outfit—a traditional white lab coat and a baroque pearl necklace (undoubtedly an expensive antique) clash jarringly. The unlikely combination suggests that Mrs. Frankweiler values both beauty and scientific inquiry, both emotion and rationality. It also suggests that she doesn't mind looking "different" (the

standing-out quality that Claudia earlier admired in the United Nations tour guide). As her narration throughout the book has already made clear, Mrs. Frankweiler also doesn't mind being a bit dramatic and self-important, like making the kids wait a while before acknowledging them.

Mrs. Frankweiler's side comment to Saxonberg is especially interesting here. The fact that she immediately informed someone about the kids' arrival hints that, somehow, she already knew about the lost Kincaids and cares about their situation. Also, Saxonberg seems to have been emotional when Mrs. Frankweiler called—a state she deems “disgusting”—which raises an obvious question: why would Mrs. Frankweiler's lawyer care so much about Claudia and Jamie being found?

“If only you'd tell me if the statue was done by Michelangelo. Then I would feel that I could go home again.”

“Why would that make a difference?” I asked.


“It would because ... because ...”

“Because you found that running away from home didn't make a real difference? You were still the same Greenwich Claudia, planning and washing and keeping things in order?”

“I guess that's right,” Claudia said quietly.

Related Characters: Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler, Claudia Kincaid (speaker), Jamie Kincaid

Related Themes:    

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 138

Explanation and Analysis

Before Mrs. Frankweiler helps Claudia and Jamie with the Angel mystery, she spends time getting to know them and their situation. Here, Claudia struggles to explain why finding out Angel's origins feels so vital to her, to the point that she can't face going home without knowing.

This exchange shows how perceptive Mrs. Frankweiler is. Instead of getting straight down to business, either by sharing what she knows about Angel or by helping the kids return home, she tries to get to the root of Claudia's motivations. Her persistent questions help readers understand that for Claudia, there's more to running away, or even to Claudia's fascination with Angel, than appears on

the surface. Angel represents something new and different in Claudia's life, answering a need that simply running away didn't fulfill. After all, running away used all the same skills Claudia uses in her everyday life in Greenwich: being responsible and conscientious while looking out for a younger brother. It turns out that Mrs. Frankweiler holds the key to more than the Angel mystery—she understands things Claudia hadn't yet discovered about herself, too.

“The adventure is over. Everything gets over, and nothing is ever enough. Except the part you carry with you. It's the same as going on a vacation. Some people spend all their time on a vacation taking pictures so that when they get home they can show their friends evidence that they had a good time. They don't pause to let the vacation enter inside of them and take that home.”

Related Characters: Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler (speaker), Claudia Kincaid, Jamie Kincaid

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 139

Explanation and Analysis


Mrs. Frankweiler has been questioning Claudia about running away. She already learned from Jamie that the kids were hiding in the Metropolitan Museum, but Claudia doesn't know that, and Claudia resists telling too much, because that would make it feel like the adventure was all over.

Here, Mrs. Frankweiler points out that *everything* ends, including this adventure. Nothing ever feels like “enough.” At some point, she argues, a person has to learn to take away with them the most important lessons from a given adventure; but they can't prolong the adventure itself. She compares this to someone going on vacation and spending so much time making it *look* like they had a good time by taking pictures that they don't really experience the vacation in a lasting way. By making this comparison, Mrs. Frankweiler nudges Claudia toward taking a broader view of the museum adventure. If Claudia doesn't look at the bigger picture, she suggests, then she won't really learn anything from what she's experienced—and, consequently, she won't grow.

“I was glad that I wasn’t dealing with a stupid child. I admired her spirit; but more, I wanted to help her see the value of her adventure. She still saw it as buying her something: appreciation first, information now. Nevertheless, Claudia was tiptoeing into the grown-up world. And I decided to give her a little shove. “Claudia. James. Both of you. Come with me.”

Related Characters: Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler (speaker), Claudia Kincaid, Jamie Kincaid

Related Themes:    

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 141

Explanation and Analysis

Even after Mrs. Frankweiler encourages Claudia to think about the lessons she can learn from her adventure, Claudia still refuses to tell Mrs. Frankweiler the full story. Mrs. Frankweiler has offered the kids a trip home in her Rolls-Royce if they’ll give her the details, but learning the truth about Angel is more important to Claudia than that.

Instead of pressing Claudia further or scolding her for being stubborn, Mrs. Frankweiler appreciates the positive traits that Claudia’s attitude reveals. Her stubbornness shows that Claudia knows what’s important to her and won’t surrender to a grown-up just because they say so. Mrs. Frankweiler’s delicacy about this shows that underneath her slightly gruff exterior, she’s perceptive and sensitive, especially where clever kids are concerned.

Mrs. Frankweiler also sees that although Claudia still takes a limited view of her adventure (she sees it as “buying” her the answer to Angel’s origins), Claudia is actually taking a step in a more mature direction—“tiptoeing into the grown-up world.” So even though Claudia remains obsessed with Angel, she’s ready to learn a bigger lesson and to grow up a little more. This is what prompts Mrs. Frankweiler to take the kids back to her office and turn them loose among her files to find answers: this “little shove” might help Claudia over the threshold into greater maturity, more effectively than any persuasion Mrs. Frankweiler could offer.

“The other side of the paper needed no translation. For there, in the midst of sketches of hands and torsos was a sketch of someone they knew: Angel. There were the first lines of a thought that was to become a museum mystery 470 years later. There on that piece of old paper was the idea just as it had come from Michelangelo’s head to his hand, and he had jotted it down.

Claudia looked at the sketch until its image became blurred. She was crying.

Related Characters: Claudia Kincaid, Jamie Kincaid, Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler

Related Themes:     

Related Symbols:  

Page Number: 145

Explanation and Analysis


Mrs. Frankweiler sends Claudia and Jamie to search her mixed-up files for information about the Angel statue, and she offers no further assistance. After some false starts and squabbles, the kids muster enough teamwork to locate the folder containing files about Angel. The unmistakable sketch bears Michelangelo’s mark, proving that he was indeed the statue’s sculptor.

Claudia is moved to tears by this discovery for a few reasons. Of course she’s simply happy that her hunch about the statue has been proven right after all. She also feels triumphant because, although Mrs. Frankweiler could simply have *told* her what she knew, Claudia ultimately discovered it for herself by taking a thoughtful and systematic approach to searching the files (and was able to cooperate with Jamie at that). But perhaps more than anything, Claudia is filled with wonder at holding a 470-year-old piece of paper that was once held by the master artist. Such wonder surpasses the satisfaction of proving a point. Claudia has identified with Angel all along, and confirming Angel’s origins also deepens Claudia’s personal sense of connection both with Angel and Michelangelo. This draws Claudia closer to learning the value of her adventure, just as Mrs. Frankweiler wants.

“Returning with a secret is what she really wants. Angel had a secret and that made her exciting, important. Claudia doesn’t want adventure. She likes baths and feeling comfortable too much for that kind of thing. Secrets are the kind of adventure she needs. Secrets are safe, and they do much to make you different. On the inside where it counts.”

Related Characters: Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler (speaker), Claudia Kincaid, Jamie Kincaid

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 149

Explanation and Analysis



Mrs. Frankweiler has just revealed that she plans to leave the Michelangelo sketch to the Kincaids in her will—on the condition that the kids don't tell anyone about the sketch. She's confident Claudia won't tell because Claudia understands the value of a secret. Here, she explains to Jamie why both she and Claudia value secrets so much.


Perceptively, Mrs. Frankweiler points out that Claudia never actually wanted an adventure. That's clear from the fact that Claudia chose the museum as a hideout and took a luxurious bath as soon as she arrived at Mrs. Frankweiler's house: she enjoys a carefully planned, comfortable life. What Claudia really wants is to be different. Though Claudia hasn't yet told her about the United Nations tour, Mrs. Frankweiler arrives at the same idea that Claudia had when she met the beautiful tour guide: she values being "different." When it comes to being different, Mrs. Frankweiler explains, a meaningful secret is even better than distinctive clothing because it stays inside and helps a person change for the better.

☝ "I'm a collector of all kinds of things besides art," I said pointing to my files.

"If all those files are secrets, and if secrets make you different on the inside, then your insides, Mrs. Frankweiler, must be the most mixed-up, the most different insides I've ever seen."

Related Characters: Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler, Jamie Kincaid (speaker), Claudia Kincaid

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 149-150

Explanation and Analysis

After explaining to Jamie the beauty of secrets, Mrs. Frankweiler indicates that she "collects" secrets

herself—that's what her many filing cabinets contain. Mrs. Frankweiler doesn't explain much about what kinds of secrets she collects (they are, after all, secrets). Based on Mrs. Frankweiler's decades of art collecting and her interest in the details of the kids' adventure, it seems reasonable to guess that she not only collects "secrets" related to the history of art, but also secrets about how art touches people's lives.


Mrs. Frankweiler's files are stored in a system that only she can understand (though it seems that Claudia, too, has an instinctive hunch about how to navigate them). On the outside, the files appear to be in disarray. But, picking up on Mrs. Frankweiler's remark that secrets change a person, Jamie concludes that the outward chaos of Mrs. Frankweiler's files conceals a unique inner beauty. Her files represent a whole lifetime of exploring and cherishing secrets. Based on Mrs. Frankweiler's understanding of the kids and concern for their long-term well-being, it seems that collecting secrets this way can also make a person wise.

☝☝ Claudia said, "But, Mrs. Frankweiler, you should want to learn one new thing every day. We did even at the museum."

"No," I answered, "I don't agree with that. I think you should learn, of course, and some days you must learn a great deal. But you should also have days when you allow what is already in you to swell up inside of you until it touches everything. And you can feel it inside you. If you never take time out to let that happen, then you just accumulate facts, and they begin to rattle around inside of you. You can make noise with them, but never really feel anything with them. It's hollow."

Related Characters: Claudia Kincaid, Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler (speaker), Jamie Kincaid

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 153

Explanation and Analysis

Mrs. Frankweiler has just been telling Claudia and Jamie that she's not interested in having the Angel sketch verified by experts because she knows in her gut that it's authentic, and that once a person reaches a certain age (she's 82), they don't necessarily need to learn anything new. Always a good student, Claudia objects that *everyone* should try to learn something new every day.


Mrs. Frankweiler argues that Claudia's truism doesn't apply to everyone every day. Of *course* learning is important—but learning is more than simply collecting facts. If a person just collects facts, those facts just “rattle around inside,” never being gathered together for a useful purpose. On the other hand, if a person lets facts “swell up inside,” then the facts become not just useful information, but real wisdom that changes a person from the inside. She implies that part of growing up means learning the difference between these two kinds of learning. That's what discovering and keeping the secret about Angel's origins will do for Claudia in particular. This is another example of how Mrs. Frankweiler encourages the kids to find a deeper meaning in their adventure—one that will help them grow.

Chapter 10 Quotes

☝ Well, Saxonberg, that's why I'm leaving the drawing of Angel to Claudia and Jamie Kincaid, your two lost grandchildren that you were so worried about. Since they intend to make me their grandmother, and you already are their grandfather, that makes us—oh, well, I won't even think about that.

