

# Chapter 21

In this chapter of "Maniac Magee," the scene unfolds at Cobble's Corner, which resembles a chaotic celebration with noise from kids, traffic, and the excitement of fans. Maniac is honored by Mr. Cobble, who presents him with a certificate for a year's worth of large pizzas. Amid the festivities, the crowd produces homemade confetti, with kids clamoring for autographs, creating an atmosphere of liveliness.

Despite the bustling crowd, Amanda Beale stands out, fixated on a scrap of paper she found, leading her to frantically search for something important. Maniac notices her distress and retrieves pieces of discarded paper that hint at a lost book—the encyclopedia A. He follows the trail to the Beales' doorstep, where Amanda clutches the tattered blue-and-red cover of her prized book, lamenting her carelessness that led to its destruction. Her sadness resonates deeply with Maniac, who wishes to comfort her but knows he needs to respect her feelings and the pain his presence has caused her family.

Feeling guilty for the trouble he has brought upon the Beales, Maniac decides to leave, troubled by the man's earlier remark about returning to "your own kind." He only ventures as far as Hector Street before being confronted by McNab and the Cobras, who taunt him and invite him to return to his old group. In response, Maniac walks boldly down the center of the street, caught between the East Enders and West Enders, who alternately call him to their sides. This tension escalates, yet Maniac remains unyielding, navigating a path through the conflicting groups.

Ultimately, he continues his walk without looking back, symbolizing his decision to leave the turmoil behind, asserting his independence, while acknowledging the precarious balance he treads between the two communities. The scene encapsulates the challenges of belonging and the weight of the choices Maniac faces as he strives to protect those he cares about.