

A quick summary of what we have read so far...

- Orphaned Maia lives in England at the Mayfair Academy for Young Ladies, a boarding school paid for by her parents' trust fund. When Mr. Murray, her lawyer, informs her that she will be moving to Manaus, Brazil, to live with some distant cousins, she is thrilled. She imagines herself in a wonderland of colorful birds and "curtains of sweetly scented orchids trailing from the trees." Her classmates are not so optimistic; they tell her it is a land of man-eating crocodiles and vicious Indian tribes.
- As Maia sails from England to Brazil with her governess, Miss Minton, she meets a fellow passenger Clovis King. He is traveling with the acting troupe run by his adoptive parents, but all he wants is to return to England and his foster mother.
- When Maia arrives in Brazil, she does, indeed, find the wonderland she envisioned. However, her new family leaves much to be desired. English-natives, Mr. and Mrs. Carter seem to hate the land they live in. They stay inside almost exclusively, fearing bugs and germs. Their children, twin girls named Beatrice and Gwendolyn, are selfish and spoiled.
- When the day of Clovis's play arrives the Carters take their children to see it but they do not include Maia. She sneaks out of the house and tries to walk to the theatre. Soon she is lost, and she must rely on a kind Indian boy to show her the way. Clovis is wonderful in the performance of *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, but at a key moment, his voice begins cracking. The rest of the play is a disaster.
- As the days pass, Maia begins to feel that she cannot stand life with the Carters for much longer. They keep her trapped inside and unable to explore the beautiful world around her. Even worse, they do not really care about her, but only about the monthly stipend they receive from Mr. Murray. Fortunately, Maia again encounters the Indian boy who helped her on the night of the play. She discovers that he is a half-British, half-Xanti Indian named Finn Taverner.
- Currently, Finn is on the run from two men, Mr. Trapwood and Mr. Low (whom Maia nicknames "the crows"), who are searching for the heir to

Westwood, the wealthy Taverner estate back in England. Finn has heard his father's unhappy stories of living in Westwood, and so he is running from the crows who wish to force him to go there. Instead, Finn wants to sail down the Amazon river, which the locals call "the River Sea," to look for the Xanti, his mother's tribe.

- Maia introduces Finn to Clovis, and the boys see an opportunity to help each other out. Clovis has run away from the acting troupe, but he lacks a way to return to England. The group hatches a plan: Clovis will pose as the Taverner heir and go to Westwood with the crows, while Finn will stay behind as Clovis and be free to search for his mother's tribe. The plan goes off without too much of a hitch, and Clovis departs for England.
- One day, Miss Minton leaves to pursue a new job as a governess with a Russian family. She intends to take Maia with her in a bid to remove her from the awful Carter household, but Maia is unaware of this. She is devastated, believing herself abandoned. When the twins accidentally start a fire that destroys the Carters' house, the family is taken to the hospital, and Maia is left behind...

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