Related Characters: Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler (speaker), Saxonberg, Claudia Kincaid, Jamie Kincaid

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 160

Explanation and Analysis

Near the very end of the book, readers finally learn Saxonberg's identity. He isn't just Mrs. Frankweiler's longtime attorney—he is the Kincaid children's grandfather. This revelation explains a number of things from earlier in the book, like why Saxonberg sounded so strangely emotional when Mrs. Frankweiler called to inform him of the children's whereabouts. It also explains why Mrs. Frankweiler is taking the trouble of recording the kids' adventure for him in such detail—much more detail than an ordinary lawyer would need to know about a simple modification to a client's will.

This detail also explains something about Mrs. Frankweiler's many parenthetical asides throughout her narrative. She frequently leaves disapproving or critical notes for Saxonberg, but this final one suggests that readers have been right to pick up on a teasing tone when she addresses him—it's possible, in fact, that she's actually quite fond of him.

Observing that Mrs. Frankweiler is lonely without a husband, children, or grandchildren, Claudia and Jamie have decided to “adopt” her as their grandmother. Here, Mrs. Frankweiler hints that this arrangement will make her and Saxonberg, the kids' grandfather, almost like a married couple. She doesn't finish the thought, however, implying it disgusts her—but the opposite could be true.

The children's relationship to Saxonberg suggests that Claudia's mysterious connection to Angel is even more special than she thought. Investigating Angel led the kids to Mrs. Frankweiler and then back home—suggesting that sometimes, following mere hunches can be every bit as valid and important as rational planning.



SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

TO MY LAWYER, SAXONBERG

A note addressed to “my lawyer, Saxonberg,” complains that Saxonberg’s last visit was terribly boring. The note’s writer doesn’t want to risk another visit like that, so she’s sending this note by way of her chauffeur, Sheldon. She includes an account of changes she wants made to her will. After Saxonberg finishes reading the following account, he’ll understand why these changes must be made. The writer notes that Saxonberg is about to find out what a good writer she is and closes with the encouragement to “read and discover.” The note is signed, “Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler.”

The novel begins in a slightly confusing way: at first, it’s not clear who the author of this note is. However, the note’s author seems to be wealthy—she has a chauffeur, after all, and she’s apparently on familiar terms with her lawyer. Indeed, she doesn’t mind insulting Saxonberg pretty openly, and at this point, it’s hard to tell if she’s being good-natured or simply mean. In any case, this Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler thinks highly of herself, inviting Saxonberg—and readers—to discover her talent firsthand (and get some questions answered) by reading the following story.



CHAPTER 1

Claudia Kincaid knows she can’t pull off the “old-fashioned,” angry kind of running away. What’s more, she hates being uncomfortable. So, she decides that she won’t just run from somewhere but to somewhere—somewhere comfortable, indoors, and preferably beautiful. She chooses the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City.

Right now it’s not clear who Claudia is or what her relationship is to Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler. What is clear is that she’s unhappy in some way—and yet, her situation must not be too dire, if she can take her time planning to run away and choosing a suitably comfortable destination. And her choice—a famous art museum—is an unconventional one, suggesting that Claudia cares about beauty and culture.



Claudia plans carefully. She saves up her allowance and chooses Jamie, the second youngest of her three younger brothers, to be her companion. He’s quiet, occasionally funny, and rich—he saves almost every penny he gets. But Claudia takes her time sharing the plan with Jamie. Besides, she has to save up for train fare from the suburbs and a few other expenses.

Claudia is obviously a thoughtful kid. She doesn’t just run away in a spontaneous huff like many kids might; she thinks ahead about what she’ll need in order to run away successfully, including a budget and a suitable companion. Claudia’s planning establishes that kids can be capable and resourceful.



In the meantime, Claudia almost forgets her reason for running away, but not entirely. As the oldest child and the only girl, she suffers a lot of injustice. She has to do all the chores while her brothers get out of everything. But a bigger reason, clearer to Mrs. Frankweiler than to Claudia, is that she’s sick of monotony and routine, tired of being “straight-A’s Claudia Kincaid.”

On the one hand, it sounds like Claudia has some legitimate complaints—especially if it’s true that her parents unfairly stick her with her brothers’ chores. On the other hand, it’s common for kids to perceive that their parents treat them unfairly compared to their siblings, so readers have to take Claudia’s word for it that her situation is “unjust.” For her part, Mrs. Frankweiler can see that Claudia is simply bored and wants to experience something different in her life.



To save enough money for train fare, Claudia has to skip hot fudge sundaes for more than three weeks. This, too, is an injustice. (Since Saxonberg drives to the city and probably doesn't know how much train fare costs, Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler tells him: one-way fare costs \$1.60, but since Claudia and Jamie are both under 12, they can travel for half price.) Claudia has to save up for the return fare, too, since after everyone's "learned a lesson in Claudia appreciation," she intends to return home.

Greenwich is a commuting suburb of New York, so Claudia knows the city isn't that far away, but she also knows it's a good place to get lost. She loves New York; she finds it elegant and important. To prepare, she studies guidebooks and pamphlets. She also practices giving up things: instead of hot fudge sundaes, she contents herself with Good Humor bars from the freezer.

Claudia figures she has the smallest allowance in her class. Plus, she forfeits a nickel every time she forgets a chore, and most of the other sixth graders have maids to do their chores for them. Claudia's family just has a twice-a-week cleaning lady. Jamie, for his part, rarely spends money. A year and a half ago, he bought a transistor radio he'd saved up for. Claudia figures the transistor radio might come in handy.

On Saturdays, Claudia has to empty everyone's wastebaskets. One week, Claudia discovers a 10-ride railroad pass in her parents' wastebasket. There's one ride left on it—her dad must have lost track of the pass, and then the cleaning lady mistakenly threw it away. Claudia feels this is a stroke of good luck, since both she and Jamie can use the pass to get to New York. She decides they'll leave on Wednesday.

On Monday after school, Claudia tells Jamie she wants to sit with him on the bus so they can talk. Usually, the Kincaid kids don't wait for one another, except that one of the older kids is in charge of Kevin each week (at six, he's the youngest Kincaid, and Claudia thinks he's spoiled). Jamie had wanted to sit with his friend Bruce since they always play cards together, and he pouts when Claudia pulls him away. Once he's cooled down, Claudia tells Jamie that she wants him "for the greatest adventure in our lives." After letting suspense build, she explains that she's chosen Jamie to run away with her.

The fact that Claudia perceives skipping sundaes as an injustice (as opposed to an inconvenience) hints that her home life isn't truly as oppressive as she makes it sound. Indeed, the fact that she plans to return home after her family has "learned a lesson" confirms this hint—rather than escaping an awful situation, Claudia is trying to make a point.



Greenwich, Connecticut, is only about 30 miles from New York City, but it's much smaller and quieter than a bustling metropolis—hence Claudia's belief that New York is an ideal place to hide. Again, she shows her competence by taking the time to research and prepare for the trip. Some of her preparations are funny, like settling for subpar ice cream—not exactly a huge sacrifice.



This passage also suggests that Claudia's home life isn't terribly difficult, even though she perceives it that way. The fact that her family can afford to hire someone to clean for them and give the kids allowances suggests that they're financially comfortable, even if most of Claudia's classmates are wealthier. Claudia shows her immaturity in that she finds chores and a limited allowance unfair.



Claudia shows her resourcefulness again: while doing ordinary chores, she keeps her eyes open for things that could potentially support her plans to run away. And even though she resents having to do chores, she's ready to turn the situation to her advantage.



The Kincaid kids don't seem to be extremely close: after school, they each go their separate ways unless they're forced to do otherwise (like taking care of Kevin). So, Claudia's interest in talking to Jamie is unusual and definitely not to his liking at first. At the same time, Claudia seems to know Jamie well enough to guess what will be persuasive to him—like presenting her plan in as dramatic and suspenseful a way as possible.



At first, Jamie wonders why Claudia is picking on him instead of their brother Steve, but soon he starts feeling special and chosen. He asks Claudia how they're going to "bust out of here" and urges her to make the plan as complicated as possible, since he likes complications. But Claudia says a successful plan has to be simple. That's why she's picked Wednesday—it's music lesson day. She can take her violin out of its case and pack the case full of clothes; Jamie should do the same with his trumpet and trumpet case. She also tells him to bring his transistor radio.

Claudia butters Jamie up by assuring him that if he runs away with her, he'll be allowed to wear his sneakers. Then she asks him how much money he has. At first, he doesn't want to answer. He tells her that she can't tell their parents this, but he gambles with Bruce and collects winnings every Friday. He always wins. Claudia finally gets him to admit that he's saved up \$24.43 in winnings. Furthermore, he knows he'll win again this Friday (he won't say how he knows), so if Claudia will wait until then, he can make the total an even \$25.

Claudia feels justified for choosing Jamie, since they complement each other so well—she is cautious where he's adventurous, and she is poor while he's rich. But Claudia refuses to wait until Friday to run away. She says she will write down their plan, and after Jamie memorizes the plan, he must destroy the note. Jamie says he'll eat the note, since he likes complications.

When they get off the bus, Steve yells that it's Claudia's responsibility to walk Kevin home, so she pulls him along. Kevin whines that he'd rather walk with Steve all the time, and Claudia tells him he might get his wish. Kevin, pouting, never realizes that Claudia gave him a clue.

CHAPTER 2

On Tuesday night, Jamie finds a list of instructions under his pillow. The first instruction is to forget about his homework; he should get ready for the trip instead. (Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler admires Claudia's attention to detail; it's nearly as good as her own.) She even tells Jamie to hide his trumpet by rolling it up in a blanket. After he's followed all the instructions, Jamie gets a glass of water and begins eating the list. But the ink turns his teeth blue, so he gives up, throws it away, and brushes his teeth.

Singling Jamie out as special seems to work for Claudia. He doesn't indicate that he feels the same way about their home life as Claudia does, but he's clearly inspired by the idea of running away. In explaining her plan, Claudia demonstrates her talent for planning—instead of making the plan as elaborate as possible, as Jamie would prefer, she builds the plan on top of their usual routine. Keeping things simple like this might help the kids avoid suspicion.



In some ways, Jamie is an ordinary kid, concerned about whether he'll be allowed to wear his favorite shoes while running away. In other ways, he is precocious and even conniving for a nine-year-old. Not only does he gamble with his friend, but it's also implied that he isn't completely honest in his card-playing, though he won't admit it to Claudia.



Claudia appreciates her brother's strengths, though so far, she mostly thinks about Jamie in terms of how he can benefit her plans. Meanwhile, Jamie's preference for "complications" isn't always rational, showing that while he's clever, he's still a silly little kid at times.



Though Claudia feels that her family takes her for granted and doesn't appreciate her, her impatience with her siblings suggests that maybe she doesn't appreciate them as much as she should, either.



Claudia begins putting her detailed plan into action. Mrs. Frankweiler often adds parenthetical remarks for Saxonberg's benefit, in this case paying Claudia a compliment by comparing Claudia's planning ability to her own. Indeed, Claudia seems to have thought of everything. Jamie, by contrast, doesn't always consider the consequences of his actions.



The next morning, Claudia and Jamie get on the school bus and sit together at the back. After all the other kids have gotten off, Jamie and Claudia huddle in the seats, pulling their feet up so that the driver, Herbert, won't see them. They hold their breaths as they wait for the bus to empty. When they hear the motor starting up again, they smile at each other. They know Herbert will park the bus in the lot on the Boston Post Road. On the way, the empty bus bounces noisily. Claudia is glad, since her heart is pounding so loudly she's afraid Herbert would otherwise hear it.

