



## The Amnesia Clinic

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## **The Amnesia Clinic** James Scudamore

Anti, a quiet English boy living in Quito, Ecuador, strikes up a friendship with flamboyant classmate Fabián, who is everything Anti isn't: handsome, athletic and popular. What's more, he lives with his rakish Uncle Suarez, while Anti is stuck in the dull ex-pat world inhabited by his parents. Suarez, a storyteller par excellence, infects the boys with his passion for outlandish tales, and before long their relationship becomes one conducted entirely through the telling of tales. One subject, however, is taboo: Fabián's parents. But when details surrounding their disappearance begin to emerge, Anti decides to console his friend with a story suggesting that Fabián's mother may be living at a bizarre hospital on the coast for patients with memory loss. With confused emotions and reality losing its grip, the boys embark on a quixotic voyage across Ecuador in search of an 'Amnesia Clinic' that may, or may not exist.

## **The Amnesia Clinic Details**

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Author : James Scudamore

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## From Reader Review The Amnesia Clinic for online ebook

### Kathy Doll says

'Sometimes it doesn't hurt to let people believe what they want to believe', says Uncle Suarez.

I loved this so much, I am walking around with a bit of a glow on this morning. 2 teenage boys go on a journey of discovery in modern day Ecuador. Their relationship is so wonderfully painted and drawn out. From the banal subdivisions for expats in Quito, to exotic mountains and beaches, many stories are told between them, but what is real and what is invented?

5 stars you say? Absolutely. I couldn't put this down. The writing was flowing and effortless, love, love, loved it.

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### Sarah says

This adult novel definitely kept my interest and I was surprised at the ending. Two fifteen-year-old boys are friends growing up in Ecuador. That alone makes the novel different. Anti is the white outsider while Fabian is the outrageous local boy who lives with his eccentric, rich uncle. Storytelling is a central theme of this novel. The uncle can really spin a tale and the two boys eat up every word. Fabian can really tell a tale, too, and at the end of the novel, Anti is pretty good, too. I read another review that compared this novel to Life of Pi, and I agree with the comparison. Both have the "who knows what happened" plot line. Unreliable narrators are stinky!

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### Leah says

The story is about two 15 year old boys who are friends. Anti tells us the story in retrospect, a short amount of time after the events he describes have happened. It is set pretty much in the present day. He is English, living a polite existence in an ex-pat bubble, quiet and a little unsure of himself. He becomes friends with Fabian at school, an adventurous and charismatic boy who lives with his unconventional uncle after the death of his parents. The two of them live on stories that they tell each other, enjoying each others ability to lend their imaginations to the everyday, bending reality to suit their will.

Anti loves to visit Fabian at his uncles grand house, where Anti is allowed a more liberal lifestyle than at his parents house. The only thing that is out of bounds is talking about the death of Fabian's parents. That is until one evening Fabian, aided by tequila, tells a fabricated version of their deaths in a road accident, where his mothers body was never found. Fabian believes she is still alive but has lost her memory. To help his friend, Anti constructs a newspaper article about an Amnesia clinic on the coast. Anti thinks that the rules of this game are clear, an indulgent story that keeps the reality at bay. That is until Fabian persuades Anti to skip school and go on an adventure with him to find the clinic that doesn't exist. From then on it is unclear who is playing what game and with who.

This book is a coming of age story that explores the use of construction to replace a painful reality, and how deeply those illusions can run and become confused. It is easy to read, although some sections are a little long winded. There are some interesting descriptions along the way. I enjoyed the episode in the service lift...

"The interior was padded with thick brown material, put there to absorb the blows of furniture or appliances as they were delivered to the show apartments above. It had absorbed more than that, too -the smells of stale sweat, of coffee and pollution... It was as if I had momentarily slipped into an alternative version of reality. Even the ping of the doors...was louder, and more ragged, as if some crucial, restraining parts of its apparatus had been snapped off... I reached up, pressed button number seven and wiped the oily deposit this left from my fingertip on to the brown cladding. The machine jerked into action."

I found that the story held some surprising developments, especially towards the end, and it was difficult to predict exactly where it was going. I found the boys friendship a little unconvincing at times. Because it is based on lies and fabrications, and also on deep needs, it is never really warm, despite the way Anti describes it. I also found Fabian's tantrums annoying. I was left wondering why no one stood up to him. Mostly though, I found it a pleasant read that kept me interested on the whole, especially near the end. The place descriptions and South American setting intrigued me. However, I suspect that it did not have enough to remain in my thoughts much after it has finished. Time will tell.

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### **Kaite Stover says**

Anti and Fabian are unlikely friends in Quito, Ecuador who share a love for outlandish storytelling and yearn to "discover" something remarkable. While they talk about everything, one subject goes unmentioned--the deaths of Fabian's parents. One night, after too much tequila, Favian spins the tale of his parents' demise. Anti, sympathetic, yet disbelieving, crafts a false newspaper story to demonstrate his support for Fabian and the fictions that help him get through this tragedy. However, Fabian reads the clipping and also notes the bogus story next to it, one for an Amnesia Clinic serving victims of accidents or kidnappings with no memories of who they are. Fabian is certain his mother, whose body was never recovered, is staying in the Amnesia Clinic. The boys set off on a journey that will reveal more about their friendship and future than either can imagine.

Special appeal for teens: The relationship between the two friends; the natural dialogue and the wild tale telling; the search for family will all draw in teen readers.

I enjoyed this book for its compelling story, natural and likeable characters, realistic portrayals of the adults in the teens's lives, and the sense of wonder and familiarity the boys experience with their shared world and with each other.

