

Chapter 39

In the early morning, as March reluctantly released its grip on winter, Maniac Magee quietly left his home, feeling a burst of joy after an emotional reunion. He moved silently up Sycamore, savoring the dry streets and remnants of the season. Soon, he was spotted by Russell and Piper, who expressed their wild fears about his supposed fate, jokingly embellishing the idea that he'd been gruesomely harmed. Their exaggerated worries brought laughter to Maniac despite their absurdity, revealing their genuine concern for him.

As he continued, he heard the sounds of George McNab and his son, John, in the midst of constructing something significant. They were laboriously bringing in cinder blocks and creating what they called a "pillbox," a defensive structure. Maniac, watching their preparations, was both intrigued and apprehensive about their intentions. In conversations, John expressed his belief that a revolt from the East Enders was imminent, suggesting they needed to be ready for chaos. John's casual portrayal of the impending conflict, likening it to an old-fashioned raid, made Maniac uncomfortable, especially when he imagined the violent scene John described.

Despite Maniac's protests, John remained convinced that their preparations were necessary, pointing out that this might encourage others to take action too. However, Maniac found it hard to believe that others shared such drastic intentions. As the creeping discomfort of their plans settled into Maniac, he couldn't ignore the unsettling reality of what their actions could provoke. The atmosphere in the McNab household felt tainted, overshadowed by the construction of the pillbox, which transformed the space into a site of fear rather than comfort. Now, the house reeked of hostility, symbolizing the brewing tensions in their community as he grappled with the implications of this "defensive" undertaking.