After Herbert parks and gets off the bus, Claudia and Jamie wait for just over seven minutes before they dare to look up. When they do, they're both grinning. Herbert is nowhere in sight, so they slowly get off the bus. Jamie's pockets are so full of \$24.43 in coins that he clanks loudly when he moves. And his pants are almost falling down because he's carrying his compass, too.

Jamie tells Claudia they'll need the compass for hiding out in the woods. He and Claudia get into an argument about Jamie's grammar, but Claudia gets control of herself—as a leader, she needs to stay calm, even if she's leading a brat—and explains that they're not going to be hiding in the woods. They're going to hide in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Jamie is disappointed that they're going to take the train to New York instead of hitchhiking; he thinks this is a "sissy" plan. Forgetting to keep quiet, the two start quarreling again as they exit the bus, yet nobody seems to hear them.

As they walk to the train station, Claudia stops to mail two letters. She tells Jamie the first letter was a note telling their parents that they're running away and not to call the FBI. The second letter was two cereal box tops; if you mail in box tops with stars on them, she explains, you'll get 25 cents.

They arrive at the Greenwich train station in time to catch the 10:42 local train, which is relatively empty. During the ride, Jamie tries to convince Claudia that they should hide in Central Park instead. After she appoints him treasurer, Jamie decides that the Metropolitan will be adventurous enough. By this time, Claudia decides she doesn't regret having brought Jamie along, and not just because he has money and a transistor radio. She thinks "Manhattan [calls] for the courage of at least two Kincaids."

The kids pull off the first part of their plan successfully, bypassing school and taking a first step toward running away from Greenwich. The Boston Post Road is an older name for a main route between New York and Boston, so when the bus parks there, the kids are probably right in the middle of town, an ideal departure point. Claudia has planned well, but she's also aware that they're taking a big risk and breaking rules by trying to run away—hence her nervousness.



Claudia and Jamie give themselves wide margins of time so that they don't accidentally get caught by moving too hastily. Again, this shows Claudia's thoughtfulness; she's still a kid, but she's capable of managing logistics maturely. Jamie is doing his part, too, though it comes across more comically.



Like many siblings, Jamie and Claudia often squabble, and some of their arguments are prompted by Claudia's habit of correcting her brother. As Claudia reveals more details of the plan to Jamie, they also argue over Claudia's outlook on running away—namely, that the experience should be as comfortable as possible. Jamie, who prefers open-ended adventure to set plans, considers this approach weak. It seems likely that their differences will lead to further clashes.



This is a spot where Claudia's careful planning nevertheless shows how childish she can be—of course, their parents wouldn't be reassured by a note like this. Claudia's cereal box tops also show that she's planning on returning home before too long, suggesting that her home life can't really be that bad.



Claudia is a shrewd leader: she understands how to get Jamie on her side through flattery. At the same time, she's starting to genuinely appreciate her brother's presence. Running away to a big city is risky and scary, and she's realizing it can be nice to have a family member along for support, even if that person can be annoying sometimes.



CHAPTER 3

When Claudia and Jamie reach the street, Jamie declares that, to save money, they'll walk to the museum instead of taking the bus. Claudia is indignant—she wants to take a taxi. Jamie points out that they don't have any allowance or income anymore, so they can't be extravagant. Even the bus would cost 40 cents. Claudia grudgingly agrees to walk, deciding to suffer in silence the whole time. After all, Jamie will regret it when she collapses from exhaustion.

As they make their way up Madison Avenue, Claudia's violin case keeps bumping Jamie, so he walks a short distance ahead of her. By the time they reach the corner of Madison and 80th Street, where they have to turn left, Claudia is tired, sweaty, and cold all at once. She mocks Jamie for consulting his compass and crankily picks a fight with him for looking conspicuous. But Jamie says that nobody notices one another in New York, and that Claudia was "brilliant" to hide out here. Claudia calms down and agrees.

When Claudia and Jamie reach the museum, the guard clicks off two numbers on his people counter. Guards don't count people when they leave the museum, only when they arrive. (Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler knows this because her chauffeur, Sheldon, has a friend named Morris who's a Metropolitan guard. She's been getting lots of information from him.) It's one o'clock by this time, and the museum—which has over 26,000 guests on a typical Wednesday—is quite busy. It's mostly tourists, art students, and old ladies killing time before a Broadway matinee. (Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler scolds Saxonberg for never setting foot inside this wonderful, free museum that draws people from all over the world.)

Nobody thinks it's strange that a boy and girl are walking around together carrying instrument cases and book bags; about a thousand kids visit the museum each day, after all. They check their bags at the entrance, though Jamie briefly panics about how he'll change into his pajamas that night. Claudia reassures him that they'll check out at 4:30 and reenter from the back; she's got it all worked out.

The kids want lunch, so they go to the snack bar, which is cheaper than the restaurant. Jamie is shocked at the food prices, but Claudia is just mad at their stingy parents for putting them in a position to worry about money after less than a day in New York. Jamie wonders if he could get one of the guards to play cards with him for money, but Claudia points out that would be the opposite of inconspicuous. Jamie admits that he's been cheating Bruce at cards all this time, though he's not sure why he does it—he just likes complications.

Though Claudia gave Jamie the responsibility of managing their budget, that doesn't mean Claudia—who loves comfort and convenience—necessarily loves Jamie's decisions. Unsurprisingly, given her decision to run away in the first place, Claudia can be a bit dramatic about things she dislikes.



Although things have gone smoothly so far, Claudia is realizing that running away inevitably comes with discomfort. And when she's uncomfortable, she tends to lash out. But Jamie knows what his sister likes to hear and manages to defuse her cranky mood through flattery. He's also right—in New York, two runaway kids won't necessarily stick out.



As Claudia intended, the Metropolitan is a great place to get lost in a crowd and avoid detection. With a little creativity and luck, the kids can potentially stay hidden and anonymous for days. By setting the story here, the author also draws attention to the wonder of the museum itself—as Mrs. Frankweiler's side comment points out, it's a fantastic resource that people travel from all over to experience. (Note that this book takes place in the 1960s—today, the Metropolitan no longer has free admission.)



Jamie's worry is another good reminder that he is, after all, a little kid—the thought of departing from routine, like being unable to change into his pajamas at bedtime, is unsettling. As she's done with everything else so far, however, Claudia has already anticipated this problem.



The kids face some of the tough realities of hiding out in New York City, like the fact that their limited budget won't stretch very far. Claudia, however, adds this reality to her list of grievances against her parents, suggesting once again that although she's precocious in some ways, she's a typical preteen in other ways. Their parents don't give them an allowance for the purpose of living on their own in New York City, after all—and it's generous of them to give one at all.



They study a map to figure out where they should hide after the museum closes and before the guards leave. Claudia decides they should hide in the bathrooms; she explains that Jamie must go into a stall and “stand on it” (she’s reluctant to say “toilet”) with his head down. After they’re sure the guards have left, they can come out. Jamie asks what they’ll do about the night watchman, and Claudia pretends to feel confident—she figures they’ll learn the watchman’s habits soon enough and avoid touching anything that might have an alarm on it.

They wander around in search of a place to spend the night. In a display of fine French and English furniture, Claudia wants to sit on Marie Antoinette’s lounge chair, but it’s roped off. She finally finds an ornate canopy bed where the two of them can spend the night. (Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler tells Saxonberg that this bed dates to the 16th century like her own does. She’d even thought of donating her bed to the museum once, but she was relieved when somebody else donated this one instead.)

Claudia knows she’s always been meant to sleep in a fancy bed like this, but Jamie finds this boring. Claudia shows him the card posted at the foot of the bed. It says that this bed was the site of the alleged murder of Amy Robsart, wife of Lord Dudley. This cheers Jamie up, and he says Claudia isn’t so bad. At that precise moment, the two of them become a team. It doesn’t mean that they stop arguing, but it means that the arguments become part of their adventure. It’s rare for two people to feel like this at the same moment—“especially a brother and a sister who had always spent more time with activities than they had with each other.”

As they’d planned, Claudia and Jamie check out of the museum and reenter through the back. The guard at the back tells them to check their instrument cases, but they tell him they’re just passing through the building. Then they hide in the bathroom stalls. At 5:30, they both emerge into the darkened museum and make their way to the English Renaissance furniture. Even after changing into their pajamas, they’re uncomfortable; they’re hungry, and the canopy bed smells musty.

The two lie there quietly for a while, feeling strange. Jamie points out that he didn’t brush his teeth. Claudia promises him that tomorrow will be even better organized. Even though it’s earlier than their usual bedtime, she feels incredibly tired. Gradually, the museum’s warmth, silence, and stillness settle around the pair, and they both fall asleep. They sleep quietly in the deep darkness and are not discovered. (Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler points out to Saxonberg that the bed’s draperies help, too.)

Claudia has anticipated many problems, like how to stay hidden during the risky period of time when the museum is emptying out each day. Still, as capable as she is, there are problems that can’t be solved in advance, like the fact that there will still be guards around at night. Also note that security cameras weren’t as widely used in the 1960s as they are today, which certainly makes Claudia’s plans more feasible.



Claudia is drawn to beautiful, luxurious things, which is part of the reason she picked the museum as a hiding spot. She has this in common with Mrs. Frankweiler. Little has been revealed about Mrs. Frankweiler so far, but it’s evident that she is very wealthy, if she can afford to sleep in a bed that could become a museum piece.



Unlike Claudia, Jamie doesn’t care about sleeping in an antique bed, but this bed’s supposed history gives him a different perspective. Lord Dudley was a favorite suitor of Queen Elizabeth I, and Jamie likes the grisly possibility that he’s sleeping where Dudley’s wife may have died centuries ago. Even though Claudia and Jamie annoy each other, they’re starting to enjoy their shared adventure and to appreciate one another more. Since their childhood has been filled with extracurricular activities, they haven’t had many opportunities to be a team before.



Claudia and Jamie’s plan to dodge the guards goes as they’ve hoped. However, until now, they’ve overlooked some of the realities of museum life, like the fact that their parents aren’t there to provide them with an evening meal, and that an antique bed isn’t intended for people to sleep in.



The first day of the Kincaids’ adventure has been a great success overall, though it’s also been exhausting. The kids have proven that, with daring and ingenuity, they’re capable of running away from home and surviving on their own in New York City for a day. Mrs. Frankweiler points out a detail that explains how they manage to stay undiscovered: the kids are safely concealed behind curtains for the night.



CHAPTER 4

Claudia and Jamie wake up early the next morning, while it's still dark. Their stomachs feel empty, they feel unwashed, and it's chilly. They hurriedly get dressed, then stash their belongings around the museum in different locations, so that if museum workers find one thing, the rest of their things will still be safe. Claudia hides her violin case in a marble sarcophagus, and her book bag goes behind a tapestry screen. She dissuades Jamie from hiding his things in a mummy case.

Then the kids “[man] their stations,” which means they hide in the bathrooms again until the museum opens. They both use this time to wash up and brush their teeth, then begin the long wait for staff to arrive. Claudia can't stop thinking about how hungry she is. And a few minutes after 10 o'clock, Jamie makes a mistake: he hears water running and thinks it's a museum guest, so he steps out of his stall and finds a janitor with a mop and bucket instead. When the janitor asks where Jamie came from, Jamie politely answers, “Mother always says that I came from Heaven.” He enjoys the brush with danger.

