From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler by E. L. Konigsburg. To my lawyer, Saxonberg: I can't say that I enjoyed your last visit. It was obvious that you had too much on your mind to pay any attention to what I was trying to say. Perhaps, if you had some interest in this world besides law, taxes, and your grandchildren, you could almost be a fascinating person. Almost. That last visit was the worst bore. I won't risk another dull visit for a while, so I'm
ving Sheldon, my chauffeur, deliver this account to your home. I've written it to explain certain changes I want made in my last will and testament. You'll understand those changes (and a lot of other things) much better after reading it. I'm sending you a carbon copy; I'll keep the original in my files. I don't come in until much later, but never mind. You'll find enough to interest you until I do. You never knew that I could write this well, did you? Of course, you don't a
tually 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. 1 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. She planned very carefully; she saved her allowance and she chose her companion. She chose Jamie, the second youngest
of her three brothers. He could be counted on to be quiet, and now and then he was good for a laugh. Besides, he was rich; unlike most boys his age, he had never even begun collecting baseball cards. He saved almost every penny he got. But Claudia waited to tell Jamie that she had decided upon him. She couldn't count on him to be that quiet for that long. And she calculated needing that long to save her weekly allowance. Jamie was
way without money. Living in the suburbs had taught her that everything costs. She had to save enough for train fare and a few expenses before she could tell Jamie or make final plans. In the meantime she almost forgot why she was subject to a lot of injustice. Perhaps it was because she had to both empty the dishwasher and set the tab
le on the same night while her br
others got out of everything. And, perhap
s, there was another reason more
clear to me than to Claudia. A reason tha
t had to do with the sameness of
each and every week. She was bored with
simply being straight-A's Claudi
a Kincaid. She was tired of arguing about
simply being straight-A's Claudi
ch was consistent. Claudia was tired of being the oldest child in the family. Most of them were venturesome; it was exhausting, an
d Jamie could each travel for half of that since she was one month under twelve, and Jamie was well under twelve—being only nine.) Since she intended to return home after everyone had learned a lesson in Claudia appreciation, she had to save money for her return trip, too, which was like full fare one way. Claudia knew that hundreds of people who lived in her town worked in offices in New York City and could afford to pay full fare both ways every day. Like he
r father. After all, Greenwi
her, she knew that it was a good place to get lost. Her mother's Mah-Jong club ladies called it the city. Most of them were venturesome; it was exhausting, an
d it made them nervous. When sh e was i n the fourth grade, her class had gone on a trip to visit historical places in Manhattan. John athan Richter's mother hadn't let him go for fear he'd get separated from the group in all the jostling th
st." And she considered the air very bad for him to b reathe. Claudia loved the city because it was elegant; it was important; and busy. The best place in the world to hi de. She studied maps and the Tourguide book of the American Automobile Association and revi
house, which she quietly rese arched o decided that she must get accustomed to giving up things. Learning to do without hot fu d g es u ndaes was good practice for her. She made do with the Good Humor bars her mother always
ewed every field trip her class had ever taken. She made a specialized geography course for herself. There were even
allow ance was th e smallest in her class. And most of the other sixth graders never lost part of their pay sinc
kept in their freezer. Normally, Claudia's hot fudge expenses were forty cents per week. Before her decision to run a
cleaning lady only twice a week. Onc e after she ha d start ed saving, the drug store had a special. HOT FUDGE, 27¢, the sign in the window. Claudia felt that it was only a sacrifice worthy of her. Sh e bought one. Th e u p h er m in d to go, she enjoyed the planning almost as much as she enjoyed spending money. Plan ning
osen brother, didn't even care for h t fudge sund ae s although he could have bought one at l east every other week. A ye r a ney and part of his Christmas mo ney on a transistor radio, made in Japan, purchas ed
hey would probably need the radio; th at ch was considered an actual suburb of New York, as was commuting suburb. Even though Claudia knew w that New York City was not far away, certainly not far enough to go considering the size and number of the injustices done to a t gates on in New York. Mrs. Richter, who was something of a character, had said that she was
cil sharpener into his. She knew he m ad e his bas made another good reason for choosing Jami e. On Saturdays Claudia emptied the wa st ebaskets, a ta ks and waste-basket except her m other and father who shared both—with each other. T heir bas
stick, and thus exposed the corner of a red t ic ket. Using the tips of her forefinger and thumb lik e a pair of forceps, she pulled at it and disco ve red a ten ket messy occasions. Claudia was a neat person. Claudia hated messy rooms. Claudia hated messy ba ket not a person in suburban waste basket s; they appear in the pockets of train co nductors. Ni ne ri d
mie could travel on the leftover pass ince two h alf they are used only once. Claudia thought that the pass was all used up since rides o ne through—nine were left. Claudia kept her pocket ed t ickets in her pocket, where they would not be lost. Claudia was a neat person. Claudia hated messy ba ket; she kept her pocket ed t ickets in her pocket, where they would not be lost. Claudia was a neat person. Claudia hated messy ba
