

Chapter 8

In the bustling town, excitement surrounded the schoolchildren and residents as they whispered about the new kid who had arrived. This stranger, distinguishing himself with scraggly hair, a penchant for carrying a book, and flap-soled sneakers, was quickly making a name for himself. Known for his uncanny athletic abilities, he had made quite an impression by intercepting Brian Denehy's pass and punting it back, showcasing a strength that surpassed Denehy's own throw.

His fame grew further when he rescued Arnold Jones from a precarious situation in Finsterwald's backyard, and later, he impressively tattooed Giant John McNab's fastball, hitting six home runs and circling the bases with ease. The students had begun to refer to this extraordinary boy as "Maniac," a name that quickly spread among them. It caught on so well that soon, everyone in town was calling him by that moniker, leaving behind any other names, except for Amanda Beale, who knew him differently.

Despite his newfound reputation, Maniac lacked a proper address to call home. For his initial nights in town, he sought refuge in the deer shed at Elmwood Park Zoo, making do with what scraps he could find, such as carrots, apples, and day-old hamburger buns. His connection to a story began when he discovered Amanda Beale's book on his second day in town. Captivated by the account of the Children's Crusade, he not only read the book in one sitting but also decided to keep it for additional readings in the days that followed.

While others might have spent their time walking aimlessly, Maniac Magee ran everywhere he went, book in hand, ensuring its pristine condition. It was during one of these runs that he encountered a vital moment in his life that would further define his existence in the town.