Since the snack bar won't open for hours, Jamie and Claudia leave the museum and buy food at the automat. They also stop at a grocery store to buy peanut butter crackers for that night's dinner. They figure that for lunch, they'll just blend in with a school group at the snack bar. In the meantime, Claudia tells Jamie that they should take advantage of this amazing educational opportunity. She decides the two of them should learn everything about the museum, one artwork at a time. (Claudia probably doesn't realize that the museum contains over 365,000 works of art.) They'll take turns picking a gallery to explore each day. Jamie finds the idea of learning outrageous, so he chooses the Italian Renaissance, hoping the gallery's size will change Claudia's mind.

Jamie's choice surprises Claudia, but she thinks she understands it—she took an art appreciation class last year, and the Renaissance seemed to have a lot to do with naked women. She'd thought Jamie was too young to be interested. He actually is—he just chose this gallery hoping Claudia would get bored. In any case, they head to the Hall of the Italian Renaissance as soon as they return to the museum. They find at least 1,000 people waiting in line. Figuring crowds aren't unusual in New York City, they get in line, too.

The kids' first morning in the museum is uncomfortable because it's outside of their normal routine—adventure forces them to make adjustments. They also have to think about how they could potentially get caught, showing foresight and cleverness.



The kids have to arrange their daily schedule around the museum's opening and closing hours, which often means waiting uncomfortably long to eat meals. And there are many opportunities to potentially get caught, even when they stick to their plan perfectly: it's only because of Jamie's unflappable quick thinking, throwing the janitor off guard, that he doesn't get caught right away.



Automats were a popular fast-food option in New York City in the first half of the 20th century. They were basically cafeterias filled with a precursor to vending machines: workers behind the scenes cooked food and refilled the machines, and diners inserted coins to purchase the cheap hot meals displayed behind the glass. Claudia is an ambitious kid and doesn't want their time in the museum to go to waste. Her eagerness to learn sets up the book's central mystery.



Humorously, Claudia assumes that Jamie's interest in the Renaissance has an unwholesome motivation, whereas he really just wants to get out of structured learning. As Jamie hoped, Claudia gets more than she was expecting when they arrive at the Renaissance exhibit—there seems to be something major going on.



Eventually, they see a *Times* photographer on the edge of the crowd and realize something unusual is happening. Jamie is eager to get his picture taken, but Claudia shoves him forward, knowing that if they wind up photographed in *The New York Times*, somebody in Greenwich will find out and tell their parents. By this time, they've reached the front of the line. They see a graceful statue of an **angel** with folded arms. Claudia thinks it's the most beautiful thing she's ever seen.

As they exit the hall, Claudia can't stop thinking about the **angel**. She wants to buy tomorrow's *New York Times* so she can find out what's so special about this exhibit. Still mad about Claudia shoving him, Jamie argues about spending a dime on the newspaper. Finally, they detour to the Egyptian wing since the Italian Renaissance hall was too crowded for today's lesson. They find a sixth grade class doing a tour, and they join the group, listening to the guide's interesting talk about mummies and tombs. When the guide asks for any questions, Jamie is the only one to speak up. The guide assumes he's part of the class, the teacher assumes he's been planted there to stir up discussion, and the students don't care. Claudia is so mad that she wishes she could embalm Jamie on the spot.

The next morning, they don't have to buy a copy of the *New York Times*; instead, they steal an abandoned copy from the museum. Claudia reads it while they eat breakfast. She finds the article about the exhibit in the second section (Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler tells Saxonberg that she has filed an original in one of her many **cabinets**). The article says that a record crowd of 100,000 people came to see the 24-inch "**Angel**" statue, one of the museum's newest acquisitions. Apparently, the statue might be an early work of Michelangelo. The museum bought it at auction for just \$225, an incredible bargain. It's from the collection of Manhattan collector Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler, who says she bought it from a dealer in Bologna, Italy, before World War II. Mrs. Frankweiler started selling off her collection a few years ago. The article explains that she's a widow with no children who now lives on a Connecticut estate and keeps to herself.

If Claudia hadn't skipped over the paper's first section, she would have noticed a small article reporting that two children of Mr. and Mrs. Steven C. Kincaid, Sr., of Greenwich, Connecticut, have been missing since Wednesday. The article describes what the children were wearing (nylon ski jackets, like most kids in the U.S.) and notes that police in several towns have been alerted.

Claudia is more invested in staying hidden than Jamie is. Jamie is much more impulsive than his sister and is mainly motivated by adventure. But the angel statue throws a bigger hitch in their plans than Jamie does: it's already been established that Claudia appreciates art in general, but this statue seems to leave a remarkable impression on her.



The angel statue is fixed in Claudia's mind, signaling that it will be a big part of the plot from this point on. For the time being, the kids try to get the most out of their stay in the museum. Jamie continues to act impulsively, which infuriates cautious Claudia. Humorously, though, Jamie's behavior doesn't have the effect that Claudia fears—everyone else assumes he has a reason to be there and to speak up, suggesting that part of getting away with a plan like this is simply acting confident.



At this point in the story, Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler's role becomes clearer: she's a wealthy art collector and Angel's previous owner. Angel's significance also comes into focus. If Michelangelo really did carve Angel, then presumably it would be worth a lot more money. Yet the statue sold very cheaply, which raises questions about its origins and authenticity. The inclusion of these details suggests that the mystery surrounding Angel will be significant as the book progresses. Mrs. Frankweiler also mentions her collection of filing cabinets, another detail that will be significant later.



So far, the Kincaid kids haven't worried too much about what's happening at home, presumably because there's too much happening here. However, the existence of the article about the missing kids (and Mrs. Frankweiler's comments, which bring an outside perspective into the narrative) remind readers that the kids' running away has affected other people.



Claudia, fascinated by the mystery, reads the article twice. Jamie isn't impressed by the museum's bargain, but Claudia explains that if this statue is really by Michelangelo, it would be worth \$2,250,000 instead of \$225. She suddenly has an idea. Instead of trying to learn the contents of the entire museum, she wants to focus on the **angel** statue instead. Claudia, blushing, asks Jamie if he thinks the statue resembles anyone in their family, but he thinks she's being ridiculous. He suggests that they examine the statue for fingerprints, and though Claudia doubts it will work, she agrees this is a good first step.

That day, there's an even bigger crowd waiting to see "**Angel.**" (Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler is surprised that the newspaper article couldn't get even Saxonberg to visit the museum. He seems to be completely unaware of the "magic" of Michelangelo.) Because of the crowd, the children can't get close enough to look for fingerprints on the statue, so they decide to visit it after the museum is closed. Claudia is determined to solve the statue's mystery; she feels that the statue, in turn, will somehow do something important for her.

After that, the kids search for a school group to tag along with for lunch. They've become good at getting near a group without ever being part of it. (Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler notes that some people never master this skill, and some people do it too well.)

CHAPTER 5

Claudia and Jamie have been hiding for three days now. Laundry is becoming an issue, so on Saturday, when there are no school groups touring the museum, they go to the laundromat after breakfast. Nobody stares at them as they pull dirty socks and underwear out of their pockets. They throw everything into a single load, and by the time the laundry is done, all their clothes look gray. Then Jamie wants to go to Bloomingdale's and relax in the TV department, but Claudia insists on going to the library to research Michelangelo and the Renaissance instead. They have to walk there, of course.

Claudia feels incredibly drawn to the angel statue. Her comments to Jamie suggest that she even thinks the angel resembles her. At this point, it's not clear why she cares so much about the statue. While the mystery of its origins is interesting, Claudia seems to have additional reasons for wanting to learn about it. She seems to identify with the statue personally, for reasons that aren't yet clear.



Mrs. Frankweiler's annoyed (or teasing) comment to Saxonberg makes an important point: that art can inspire a sense of wonder that goes beyond just logic. People like Mrs. Frankweiler, and apparently Claudia, seem to be especially sensitive to this "magic." Claudia seems unable to explain what Angel means to her—only that the statue feels significant to her life in some way.



Blending in with a school group is one way the kids can fend for themselves in the museum. Mrs. Frankweiler suggests that this is also a kind of life skill—knowing how to avoid getting completely swallowed up by a crowd while also avoiding being too distant from others.



Hiding out in the museum requires the Kincaids to tackle some housekeeping tasks that might not normally be their responsibility, like laundry. Among throngs of people, though, nobody gives the kids a second glance. Since they don't have extra money to spare and aren't very experienced, the chore doesn't go terribly well. But Claudia's bigger concern is learning about the Angel statue. For her, running away isn't just about survival—it's become focused on a different goal.



When they finally reach the right library (at the first one, the children’s librarian directs them to a different branch), Claudia is determined to remember everything she reads. She assigns Jamie to look through photographs of Michelangelo’s work while she studies. After realizing that her book is more than 200 pages long with footnotes, she turns to picture books instead. Jamie points out that Michelangelo got his nose broken in a fight, so maybe his fingerprints *are* on file. He also tells Claudia that a lot of Michelangelo’s works have been lost, including a cupid, but so far he hasn’t read anything about an **angel**. Claudia feels humbled and therefore irritable, but Jamie feels confident that they can solve the mystery.

On the way back into the museum, Jamie finds an intact Hershey’s almond bar. Claudia warns him that it’s probably filled with marijuana and he’ll become a dope addict, which will bankrupt them, but Jamie eats it anyway. After lunch, they play in Central Park and stock up on snacks. Then they go back to the museum in time to hide in the bathrooms. They’ve gotten used to the routine. But this time, the guard doesn’t check the bathroom at the usual time, and the lights stay on. Jamie starts to panic that Claudia has gotten caught.

Eventually, Jamie hears more footsteps than usual, followed by two men’s voices by the sink. The men expect big crowds tomorrow, and they mention the delicate **angel** statue they’ll have to move tonight. One of them says that he doesn’t think there’ll be as many visitors as they had for the *Mona Lisa*, since that was “the real McCoy.” But the men leave and turn the lights off before Jamie can hear the rest of their conversation.

Jamie realizes that they’re moving **Angel**, and that Claudia would have no way of knowing this. He tries to warn her via telepathy, repeatedly thinking, “STAY PUT.” For some reason, Claudia does just that. Perhaps it’s because “they were meant to make the discovery they made.”

After an extra-long wait, they both emerge from the bathrooms and meet in their sleeping spot. When Jamie arrives, Claudia already knows they’re moving the statue; she saw it, dimly lit, on her way from the bathroom. Jamie thinks they’re lucky they didn’t get caught, while Claudia is annoyed that this has delayed the baths she’s been planning.

Claudia has high expectations for herself when it comes to learning new things and tackling challenges, but here she realizes that solving a mystery sometimes requires a more targeted approach. When she doesn’t find an answer easily, she feels defeated. Clearly, like many aspects of growing up, discovering Angel’s history isn’t going to be a simple matter. But the fact that there are unidentified Michelangelo sculptures out there offers hope that Angel could be one of them.



It’s humorous that Claudia’s biggest concern about the idea of a marijuana-laced Hershey bar is not that Jamie would suffer from an addiction, but that an addiction would be really expensive to maintain. The kids have settled into a routine by now, but that means that when things don’t go as expected, their hiding place might be threatened.



*Jamie inadvertently overhears some insider conversation. These museum workers seem doubtful that the angel statue is authentic, or at least they’re not certain, unlike when da Vinci’s Renaissance painting the *Mona Lisa* was exhibited (something that did happen at the Metropolitan, incidentally, in 1963—the first time the painting left its home in Paris’s Louvre).*



Claudia might accidentally cross paths with the museum workers while they’re transporting Angel, giving away the kids’ presence. Regardless of why she stays put, the statue’s relocation will apparently create an opportunity for the kids in solving the mystery.



