

Chapter 1



The small airport was quiet. It was in western Brazil. Rafael Silva was waiting.

A plane landed. Rafael saw his kids. He ran toward them.

“You guys look great!” he said. “I can’t wait to show you around.”

Franco, the oldest at 16, laughed. “We’re excited, Dad.”

“I missed you,” eleven-year-old Lilia said.

Antonio, 13, gave his dad a fist bump. “The flight rocked!”

They got their bags. Then they got a taxi. It was old. And its engine popped.

“Where *are* we, Dad?” Franco asked. “We’re going to your job. Right? Where is the dam?”

“That’s right,” Rafael said. “That airport is closed. So we’ll take a boat.”

“Cool! A boat! Up the Amazon River!” Lilia sang out.

They crossed a busy street. A soccer ball bounced ahead. The taxi stopped fast. The driver yelled.

They drove out of town. The street was bumpy. There were lots of

green trees.

“Here we are,” Rafael said.

“There’s the dock.”

“Yuck! That river looks dirty,”
Lilia cried.

The brown water was moving fast. It was hard to see the other side.

“I didn’t think the river would be this wide!” said Franco.

“It’s one of the world’s largest rivers. Some places it’s a lot wider,”
Rafael said.

Rafael paid the taxi driver. They got their bags.

“There’s only one boat,” Franco said. “So I guess it must be ours.”

“That’s it,” said Rafael. “That’s the *Amazon Queen*.”

“It’s falling apart,” Antonio said.

The old boat needed fixing. Its paint was cracked. There was rust.

“Is it safe?” Antonio asked.

Rafael nodded. “This boat is over 30 years old. Never been in an accident. Or so says Captain Dias.”

Just then a man appeared.

“Silva?” he called out.

“Yes, I’m Rafael Silva.”

The man had red eyes. His hair was messy. His clothes were dirty.

The man frowned.

“I am Captain Renato,” he said.

Rafael looked confused.

“But where is Captain Dias?” he asked.

“Sick. Got fever. No problem. I take you.”