

Chapter 45

Maniac Magee finds himself waking to the voice of Mars Bar, who has come to find him in the buffalo lean-to where Maniac is sleeping. It's the second night since the event at the trestle, and Mars Bar reveals he's been looking for Maniac after Amanda Beale told him he often hangs out there. Their conversation begins light, transitioning to a deeper discussion as Mars Bar, curious about Maniac's choice not to save a child in danger during a previous incident, presses him about it.

With a mix of silence and chatter, they walk in the moonlit night, where Maniac shares the tragic story of his parents' death. As recollections of the trestle flicker in his mind, he describes the horror of encountering it again, feeling an overwhelming sense of dread. Mars Bar, recognizing Maniac's inner strength, admires his bravery without outright stating it.

Mars Bar recounts his own experience of rescuing the child, describing him as clingy and terrified. With humor, he illustrates the absurdity of the situation, relating the child's reaction to his rescue. They share a laugh, which helps to ease the tension between them.

In a playful moment, Mars Bar reveals how his mother became attached to the rescued children, sharing anecdotes of them staying over and their plea for him to come play with them, with the comical suggestion that playing with them would allow him to "be white." This moment prompts a chuckle from Maniac, highlighting the ridiculousness of their childhood naivety.

As their conversation winds down, Mars Bar mentions that his mother wants to invite Maniac over for a visit. However, Maniac hesitates, overwhelmed by the implications of such an invitation. He struggles to articulate his reluctance, finally declining and rushing away from the conversation, leaving Mars Bar in puzzled silence. This preserve of introspection contrasts with the vibrant life surrounding them, as Maniac heads back to the safety of the lean-to, reflecting on the complexities of connection, race, and his own troubled past .