Always practical, Claudia is less concerned about the risk they’ve just dodged than about the disruption to her next plans.



Claudia explains that they'll bathe in the restaurant fountain. (Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler is "furious" that she has to tell Saxonberg about the restaurant and insists that he take her there for lunch soon. She explains that there's a huge fountain with bronze dolphins in the middle of the restaurant.) They duck under the restaurant's velvet rope, get undressed, and climb into the fountain. They both enjoy the bath, even though the water is cold. Jamie especially enjoys it because he soon discovers coins on the bottom. The kids scoop up as many coins as they can—totaling \$2.87—before getting out.

Before going to bed, they visit **Angel** in the Great Hall. Claudia says they can't make up their mind about the statue until they've examined all the evidence, so they should think about the statue, Michelangelo, and the Italian Renaissance as hard as possible before falling asleep. Instead, Jamie starts thinking about home. He figures they should be homesick and wonders if they're bad people since they don't miss their parents. He admits he hasn't been homesick since they stayed with an aunt while their mom went to the hospital for Kevin's birth. They figure homesickness is something that only happens if you're unsure of yourself or not well-trained.

CHAPTER 6

When Claudia and Jamie wake up the next morning, a Sunday, they both notice that it *feels* distinctly like a Sunday, and they wonder if they should go to church. They decide to go to the room with the medieval stained glass to say the Lord's Prayer. Jamie also reminds Claudia to say she's sorry for stealing the newspaper earlier that week. That makes it "officially Sunday."

Then they go to study **Angel** again. Jamie teases Claudia for wishing she could hug the statue; he says Mrs. Frankweiler must have hugged it every morning. Just then, they hear a guard coming down the steps, and they scoot behind the walkie-talkie booth just in time. The guard pauses in front of Angel before moving on to the Egyptian room. The kids wait breathlessly for 10 minutes, then creep back to the statue.

Claudia notices that the velvet underneath the statue has been changed—it's no longer blue but gold. Claudia notices rings on the velvet, which make her think a beer can must have rested there. But Jamie points out that a beer can would have crushed the velvet *down*, while this velvet appears to be "crushed up." Claudia picks on Jamie's grammar, but Jamie argues that the crushed-up section must be from the part of the statue where the marble is chipped away. In that spot, there's also a "W" visible.

Mrs. Frankweiler's complaint to Saxonberg also acquaints readers with the details of the museum's famous fountain. Claudia's brainstorm to bathe in the fountain has an unexpected perk: they can supplement their budget by collecting the coins people toss into the fountain for good luck.



Claudia is single-minded in her commitment to figuring out the truth about Angel's origins. Realistically, the kids don't have very much evidence to go on, but even if solving the mystery is unlikely, Claudia clearly feels uniquely drawn to the statue. Though the kids claim they aren't homesick, it's possible that they're not being totally honest with themselves. Or, perhaps more likely, the novelty and excitement of running away has crowded out homesickness.



Even though they're living on their own in a museum, the kids still find ways to approximate important parts of their normal routine—like a makeshift church service in the medieval room. And Claudia's apology suggests that even when circumstances aren't normal, that doesn't justify actions like stealing.



Even when they think they're alone in the museum, Claudia and Jamie aren't totally safe—in theory, they could be discovered at any moment. The adventure requires them to think on their feet, even when their focus—Claudia's in particular—has shifted from mere survival in the museum to studying the statue.



Claudia's careful attention to detail is already well-established, and here, it helps her and Jamie identify a critical clue about the statue. When she realizes that there's a different-colored velvet under the statue, the kids soon notice a curious marking. Even sibling squabbles, which they naturally fall into at tense moments, can't distract them from this discovery completely.



Wide-eyed, Claudia tells Jamie that's not a W, but an M. Then Jamie remembers seeing the same symbol on one of the books he looked at in the library. Claudia is mad that he didn't take the trouble to read about the symbol, but Jamie argues that at least they have an important clue now. Maybe nobody has even looked at the bottom of the statue.

It's time to hide again, so they squat under the platform. Claudia isn't thinking about their close calls with guards—she figures they won't matter in the end. "The end" has something to do with "Michelangelo, **Angel**, history, and herself." Somehow, Angel holds a clue to her running away, but she doesn't know what it is. For some reason, Angel has become more important to her than running away from home or staying safely hidden here at the museum.

A crowd has formed outside the museum. Morris the security guard was supposed to remove the statue's pedestal and drape, but instead he has to help with the sidewalk traffic. By the time he comes inside and moves the platform, Claudia and Jamie have moved on to the museum bookstore, looking for books about Michelangelo.

In the bookstore, they find the book with Michelangelo's mark on the cover. It's his stonemason's mark, and it's the same as the mark they noticed on the crushed-up velvet. Triumphant, they go to lunch and discuss what to do with their information. They can't tell the Metropolitan what they've found out without revealing that they've been living in the museum. Claudia suggests that they write a letter telling the museum to look at the statue's base for a clue. They'll rent a P.O. Box at Grand Central Station and tell the museum to write back to them there. If the museum asks for help, Claudia and Jamie will reveal themselves "as heroes."

Jamie suggests that they go home instead of waiting here for a response, but Claudia's voice gets high-pitched as she insists they can't leave without knowing the truth about **Angel**. She doesn't want to return home to "the same old thing." She's sure that finding out about Angel will be a life-changing difference in their lives, and she won't be the same again. Jamie relents, even though he thinks that running away, even with its "complications," is getting dull.

The impression of the "M" on the velvet seems to have something to do with Michelangelo. It does seem unlikely, however, that (per Jamie's optimistic remark) nobody would ever have looked at the bottom of the statue—art historians have probably studied every inch before.



It's already clear that Claudia cares more about the statue's mystery than she does about simply running away. She's now beginning to recognize that fact for herself. She doesn't know why, but she feels a deep, personal connection to the statue and its history that she can't articulate logically.



Morris is a friend of Mrs. Frankweiler's chauffeur Sheldon, which explains why his perspective gets included here. Presumably, if Morris hadn't been called to help with the unusually large crowds, the kids might have gotten caught hiding in the exhibit.



As the kids have already suspected, the impression of the "M" on the velvet under the statue does signify "Michelangelo." However, it's possible that they're jumping to conclusions by assuming that the mark is necessarily Michelangelo's—or that the museum isn't already well aware of the mark's presence. These oversights are realistic for a pair of excited kids, though. As far as the Kincaids are concerned, they've made a groundbreaking discovery that they're obligated to share with the world. The only question is how.



Jamie is less keen on their adventure at this point than Claudia is. Running away has lost its novelty and excitement, so he's ready to return home. But for Claudia, going home would mean giving up on the Angel mystery. Clearly, staying at the museum is no longer about proving a point to her parents. Even though she can't explain how, the whole adventure increasingly has to do with her own character and growing up.



They go to the Olivetti place on Fifth Avenue, since Claudia saw a typewriter outside that anyone can use. There's already a piece of paper in the typewriter, with a sentence typed on it: "Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of their party." Claudia doesn't know that's a common sentence used for typing practice, and she decides it will add appropriate mystery to their message. So underneath the sentence, she writes a typo-filled letter to "Museum Head" suggesting that they look for Michelangelo's stonemason's mark on the bottom of the statue. If they need help, they can write to the P.O. Box. She signs the letter "Friends of the Museum."

The Olivetti company manufactured typewriters throughout most of the 20th century. Showing her resourcefulness, Claudia thinks of the store's model typewriter as a good way to create an anonymous, professional-looking letter to send to the museum. Humorously, of course, the misuse of the typing drill sentence and the many typing errors offset the professionalism somewhat. Overall, though, it's a creative way for the kids to move their investigation forward.



CHAPTER 7

On Monday morning, Claudia and Jamie go to Grand Central Station to rent a post office box. When the postal worker says the rental will cost \$4.50, Claudia just shrugs at Jamie and says they'll take an extra-long bath tonight. The postal worker is unfazed; he's used to hearing odd remarks. Jamie rents the box under the name "Angelo Michaels" from Marblehead, Massachusetts.

The kids figure they can collect coins from the museum fountain to help pay for their post office box. (Since people throw away their loose change for good luck, Claudia doesn't seem to regard this method as stealing.) Jamie's rental details humorously allude to Michelangelo and his marble sculptures.



When they return to the museum, they decide to find a messenger to deliver the letter for them. While sizing up a school group, they hide inside a section of a tomb called a mastaba. They can tell from the passing conversation that the school group is around their age. But they notice something else, too—the kids' names sound uncomfortably familiar.

Up to this point, the Kincaids have had a fairly easy time dodging unwanted attention in the big, anonymous city. But the Metropolitan is one of the region's most popular field trip destinations, so it's not unthinkable that their luck would run out in this way.



Suddenly, they hear boys' voices right outside the tomb door. Claudia claps her hand over Jamie's open mouth. Then they hear a familiar teacher's voice urging the boys onward—it's Miss Clendennan, Jamie's third-grade teacher. Jamie scowls at Claudia for muzzling him, but she holds her finger to her lips until the third-grade class is long gone, and the tomb grows silent again.

The kids narrowly miss being discovered by some of Jamie's classmates. It's not clear whether Jamie would actually have said anything to give their presence away, but Claudia is determined not to leave the museum yet, so she doesn't take any chances with her impulsive little brother.



Jamie says part of him wants to join the class and return to Greenwich with them—he'll "just be mysterious about where I came from." But Claudia insists this coincidence is perfect for another reason: it gives the perfect cover for delivering their letter. Jamie can claim to be from the Greenwich group and, if asked his name, he can give a classmate's name. They go to the museum office, and delivering the letter goes without a hitch. Jamie is wound up from all the excitement, so Claudia steers him outside and starts walking up Fifth Avenue with him.

Instead of getting upset about their near discovery, Claudia uses this turn of events to their advantage—another way she shows her creativity and resourcefulness. As the responsible planner of the pair, she's also used to managing Jamie's impulsive energies by this time and wisely lets him blow off steam after their big day.



CHAPTER 8

On Tuesday, Claudia and Jamie do laundry again—Claudia’s sweater has shrunk—and check their P.O. Box. There’s nothing there. They decide to take a tour of the United Nations instead of returning to the museum—they can afford it if Claudia agrees not to buy dessert today. The girl selling tickets asks them if there’s no school today, prompting Jamie to make up an elaborate story about the boiler on the school’s furnace blowing up. But a man in a derby hat gets impatient at the holdup, so they move on. Claudia is impressed by Jamie’s ready-made excuse—he says he’s been holding onto the story since they left home—and tells him he’s “quite a kid.”

Soon their numbers are called, and their tour begins. Their tour guide is an Indian woman, and Claudia is fascinated by her graceful walk, her “smoky topaz” skin color, and her accent. By the end of the tour, Claudia hasn’t learned much about the United Nations, but the guide’s beautiful sari has made her realize something. “Saris are a way of being different,” so when she’s grown up, she could either move to a place like India and be different by dressing as she normally does, or she could be different by staying in Greenwich and dressing like somebody else. Jamie doesn’t understand, but Claudia is determined to figure out a way to be different—and **Angel** will help her.

