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Maniac Magee was not born in a dump. He was born in a house, a pretty ordinary house, right across the river from here, in Bridgeport. And he had regular parents, a mother and a father.

But not for long.

One day his parents left him with a sitter and took the P & W high-speed trolley into the city. On the way back home, they were on board when the P & W had its famous crash, when the motorman was drunk and took the high trestle over the Schuylkill River at sixty miles an hour, and the whole kaboodle took a swan dive into the water.

And just like that, Maniac was an orphan. He was three years old.

Of course, to be accurate, he wasn't really Maniac then. He was Jeffrey. Jeffrey Lionel Magee.

Little Jeffrey was shipped off to his nearest relatives, Aunt Dot and Uncle Dan. They lived in Holidaysburg, in the western part of Pennsylvania.