

Chapter 20

In this chapter of "Maniac Magee," the scene is set as Cobble's Knot is displayed at a local event, eliciting curiosity and excitement among the onlookers. Maniac Magee, the protagonist, confidently approaches this infamous knot, which has defeated many challengers before him. The Knot was notorious—hard, grimy, and nearly impenetrable after being left outside for a year. However, Maniac's demeanor suggests a playful challenge rather than fear. His examination of the knot is meticulous; he delicately brushes off the crust and feels its weight, almost as if he's reconnecting with an old friend.

Initially, only a few spectators are present, primarily a group of young children known as Heck's Angels, who have been previously helped by Maniac with simpler knot tricks. As time progresses and Maniac works diligently, a growing crowd gathers, drawn by rumors of his progress. Yet, despite his efforts over an hour, Maniac only reveals minor loops, prompting impatience among the spectators.

As lunchtime approaches, more people arrive, curious about the unfolding spectacle. The knot's complexity increases, described later in newspapers as a "gigantic hairball." The crowd gasps as they believe Maniac has located the end of the knot, bursting into applause. Meanwhile, Cobble's Corner, the local business, thrives as it offers food to attendees, with Mr. Cobble even attempting to feed Maniac, who prefers an orange soda and is gifted with Tastykake Krimpets by a child.

In an unexpected turn, Maniac lays down on the challenge table for a nap, knowing that true complexity lies ahead in untangling the knot. He recognizes the necessity of focus for the task at hand. After a brief rest, he resumes working on the knot like a skilled craftsman navigating through a maze. As the afternoon progresses, he makes significant headway, and by dinner time, cheers erupt when the knot is finally unveiled as nothing but loose string, showcasing Maniac's triumphant accomplishment over a formidable challenge.