The next day, they see an envelope in their P.O. Box. Claudia feels ready to become a 12-year-old heroine. When Jamie unfolds the letter, they read it together silently. (Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler attaches a copy of the letter from her files.) The letter thanks “Friends of the Museum” for their help in trying to solve the statue’s mystery. It says that the museum has known about the stonemason’s mark for a long time. However, more evidence is needed, because not all the marble bearing Michelangelo’s mark was actually carved by him.

So, there are three possibilities, the letter continues: the statue could be Michelangelo’s, it could have been designed by Michelangelo but carved by someone else, or it could have been both designed and carved by someone else. The mark could be a counterfeit.

Biding their time for a response from the museum, the kids take advantage of some of New York City’s other famous attractions. They’re slightly less able to blend in at the United Nations than they are in the museum, but Jamie has apparently been preparing for a moment like this with a story that’s at least somewhat plausible. Though Jamie’s ideas have sometimes come close to landing the kids in trouble, Claudia also appreciates his skill in spinning tales like this. In fact, their adventure seems to have helped Claudia appreciate her brother more instead of criticizing and bossing him all the time.



Instead of just a diversion from the museum, the United Nations tour becomes a significant turning point for Claudia personally. Their guide’s “different” characteristics prompt Claudia to think differently about herself. Of course, there are much more complex differences among human beings than just outward expressions like clothing style. But Claudia’s point is that she doesn’t want to be just the same as everyone around her. Even though her sense of what it means to be “different” is a bit superficial so far, it also suggests that she’s thinking more about the kind of person she wants to grow up to be.



Just two days after giving their letter to the museum, the kids get a response—but it’s not what they’ve been hoping for. It turns out that the “M” impression they spotted wasn’t a huge revelation after all. But that’s not the only problem—just because the statue has Michelangelo’s mark on it doesn’t prove anything by itself. While this development might be pretty obvious to an art expert, the kids wouldn’t necessarily realize it on their own.



The museum’s letter lays out possible explanations for Michelangelo’s mark being on the statue. These possibilities highlight the fact that history is complex and messy, and that evidence must be interpreted, not just accepted at face value. Moreover, evidence may not necessarily prove what someone wants it to prove.



Neither of the biographers who knew Michelangelo personally mention an **angel** statue. However, in a letter written in 1497, Michelangelo wrote to his father that he had bought a piece of marble with the intention of sculpting something for himself. Experts have believed that sculpture was a cupid, but it might actually have been an angel. Many international experts have examined the angel, and two more experts are on their way from Italy right now. In the meantime, the letter invites them to share any additional clues they might find. The letter is signed by Harold C. Lowery, Public Relations.

Claudia and Jamie sit down in Grand Central Station's waiting room, speechless with disappointment. The letter was so polite that Claudia can't get angry, so she cries instead. Jamie fidgets until she's done, then quietly asks what they should do now—go home? Claudia says she can't face home without having accomplished anything. When they left home, she only cared about having fun. But now that's not enough.

Jamie tries to convince Claudia that just living in the museum for a whole week was an accomplishment. But Claudia feels like she jumped into a lake to rescue a boy, and the boy turned out to be just a log—she's no heroine after all. Jamie points out that she didn't set out to be a hero—she just wanted to run away and do so comfortably. But Claudia says she didn't know she wanted to be a heroine. Then the statue gave her a chance. If they make a real discovery, then she'll know *how* to go back to Greenwich.

Jamie is still puzzled—don't they go back to Greenwich on the New Haven railroad, the same way they came? Claudia explains that she doesn't mean she wants to go home *differently*. She wants to go home *different*, not the same old Claudia Kincaid. Jamie retorts that one thing Claudia can do differently is stop ending every conversation with an argument about grammar. To his surprise, Claudia says she'll try.

Claudia keeps insisting she has to know for sure if Michelangelo did the sculpture, while Jamie says that if the experts don't even know, then he's fine with not knowing. He gets up to buy train tickets home, then lectures Claudia that she's never satisfied—she started out running away and ended up wanting to know everything. Claudia doesn't argue and follows him slowly to the counter. But when Jamie orders the tickets, she interrupts and says they want to go to Farmington, Connecticut. They step aside, and Claudia explains that's where Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler lives. She has a hunch that Mrs. Frankweiler will see them, and that she knows the answer about **Angel**.

Finally, the letter also points out that there's reason to hope that the statue might indeed have been carved by Michelangelo. In other words, an angel statue might very well be among the artist's "lost" works that Jamie read about earlier, and experts are actively investigating this possibility. So in this respect, at least, the kids' hunch about the statue seems to have been on the right track.



Claudia's heart was set on solving Angel's mystery, though it's not totally clear why. Whatever the reason, the news that they haven't solved the mystery is something Claudia takes very personally. It's also obvious that Claudia has changed over the course of the past week—she's now looking for something deeper from this adventure than escaping responsibility or proving a point.



By comparing this situation to rescuing a drowning kid, Claudia means that she wants to do something unique—"heroic"—that nobody else could do. Now, though, she feels as if she's played a trick on herself: she thought she had discovered something nobody else knew, but she was wrong the whole time. Because of that, she feels like the entire effort of running away was for nothing.



Being younger, Jamie doesn't quite follow Claudia's reasoning—he takes her meaning at face value, whereas Claudia is concerned about growing up. Perhaps the most surprising thing about their conversation, though, is that Claudia is willing to make an effort to stop criticizing Jamie's grammar, suggesting that she's no longer so focused on his weaknesses.



Jamie isn't as invested in the truth about Angel as Claudia is, and he doesn't relate to how her outlook has changed over the course of their adventure. To him, it just seems like Claudia can't make up her mind about what she wants. For a moment, it looks like Claudia gives in. But as she's done at other low moments in the story, she suddenly turns a difficult scenario to their advantage with the brainstorm to track down Mrs. Frankweiler.



Jamie is surprised that Claudia has a “hunch”—she usually plans everything. But Claudia argues that the night she stayed in the bathroom while the statue was being moved, that was a hunch, too. That satisfies Jamie, and he buys them tickets to Hartford (from which they’ll catch a bus to Farmington). While they’re waiting at the track, Claudia points out this is also a first for Jamie—he bought the tickets without worrying about the price. Thinking about this, Jamie acknowledges that he’s been a “tightwad” his whole life.

The kids enjoy the train ride, and by the time they arrive in Hartford, Claudia feels happy and confident again. She hails a cab outside the station, and Jamie gets in without complaint. Claudia tells the driver to take them to Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler’s house in Farmington. (And that, Mrs. Frankweiler tells Saxonberg, is how she enters the story.)

CHAPTER 9

The taxi drives up Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler’s long, tree-lined driveway. Jamie wonders aloud if Mrs. Frankweiler owns this “highway,” and the driver tells him this is Mrs. Frankweiler’s driveway—“this dame’s loaded.” When they pull up, Jamie thinks her house resembles a museum. Claudia points out that, in that case, they’ll feel at home. Jamie gives all their remaining money to the driver for a tip, and the kids worry briefly about being broke—they’ve “traded safety for adventure.”

Jamie rings Mrs. Frankweiler’s doorbell, and the butler, Parks, answers. Claudia gives their names, and after a long wait, the butler returns to say that Mrs. Frankweiler doesn’t know them. Claudia insists that they would *like* her to know them and explains that they’ve come looking for information about the Italian Renaissance. After another long wait, Parks ushers the kids through several rooms filled with antique furniture and Oriental rugs. After all that, Mrs. Frankweiler’s office comes as a surprise.

Saxonberg has always told Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler that her office looks more like a laboratory than an office. That, she says, is why she calls her work research. It’s furnished with steel, Formica, vinyl, and fluorescent lights—and rows and rows of **filing cabinets**. When Parks brings Claudia and Jamie in, Mrs. Frankweiler is sitting at a table wearing her “customary” white lab coat and her baroque pearl necklace. After Parks announces the children, Mrs. Frankweiler lets them wait for a good while. She pointedly goes on with her research, even when Jamie gives two obviously fake sneezes.

What Jamie points out is true—Claudia has organized their whole trip around meticulous plans. It’s unlike her to make a decision based on an instinct like this. And, for that matter, it’s unlike Jamie to spend money without making a big deal over it. It seems both kids have changed and become a bit more flexible. They’re both quicker to acknowledge their weaknesses and also to recognize each other’s strengths.



After living in the museum for a week, the kids leave New York behind, but their adventure isn’t over. Deciding to visit Mrs. Frankweiler is a step out of hiding and back toward ordinary life again, but first, they have a mystery to solve.



Mrs. Frankweiler is obviously quite wealthy—something readers would guess based on hints she’s dropped throughout the story, but which still comes as a surprise to the kids when they see the evidence firsthand. Claudia’s comment that they’ll feel at home in Mrs. Frankweiler’s museum-like mansion has a point—the kids have developed confidence over the past week of living on their own. Still, being broke is scary because it means the kids can’t fend for themselves so easily.



Claudia’s response to Mrs. Frankweiler’s initial rejection shows that she won’t be easily deterred by disappointment, suggesting that the past week has helped her grow more resilient. At first, Mrs. Frankweiler’s mansion looks just like one would expect a wealthy person’s home to look—but there might be more to Mrs. Frankweiler than meets the eye.



It’s not really clear what sort of “research” Mrs. Frankweiler does; nothing about her office’s furnishings makes that obvious. And, for that matter, Mrs. Frankweiler’s odd clothing combination—a lab coat with a fancy necklace—suggests that her personality can’t be neatly categorized, either. After hearing from and about Mrs. Frankweiler from the beginning of the story, the Kincaids—and readers—finally get to meet the character herself, and she’s happy to let the suspense build.



Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler doesn't like wasting time. When she finally turns around, she demands to know whether Claudia and Jamie are the children who've been missing from Greenwich for the past week. (She notes that Saxonberg must admit she has a "finely developed sense of theatrics" when necessary.) The kids have become used to going undiscovered, so they've forgotten they're runaways. They're in shock.

Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler says they don't have to tell her—she already knows the answer. In answer to the children's questions, she explains that she found out about them from the newspaper and, no, she didn't call the police. She tells them to sit down and start talking about the Italian Renaissance. She also hands them newspapers they've appeared in from Hartford, Stamford, and Greenwich—they made the front page in Greenwich.

When the kids keep asking questions, Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler warns them that if they keep talking this way, she'll get bored and call both the police and their parents so she can be rid of them. They humbly agree to stop. When Mrs. Frankweiler asks Jamie if he finds her frightening, he says she's "not so bad looking," and Mrs. Frankweiler rings for Parks to bring her a mirror—she rarely thinks about her appearance nowadays. When Parks brings the mirror, she studies her reflection in silence for a long time and concludes that she simply looks like she's getting older, but that perhaps she should get a permanent wave for her hair—she normally has Parks cut it.

Mrs. Frankweiler tells Claudia that she never really looks past her eyes, since that way she always feels pretty. Claudia steps closer and tells Mrs. Frankweiler that her eyes are beautiful, but her intent gaze makes Mrs. Frankweiler uncomfortable, so she changes the subject. She commands Jamie to speak, and he stammers that they want to find out about the statue. Once they've explained which statue they're talking about, she pulls out a **file** containing newspaper clippings about the auction and the exhibit. Claudia asks why she sold **Angel**, and Mrs. Frankweiler says she doesn't like to donate things.