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### **Bookwormthings says**

Friendship, truth, reality, when is reality up for distortion, and how easy it is at 15 to think you know everything before you realise you are seriously out of your depth. I really enjoyed this tale.

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### **Margaret says**

Style of writing and location of story (sth america) same as his book Heliopolis. Both at least 4 star books. When i'm reading his books i can 'see' the story, visualise the scenes and scenery and action, remaining engrossed in the themes, characters and personalities

I've already got his latest and only other book set in the UK. Hoping it's a treat when i've finished my current book

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### **Annet says**

Wow, what a wonderful book and what a talented writer! I loved it, the story is so intriguing and at times weird and tragic, fascinating, descriptions of the various characters in the story and Equador and the city of Quito surroundings are fabulous and beautiful. It's a story about a British boy (15) Anti living in Equador with his expat parents, quiet father and sort of dominant mother living an expat life. Anti befriends Fabian at school, an Ecuadorian boy who lives with his uncle Suarez (great, fascinating character). This way, Anti gets a way to step outside the expat life and a way into the Ecuadorian life, amongst others by his visits and stays at Suarez's house. Fabian's parents have died in a mysterious car accident in the mountains, although his mother never was found. The boys set out on adventure travelling to a place at the coast of Equador, searching for an imaginary Amnesia clinic where Fabian hopes to find his mother. It's a story about storytelling, the more fantastic the better. It also has a tragic edge to it, made me think of The Beach (because of the weird beach scenes and the character development of Fabian) and Sabbath Ceek (Judson Mitcham) because of the coming of age and growing up story part of it. The end is unexpected (the story of Anti), wow, what an imagination and what a great ending. Sad, but also good. Just as you thought you knew it all, the story takes an unexpected turn. Really loved this book, it seems to be a debut of writer James Scudamore. I will be looking out for his next book! 4.5 stars for an excellent book.

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### **Natalie Awdry says**

I have read James Scudamore before and loved his writing. I have found his pace and excitement very engaging but I feel like The Amnesia Clinic just missed the mark. While the story itself was an interesting narrative, it felt obvious what was going to happen through the tale (until the end) and it wasn't as fast-paced as I would have liked.

The ending did surprise me and I did "enjoy" it but I felt that, up until that point, everything else was expected and the book trundled along in the direction I felt it would. That being said, I did enjoy it, it was an easy read and fairly enjoyable - just not as engaging when compared with Scudamore's other novels.

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### **Cara says**

Scudamore's prose is as majestic and lush as the Ecuadorian landscape he describes in The Amnesia Clinic. Details both gorgeous and gritty are relayed with equal linguistic delicacy. Nostalgia infuses the pages of this novel, both for Ecuadorian culture and for the carefree life of boyhood. Ultimately, The Amnesia Clinic illuminates the power of nostalgia, and it's potentially dangerous grip on our perception of reality.

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## **Sophie says**

3.5 stars

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## **Kathleen Dixon says**

I've always liked a reason to read something that I wouldn't normally, and my "amnesia" research is giving me that opportunity. I used to satisfy the urge by having Library Challenges with my daughter, where, for example, we'd go through the alphabet by authors and weren't allowed to skip a letter out even if there was **nothing** that looked appealing. And so on with some much more inventive challenges. Now she has 3 small children and no time for that kind of game, which is a little sad.

I've just had a brainwave - the grandchildren aren't literate yet, but we can still start playing library games. Yes!

Anyway, that's all completely irrelevant. I got this book from the library from the title alone and enjoyed it. It has nothing to offer for my research because the Amnesia Clinic was an imaginary construct between 2 15-year-old lads, and everything that was posited about amnesia was within that same imaginary world.

What this book **is** about is 2 lads in Quito, Ecuador who attend the International School together and have been close friends for the last 2 years. Anti is an English boy whose father is a journalist and whose mother researches and writes about indigenous/colonialist relations (or something like that - I didn't pay that too much attention). Anti has asthma (this is relevant), and he has always enjoyed playing imaginative games with his father (I like how they sit together, hear a sound, and then make up wonderful possibilities about that sound).

Fabián is an orphan who lives with his wealthy uncle. His father was a Mestizo (part Indian, part European (in this case, Spanish)) and his mother of 'pure' Spanish descent. Fabián is charming, good-looking, possibly the most popular boy at school, and a spinner-of-yarns-extraordinaire. But he is also troubled by memories of his parents and their death . . . or is his mother still alive?

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## **Margo says**

An enjoyable listen despite very slow narration speed.

This story is a fictional travelogue detailing two 15 year old boys journeying through Ecuador in search of The Amnesia Clinic - a kind of refuge for those with no memory of their previous lives and no other place to go.

This book contains much colourful description and, what certainly sounded to be, authentic local detail (I stand ready for correction on that having never been to Ecuador!)

Very original and surprising tale of dubious morality. Includes many a parents worst nightmares!

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**Kristin says**

A really lovely tale about tall tales and their importance in the lives of those that need them to survive. It was also a fascinating look at Ecuador in the 90s and the British expat experience there. Though the narrator is a teenager, it doesn't have that saccharin sweet quality so many YA books or even books about teenagers have.

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**LizG says**

Imaginative story, light read, characters who drew me in, lyrical prose. I was whisked away to South America, envisioning each scene without the need for flowery descriptions. I am encouraged to leave behind a strictly literal view of life's events and allow a more creative interpretation that appreciates the magic of life. Facts and figures are, after all, rather mundane. Do we really need to see ALL of life strictly in those terms? Calls to mind a certain reminiscence of *The Life of Pi*.

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**Carla Villar says**

While the story of young friends on an adventure gone awry is compelling, it is told by an unreliable narrator, so I was left wanting to know more.

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