

Chapter 37

In the chapter, Maniac Magee embarks on a series of extraordinary feats that cement his legendary status in the town. Notably, he impressively hits a telephone pole with a stone sixty-one times consecutively from twenty paces away. In another remarkable display, he races a freight train coming down Elm Street, starting at the Oriole Street dead end and effortlessly beating it to the park, all while running on just one rail.

Later, he showcases his fearlessness by walking barefoot through a rat-infested area at the base of Rako Hill, demonstrating a casual demeanor. A thrilling episode occurs when he confronts a mysterious hole by the creek, an unapproachable spot for most. Undeterred, he plunges his arm deep into the dirty greenness for an entire minute, pulling it out filthy yet intact.

Maniac's adventurous spirit is further exemplified when he dares to climb the fence at the zoo's American bison pen, a feat he proposed himself, earning mixed reactions from others. In a bold move, he kisses a baby buffalo while its mother watches, adding to the many tales swirling around him.

Throughout February and March, each week presents Maniac with a new challenge, contributing to the legend surrounding him. While much of the town revels in these exploits, for Russell and Piper McNab, his feats serve as a means to elevate their own status amongst peers. They bask in the glow of his achievements, portraying themselves as the orchestrators of his actions, much like a lion tamer boasts of their lion.

However, Maniac is aware of their motives; despite being used for their glory, he realizes that without him, the McNab brothers would not have the opportunity to attend school. This arrangement is not without cost—his weekly performance acts as a sort of tuition for the education they receive. Although he is cognizant of being their pawn, he finds joy in tackling the challenges they devise. Eventually, the brothers present him with what they declare is the most dangerous challenge yet: to venture into the East End, a place known for its risks.