Claudia proclaims that if she owned such a beautiful statue, she'd never sell or donate it—she'd love it like a family member. Mrs. Frankweiler retorts that this isn't saying much, considering how much trouble Claudia has caused her family. She tells Claudia that if she had actually read the article about her disappearance, she would have known that her parents are frantic with worry, and that Claudia's letter apparently didn't reassure them.

Mrs. Frankweiler's abrupt question surprises the kids, and it also jolts readers back to an awareness of what's been happening in the world outside the museum. The angel statue has become the Kincaids' obsession, but their running away has clearly caused a stir even among strangers.



Right away, Mrs. Frankweiler seems like a potential ally for the kids. For one thing, she doesn't immediately contact the authorities as they might have expected a grown-up to do, and she respects the reasons they've shown up at her door. It seems plausible, then, that Mrs. Frankweiler might indeed be the key to solving the mystery.



Mrs. Frankweiler continues to subvert expectations for a grown-up character by threatening to only turn the kids in if they aren't sufficiently entertaining. Of course, it's likely that Mrs. Frankweiler isn't nearly as indifferent to alerting the authorities as she acts while she's trying to gain the kids' trust. Still, her attitude does convey that she takes an interest in the Kincaids as more than helpless, lost children.



Mrs. Frankweiler suggests that she's too preoccupied with the wonders of the world around her to be very concerned about her own appearance. It's also evident that she isn't used to receiving admiration from others, which speaks to her isolated, perhaps lonely life. Her file about Angel is a hopeful sign that she does, in fact, have information that will be useful to the Kincaids. It also seems like she has information about lots of things, though it's unclear why.



Mrs. Frankweiler's wry remark points out that by running away, Claudia hasn't been very considerate to her family. Indeed, Claudia's immaturity is apparent here. She might be resourceful enough to survive on her own for a few days, but on the other hand, she naively assumes that her parents aren't worried about her (if she thinks about them at all).



Claudia explains that she can't go home until she knows the truth about **Angel's** sculptor. Mrs. Frankweiler says that's her secret and asks where the kids have been hiding all week, and Claudia says that's *their* secret. Mrs. Frankweiler cheers at this reply and decides she likes these children. She sends the children to wash up for lunch, and Claudia relishes washing up in Mrs. Frankweiler's beautiful marble bathroom with gold fixtures. She can't even resist taking a bath in the black marble tub, which is the size of a small swimming pool.

When Jamie finds out what Claudia is doing, he declares it "boloney" and goes to start lunch without her. He explains his "nutty" sister's fondness for baths and even tells Mrs. Frankweiler how they bathed in the museum fountain. He adds that Claudia did the planning and he managed the money, but now they're broke. Mrs. Frankweiler suggests that they make a deal—maybe if Jamie gives her some details, she can give the kids a ride home in exchange. Jamie says she'll have to work that out with Claudia, but he invites her to play a card game. Mrs. Frankweiler says she assumes that Jamie cheats, but she might play after lunch anyway—she loves a good game of cards.

When Claudia finally shows up after her bath, Mrs. Frankweiler can tell she's annoyed that they didn't wait for her. But she softens when Parks serves a fancy-sounding casserole, which turns out to be simple macaroni and cheese. Mrs. Frankweiler explains that she's really just a plain lady at heart. Over lunch Claudia admits that she hasn't been thinking about her family much—she doesn't feel she can go home without knowing if Michelangelo carved **Angel**. Mrs. Frankweiler asks why that would make a difference and then answers her own question—because running away didn't make a difference; Claudia still had to do the planning and keeping things in order, just like at home.

Claudia admits Mrs. Frankweiler is right. She adds that she enjoyed doing all the planning for running away, and that once they'd done it, it felt like living at home away from home. Mrs. Frankweiler asks what her favorite part was, and Claudia says that, eventually, it was **Angel**. But she doesn't want to explain how Angel got involved. And that's partly because, once she reveals where they were hiding all this time, she'll feel that the adventure is over.

Mrs. Frankweiler is delighted with the kids because they're willing to stand up for what's important to them and not just tell a grown-up what she wants to hear. Instead of getting frustrated or demanding the truth as some adults might, she seems to be willing to take her time, give the kids space, and hear them out. Meanwhile, Claudia gets to indulge in one of the luxuries she's missed during life as a runaway.



Notice that Jamie quickly—and apparently thoughtlessly—gives away the truth about where the kids have been hiding out. Yet Mrs. Frankweiler continues to keep her cool about the situation, not making a big deal of Jamie's revelation for now. She also relates to him shrewdly, assuming a clever little boy would appreciate making a deal and also that he's an unscrupulous card player (something she doesn't scold him for).



Mrs. Frankweiler's preference for a meal like macaroni and cheese is another hint that although she may be wealthy, she's not at all stuffy or unapproachable. This probably helps encourage the kids to be honest with her, like when Claudia admits that Angel is more important to her right now than her family is. Then, instead of reprimanding Claudia for being insensitive, Mrs. Frankweiler is perceptive enough to realize that perhaps running away didn't actually achieve what Claudia thought it would—it didn't relieve her of her responsibilities as the eldest sibling, for one thing.



Claudia has shown a great deal of competence and creativity throughout the story, so it's not surprising that preparing to run away was fun for her. But since living in the museum wasn't all that different from home, Angel soon became her new challenge. Of course Mrs. Frankweiler already knows where the Kincaids were hiding (and could probably guess at this point even if she didn't), but Claudia doesn't know that.



Mrs. Frankweiler says the adventure *is* over. Everything ends, except the part a person carries with them. It's like going on vacation—some people spend the whole time taking pictures so they can show everyone they had a good time, and they forget to *actually* have a good time.

Claudia asks if Mrs. Frankweiler already knows where they've been, and she says yes. Then Claudia glances at Jamie and sees he's hiding underneath his napkin. He meekly confesses that the truth slipped out—he's not used to talking to anyone but Claudia. Claudia is distraught; the secret was all they had.

Mrs. Frankweiler tells her about the deal she discussed with Jamie. But even a ride home in a Rolls-Royce isn't enough for Claudia—she wants to know about **Angel**. Mrs. Frankweiler feels grateful that she's dealing with a spirited child instead of a stupid one. At the same time, she wants to help Claudia “see the value of her adventure.” It means Claudia is “tiptoeing into the grown-up world.”

Mrs. Frankweiler leads the children into her office. She points to the **filing cabinets** along the wall and explains that these are her “secrets.” In one of the cabinets is the secret of Michelangelo's **Angel**. She'll share it with them—but they must have a “handicap,” which is that they must find the file for themselves, within one hour. And they mustn't mess up her files, because they're in a special order that only she understands. Mrs. Frankweiler then sneaks into the large closet next to her office so she can watch everything the children do.

Jamie immediately starts tearing through **cabinets**, but Claudia yells at him to stop. She says that “five minutes of planning are worth fifteen minutes of just looking,” and begins making a list. She makes a list of 11 items, including “Michelangelo,” “**Angel**,” and “Metropolitan Museum of Art.” She and Jamie squabble briefly over who should get the evens and the odds, but then they get to work searching through the files. Though they find many folders fitting the listed categories, when there are just six minutes remaining, they haven't yet found anything about Angel.

Mrs. Frankweiler tries to help Claudia reach a more mature understanding of what's happened. Claudia needs to move on from the adventure while taking what lessons she can from it. If she keeps hanging on to the adventure itself, she won't be able to reap its benefits.



Jamie's impulsiveness, and the fact that this is the first conversation he's had with an adult since running away, make him forget how much the secret of their museum stay means to Claudia. Since they didn't succeed in solving the Angel mystery, Claudia feels that the secret is all she has to show for the past week.



Mrs. Frankweiler seems to empathize with Claudia's strong emotions on some level. At the same time, she believes that Claudia's experience is bigger than simply running away or even discovering the truth about the statue. Her belief suggests that “the grown-up world” includes the ability to evaluate one's experiences and view them from a broader perspective—something Claudia is now better equipped to do.



For now, Mrs. Frankweiler doesn't elaborate on what she sees as the value of Claudia's adventure. First, she is going to help the kids solve the mystery at last—and she expects the kids to do the work. Both her willingness to help, and her insistence that they make the effort themselves, suggest that she respects the kids' competence. She also seems to understand that discovering the answer will mean more to them if they accomplish it themselves.



True to form, Jamie acts impulsively, hoping to find an answer as quickly as possible, while Claudia immediately sees the value of making a plan in order to save precious time. Although they still disagree about how to handle tasks, they're better able to compromise and cooperate than they used to be, showing that their adventure has helped them appreciate and rely on each other's strengths.



In desperation, Claudia asks Jamie what else they should search for, but when Jamie starts to say, “Look him up under...,” Claudia attacks his grammar. Jamie protests, “Oh, boloney”—and suddenly Claudia knows where to look. She remembers that Mrs. Frankweiler purchased **Angel** in Bologna, Italy. They race back to the cabinets and find a file labeled “BOLOGNA.” At once, they know they’ve found where the secret is kept.

Claudia sits down and starts carefully going through the folder. Inside is a very old piece of paper sealed between two glass sheets. On one side of the paper is an Italian sonnet. They can’t read it, but they recognize the signature—“Michelangelo.” On the other side is a sketch of an **angel**.

Claudia starts to cry, hugging the glass frame. Finally she tells Jamie that Michelangelo himself touched this paper over 400 years ago. Then Mrs. Frankweiler emerges from her hiding place. She explains that the rest of the papers in the folder are her research on **Angel**. Michelangelo actually sculpted Angel in Rome, she adds, but she files the research under Bologna to make it more difficult to find.

Mrs. Frankweiler has known for a long time that Michelangelo did this statue. She’s had the sketch since right after the war. She got it from an Italian nobleman. The kids jump in with speculations about how this happened, but it turns out to be simple: the nobleman was a bad poker player, and Mrs. Frankweiler is a good one. But, she tells Jamie, she didn’t cheat.

Jamie asks Mrs. Frankweiler why she didn’t sell the sketch, too. She explains that she needed the secret more than she needed the money. Jamie looks puzzled, but Claudia understands and thanks Mrs. Frankweiler for sharing the secret with them. Jamie wonders how she knows they’ll keep the secret. Mrs. Frankweiler says that a boy who cheats at cards should know. Jamie’s face lights up—she’s going to bribe them. He demands details.

In a stressful moment, Claudia falls back on her old habit of criticizing Jamie. In this case, though, the sibling spat turns out to be unexpectedly useful. Fittingly, the kids end up finding the answer together as their argument gives way to cooperation.



In Mrs. Frankweiler’s file, Claudia finally finds what she’s been looking for: the signature together with the angel sketch is powerful evidence that Michelangelo carved Angel. The finding vindicates Claudia’s hunch about both the statue and Mrs. Frankweiler.



Claudia is more than just triumphant about solving the mystery—she’s awestruck as she encounters this piece of history. The fact that she’s succeeded in navigating the complicated files (which aren’t organized in a strictly logical fashion, it seems) suggests that, besides being a good planner and researcher, Claudia shares Mrs. Frankweiler’s sense of whimsy and wonder about the world.



Mrs. Frankweiler could have told everyone that Michelangelo carved the statue all along—it’s not clear why she chose not to do so. Whatever the reason, she clearly has an unconventional attitude about collecting art, as her poker story shows.



Here, Mrs. Frankweiler starts getting into what she hinted at earlier about the value of the kids’ adventure. For her, a secret is intrinsically valuable, worth keeping even if one stands to gain by sharing it. Claudia’s reluctance to talk about running away suggests that she shares Mrs. Frankweiler’s view of secrets.