bus stop that she wanted him to sit with her be cau fares equal one ride. Now they could board the train w ithout having to purchase tickets. T he y would a void th e station m aster a nd any st upid quest ions he might a sk. Wha t a find! From a litter o f lips s, Claudia had plucked a free ride. She regarded it as an invitation. They w ould leave on Wed ne sd ay
first grade and was made much over b y e ve ry o ne, se she had something important to tell him. Usually , the fo ur Kincaid children neither waited fo r each o th er nor walke d together, e xcept f or Kevin, who was someb ody's charge each wee k. Sc ho ol Wednesday afternoon and Saturday morning. Jamie was not allowed to go to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in Manhattan." For the first time, the meaning instead of the
had simply met her at the bus stop e very d ay. J a mi n ly ha d a crush on Jamie. Jamie was not allowed to go to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in Manhattan." For the first time, the meaning instead of the
ne, there is a war which involves putting d o wn m o re especially by Mrs. Kincai d, Claudia thought. Claudia a lso tho ught that she was terribly babied a nd impossi b ly spo i l ed. Yo u wou ld thi nk that her parents would know something about raising chil dren b y t
cards; winner then takes all th e war cards.) Every night w hen th e uce got off at his stop, he'd take h is sta c k of car ds home with h nothing very complicate d, Sa ys Jamie. Jamie was not allowed to go to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in Manhattan." For the first time, the meaning instead of the
other's chin and spin each other's deck s wa ys pulled down on top of his eyes. He looked like a miniature, cl ean-s haven Neanderthal ma n. Claudia di dn't s ay anyt im. Jamie wo uld do t h sa me. T hey
ing." You shall not shuffle." The n each t opped his deck and put it in his pocket. Claudia to ld th e w ho le gr ocedure disgusting , so she s uff ered in silence. Jamie was not allowed to go to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in Manhattan." For the first time, the meaning instead of the
his seat with his lips pooched out an d h is e ye s wa ne d. Jamie was not allowed to go to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in Manhattan." For the first time, the meaning instead of the
want Steve." "Well," Jamie pleaded, "wa nt him ! W ait ee ! " Claudia remained s ilent . J hing. Sh e wa ite d uldn't min d if you'd pick on s omeone else." Claudia looked out the window and didn't answer. Jami e sai d, "What'
aid nothing and still looked out the wi nd o w. Ja mie became impatient. "I said that as long as yo u've got me here, you ma y as well tell me." Claudi a remain ed s i lent . J d, "Well, I wo uldn't min d if you'd pick on s omeone else." Claudia looked out the window and didn't answer. Jami e sai d, "What'
laudia corrected. "Oh, boloney! You k no w wh at I m e an. Now tell me," he demanded. "I've picked you to accompany me on the greatest advent ur e of o ur mutual liv es, " C la u di a r ep ea te d. "Wh at's the matter wit h you, Claude? First you bust up my card game, then you don't tell me. It's und ec
ed." Why not pick on Steve? Steve is one of the best kids in my life. Steve is as important a mo ve as the lever, isn't he, Saxonberg? Give him a pro p er
e. He stopped thinking, "Why pick on me?" a nd s igned, "I don't want Steve to go with us." Jamie squinted his eyes and asked, "Steve? Why Steve? Why not pick on Steve?" Claudia stifled the grammar again. "On Wednesday, Flye lin a pro p er
, "Make it complicated, Claude. I like comp lic at ed." Claudia laughed. "It's got to be simple to work. We' ll go on Wednesday be cau se Wednes da y is music l esson day. I'm taking my violin out of its case and am packing it full of clothes. You do the same with your tru
ddle." "You can use some of the room in my c ase Al so use your book bag. Take your transistor radio." "Can I wear sneakers?" Jam ie asked. C la udia answ ered, "Of course. Wearing shoes all the time is one of the tyrannies you'll escape by coming with me." Jami e s
way, how much money do you have? " J a mie p u t h is foot back down on the floor, looked out the window and s aid, "Why do you wan t to know ?" "For g oodness' sake, Jamie, if we're in this together, then we're together. I've got to know. How much do you have? " "
iffs of air through her nostrils; had s done i t harder or as quiet, it would have been called a snort. "Well, you see, Claude," Ja mie sh ug ged, "I h a ve quite a lot of money." Claudia thought that old Jamie would end up being a business tycoon someday. O
r Every Friday e xcept th e bills, the pays nen ts, and the s ometimes ve ry ex pensive ones, I s o r e very ace. A nd I always put my dollars into U.S. Savings Bonds. I'm not h ome much, so I don't
." Claudia gasped, and Jamie, enjoying her re ac tio n, added, "Hand around until Friday and I'll make it twenty-five even." "How can you do th at? Y our al low a nce is only twenty-five cents. Twenty-four forty-three plus twenty-five cents makes only twenty-four dollars a nd sixty-e ight cents." Details never escaped Claudia. "I'll win the rest from Bruce. C'mon now, Jame s, h o
I just know that I will," he answered. "How do y ou know? Are you a pe rfe ct s ou l? Do you ever lie, Jamie? Do you ever fib? Do you ever cheat? Every one lies sometimes. Do you ever cheat? Do you ever fib? Do you ever lie? Every one lies sometimes." Jamie was not perfect. They complemented e ach other perfectly. She was cautious (about everything but money) and d o
nd rich. More than twenty-four dollars . T hat w o u ld be quite a nice boodle to put in their knapsacks if they were using knapsac ks instead of instrumen t cases. She already had four dollars and eighteen cents. They would escape in comfort. Jamie wished while she thou ght, "Wh at do you say? Wa nt to wait until Friday?" Claudia hesitated only a minute more before de cid in g. "Jamie, you
ls of my plan. You must show the pla n t o no o ne. Ne ver mention it to anyone. Ne ver mention it to anyone." Jamie was not sloppy and not full of pencil sharpener shavings. Or ashes. " "I'll eat it. I like complications ," J ami e said. "Y
"That's what paper is made of, you know." " Ki nd s." "Kinds of what?" "Kinds of paper." "Kinds of paper." "Kinds of paper."