

Chaper 28

In this chapter of **Maniac Magee**, Grayson experiences a breakthrough moment by finally reading **The Little Engine That Could** cover to cover. It takes him nearly an hour, leaving him sweat-drenched and exhausted, yet fulfilled. His young companion, referred to as the kid, reacts unexpectedly; instead of celebrating wildly as he had previously, he simply smiles from a distance, showing his respect for Grayson's effort by keeping his distance to ensure that Grayson read it himself. When Grayson finishes, the kid expresses his joy by clenching his fist and saying "A-men," explaining that it's a way to acknowledge something enjoyable without needing a prayer.

After this heartfelt interaction, Grayson transitions into a nurturing role. The kid requests a corn muffin, and Grayson, now equipped with kitchen supplies thanks to the boy's thoughtful gifts, happily offers his culinary skills. Their banter showcases their growing bond, as Grayson asks if the muffin should be toasted and if he should add butter, reflecting a playful camaraderie. They both find comfort in these shared moments, enjoying the simple meal of a corn muffin and apple juice.

As the evening unfolds, the kid invites Grayson to stay overnight, but the old man hesitates, feeling it's preposterous. Yet, the boy insists and lovingly prepares the makeshift sleeping area, laying down a mat and providing a blanket. Grayson's initial resistance fades as he surrenders to exhaustion, feeling cherished for the first time in decades. The chapter conveys themes of companionship, support, and the importance of embracing vulnerabilities. Grayson, who had long seen himself as a failure since disappointing a scout years ago, finds solace in the boy's affection as he drifts off to sleep, whispering "A-men" into the warmth of their friendship.