Mrs. Frankweiler laughs and says the deal is that they will tell her the story of their running away, and she will give them the sketch. Jamie wonders how she knows he won't accidentally give her secret away, like he gave away the secret that they hid in the museum. Amused, Mrs. Frankweiler explains that she's going to leave the sketch to the kids in her will. If they reveal her secret, she'll simply write them out of her will. She knows Jamie is excited about how much the sketch will be worth. Claudia, she knows, will keep the secret for another reason—the secret will let her return to Greenwich “different.”

Mrs. Frankweiler goes on that she knows Claudia doesn't really want adventure. She loves things like baths and being comfortable. Instead, Claudia likes the kind of adventure that secrets offer. They make a person different “on the inside where it counts.” Meanwhile, Mrs. Frankweiler will keep the details of their story in her **files**—she collects such secrets. Jamie marvels that if secrets make a person different on the inside, then Mrs. Frankweiler must have the most “mixed-up” insides anyone has ever seen.

Mrs. Frankweiler can see that Claudia is surprised—she'd expected **Angel's** secret to be “a loud bang, not a quiet soaking in.” She also knows that, unlike the secrets of running away and hiding in the museum, *this* secret won't come to an end. Claudia will get to carry it around with her. She'll be a heroine to herself.

Mrs. Frankweiler knows Claudia is happy. “Happiness is excitement that has found a settling down place,” but Claudia still feels unsettled about one thing—shouldn't Mrs. Frankweiler give the sketch to the museum? Mrs. Frankweiler says of course not, though the kids are free to do that after she dies. She's thought about it a lot, but she knows that if she does give them the sketch, the museum experts will “make a science” of establishing the sketch's authenticity. There'll be a big debate, and in the end, a minority will still doubt.

Mrs. Frankweiler, on the other hand, has no doubts, and she doesn't want to see doubt thrown on something she's sure about. Claudia asks if Mrs. Frankweiler wouldn't prefer to have any lingering doubts cleared away, but Mrs. Frankweiler says no—she is, after all, 82 years old. She's “not in the mood to learn anything new.”

At this point, the details of Mrs. Frankweiler's revision to her will—hinted at in the novel's preface—finally become clear: she's leaving the Michelangelo sketch to the children. Mrs. Frankweiler is shrewd, in that she understands what motivates both Kincaid kids. For Jamie, it's money, while for Claudia, it's the secret's intrinsic value. Though Claudia thought solving the statue's mystery would make her a hero, it turns out that her personal feeling of being “different” is more important to her than what others think.



Mrs. Frankweiler gets to the heart of Claudia's feelings about Angel and running away in general. She pinpoints the fact that, regardless of what Claudia thought at first, Claudia wasn't really interested in doing something outwardly daring. Rather, she wanted to change inside—to grow up, in other words. The Angel secret has served that need. Mrs. Frankweiler collects secrets for a similar reason, it seems, so she understands how Claudia feels.



Claudia is learning that discovering a secret isn't always dramatic. Sometimes, it has to be treasured over time—over a lifetime, even. As she treasures a secret nobody else knows, its meaning to her will deepen over time, allowing Claudia to grow and change on the inside. This is different from the kind of heroism she sought at first, but Mrs. Frankweiler suggests it'll be more valuable in the end.



Claudia assumes that making the information public is the right thing to do, but Mrs. Frankweiler has her own reasons for keeping it to herself. With her concern for meticulous research, Mrs. Frankweiler obviously cares about establishing facts and finding the truth. But that doesn't mean that expert insights are the only important aspect of the truth. Mrs. Frankweiler fears that “mak[ing] a science” of the sketch would rob it of its wonder.



While Mrs. Frankweiler's comment could sound stubbornly closed-minded, it should be read as the perspective of an art collector who's spent her life studying—and, even more, the perspective of an elderly woman who's spent many decades gaining wisdom and honing her instincts. She's confident about what she knows, and new information isn't going to change her mind.



Claudia is troubled. She thinks it's important to learn something new every day. But Mrs. Frankweiler disagrees. Learning is very important, of course, but she thinks there are days when it's more important to let what's already inside you "swell up [...] until it touches everything." If you don't, then you'll just accumulate a bunch of facts that "make noise" but are just hollow in the end.

The kids consider this. Mrs. Frankweiler explains that the facts she's gathered about Michelangelo and **Angel** have grown inside her for a long time. There's just one new thing she'd like to experience, but it's impossible. Claudia insists nothing's impossible, but Mrs. Frankweiler tells her that when one is 82, one knows some things are impossible. She goes on to say that she'd like to know how the kids' mother feels.

Claudia doesn't understand why Mrs. Frankweiler would want to be "frantic" like their mother probably is right now, but Mrs. Frankweiler says it's part of a bigger experience she wants. Claudia figures out that she means that she wants to be a mother, and Jamie whispers awkwardly that Mrs. Frankweiler *can't* be a mother because her husband is dead. At this, Mrs. Frankweiler changes the subject—it's time for the kids to tell her their story.

CHAPTER 10

That night, Jamie and Mrs. Frankweiler play cards while Claudia records their story into the tape recorder. (Jamie wins.) Mr. and Mrs. Kincaid call (Saxonberg apparently told them the children were here). It's all Mrs. Frankweiler can do to convince them to let the children spend the night; Mrs. Kincaid keeps asking questions about the children's condition, and Mrs. Frankweiler figures she's read too many newspaper stories about lost children. While Jamie takes a turn recording his part of the story, Mrs. Frankweiler gives Claudia a tour of the house, and they have a pleasant talk.

Early the next morning, Sheldon drives the kids home to Greenwich. Mrs. Frankweiler encloses a copy of Sheldon's report for Saxonberg's amusement. Sheldon reports that Jamie spent the first part of the drive pressing every button in the Rolls-Royce's backseat. At one point he presses the button for the intercom, which lets Sheldon hear the kids' conversation. They mostly speculate about why Mrs. Frankweiler sold **Angel** in the first place. Claudia figures she did it because she wanted people to know she had a secret.

Claudia's efforts to learn everything she could in the museum established that she takes seriously the saying "learn something new every day." However, Mrs. Frankweiler suggests that she takes the saying too literally—that learning is more than mere facts. In other words, if a person just accumulates facts without letting those facts develop into wisdom, then learning isn't very useful after all.



Mrs. Frankweiler's knowledge of Angel's origins is an example of the kind of knowledge that grows inside a person, which explains why she's been reluctant to share that information with just anyone. She also suggests that part of aging and gaining wisdom is understanding life's limits—something a kid Claudia's age can't understand.



It's notable that at Mrs. Frankweiler's age, what she regrets isn't knowledge or money she's failed to attain, but an experience, specifically motherhood. Again, this is something the kids can't fully understand, and it reflects the kind of wisdom a person gains with age.



The Kincaids' parents are brought into the loop at last, connecting back to the beginning of the story when running away was Claudia's biggest concern. Mrs. Frankweiler's remark about Mrs. Kincaid's fears is arguably a bit insensitive, but it suggests that at the time the book is set (the 1960s), it was more common kids to have some level of independence from their parents. The kids' recorded account presumably becomes the basis of Mrs. Frankweiler's written account.



As they finally journey home, Jamie's madcap button-pushing provides a pretext for Sheldon hearing and sharing the kids' conversation. Even though the kids have now met their goal of learning Angel's story, some things—like Mrs. Frankweiler's motivations—remain a mystery.



The kids plan to pool their money (Jamie won 34 cents at cards last night; Claudia has cornflake money coming) to visit Mrs. Frankweiler again. After thinking a bit, Claudia wonders if Mrs. Frankweiler meant what she said about motherhood. Jamie doesn't know, but he thinks they should visit her every time they save up enough money—it can be a secret. Claudia adds that they can “adopt” her—they don't have a living grandmother, after all. That way, Mrs. Frankweiler can become “the only woman in the world to become a grandmother [without] becoming a mother first.”

This is a humorous callback to Jamie's gambling and Claudia sending off cereal box tops at the beginning of the story. The difference is that now, the kids have a better use for their money than hot fudge sundaes or simply hoarding. Sensing that Mrs. Frankweiler is lonely, they essentially welcome her into their family. This brings the story full circle, as the kids don't just return home after running away but expand their family circle in the process. Of course, there are many women in the world who've become grandmothers without bearing biological children first, but Claudia's point is lovingly meant. She has the power to do what Mrs. Frankweiler thought impossible: give her a kind of experience of motherhood.



Sheldon delivers the children to their address in Greenwich. He sees a man and woman waiting by the window, and he thinks he sees Saxonberg as well. A younger boy (Kevin) rushes out of the house as the kids get out of the car. In closing, Sheldon notes that the children failed to thank him.

It's surprising to see Saxonberg at the Kincaids' house, since (as far as readers know at this point) he's just Mrs. Frankweiler's lawyer. Sheldon's cranky observation is a reminder that the kids are, after all, just kids—and that although they earlier claimed not to be homesick, they're actually extremely excited to see their family. It's possible that they've learned to appreciate them more (not just vice versa).



Mrs. Frankweiler tells Saxonberg that this is why she's leaving the **angel** sketch to “your two lost grandchildren that you were so worried about.” Since Saxonberg is already their grandfather, and she's going to become their adopted grandmother, that makes the two of them—well, Mrs. Frankweiler doesn't want to think about it.

Finally, in a closing twist (and the novel's last big secret), it's revealed that Saxonberg has a direct connection to the Kincaids—and this adds a layer of coincidence to their discovery of Angel. In fact, Angel eventually led them back home, by way of Mrs. Frankweiler, Saxonberg's employer. Mrs. Frankweiler's disgust at the idea that she and Saxonberg would be somewhat like a couple is not only amusing. But it also hints that maybe she's just pretending to be repelled by the notion, and that her badgering criticisms have been affectionate all along.



Mrs. Frankweiler tells Saxonberg to rewrite her will with a clause about the drawing. She figures she should probably donate her bed to the Metropolitan as well. She doesn't really like donating things—after all, everyone gets the things after she's dead. She will sign the will at the museum restaurant; Saxonberg must take her there. Sheldon and Parks will serve as witnesses.

Mrs. Frankweiler brings the story full circle, now that she's explained the reason behind the change she wants made in her will. She also gets her way by insisting that Saxonberg take her to the Metropolitan's restaurant, which she scolded him earlier for never having visited.



Mrs. Frankweiler wonders if Claudia and Jamie will come to visit her again. She wouldn't mind that, and she's also got an “edge”—the secret that Saxonberg, their grandfather, has been her lawyer for 41 years.

Mrs. Frankweiler makes the kids' relationship to Saxonberg extra clear. It's also apparent that the kids' surprise—to “adopt” her as a grandmother—will be very welcome.



Mrs. Frankweiler heard on the radio that the New York City Parks budget has been cut because of the need for extra security at the Metropolitan. Mrs. Frankweiler has Sheldon talk to his friend Morris the guard to find out what's going on. Morris reports that a violin case was discovered in a sarcophagus, followed by a trumpet case two days later. The cases are full of gray laundry and a transistor radio. These items are sitting in the museum's Lost and Found, and nobody has claimed them.

In a final humorous note, Morris's intel reveals the fate of Claudia and Jamie's runaway luggage. For the Metropolitan staff, the strange instrument case inexplicably filled with laundry will probably remain a mystery forever.





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