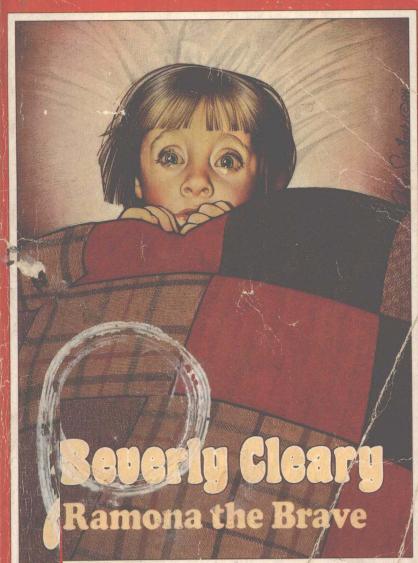


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# RAMONA THE BRAVE

ILLUSTRATED BY ALAN TIEGREEN

A YEARLING BOOK

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# RAMONA THE BRAVE

# CHAPTER ONE TROUBLE IN THE PARK

Ramona Quimby, brave and fearless, was half running, half skipping to keep up with her big sister Beatrice on their way home from the park. She had never seen her sister's cheeks so flushed with anger as they were this August afternoon. Ramona was sticky from heat and grubby from landing in the sawdust at the foot of the slides, but she was proud of herself. When Mrs. Quimby had sent the girls to

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the park for an hour, because she had an errand to do—an important errand, she hinted—she told Beezus, as Beatrice was called, to look after Ramona.

And what had happened? For the first time in her six years Ramona had looked after Beezus, who was supposed to be the responsible one. *Bossy* was a better word, Ramona sometimes thought. But not today. Ramona had stepped forward and defended her sister for a change.

"Beezus," said Ramona, panting, "slow down."

Beezus, clutching her library book in her sweaty hand, paid no attention. The clang of rings, the steady pop of tennis balls against asphalt, and the shouts of children grew fainter as the girls approached their house on Klickitat Street.



Ramona hoped their mother would be home from her errand, whatever it was. She couldn't wait to tell what had happened and how she had defended her big sister. Her mother would be so proud, and so would her father when he came home from work and heard the story. "Good for you, Ramona," he

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would say. "That's the old fight!" Brave little Ramona.

Fortunately, the car was in the garage and Mrs. Quimby was in the living room when the girls burst into the house. "Why, Beezus," said their mother, when she saw the flushed and sweaty faces of her daughters, one angry and one triumphant.

Beezus blinked to hold back the tears in her eyes.

"Ramona, what happened to Beezus?" Mrs. Quimby was alarmed.

"Don't *ever* call me Beezus again!" Beezus's voice was fierce.

Mrs. Quimby looked at Ramona for the explanation, and Ramona was eager to give it. Usually Beezus was the one who explained what had happened to Ramona, how she had dropped her ice-cream cone on the sidewalk

### TROUBLE IN THE PARK

and cried when Beezus would not let her pick it up, or how she tried, in spite of the rules, to go down a slide headfirst and had landed on her face in the sawdust. Now Ramona was going to have a turn. She took a deep breath and prepared to tell her tale. "Well, when we went to the park, I slid on the slides awhile and Beezus sat on a bench reading her library book. Then I saw an empty swing. A big swing, not a baby swing over the wading pool, and I thought since I'm going to be in the first grade next month I should swing on the big swings. Shouldn't I, Mama?"

"Yes, of course." Mrs. Quimby was impatient. "Please, go on with the story. What happened to Beezus?"

"Well, I climbed up in the swing," Ramona continued, "only my feet wouldn't touch the ground because there was this big hollow un-

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der the swing." Ramona recalled how she had longed to swing until the chains went slack in her hands and her toes pointed to the tops of the fir trees, but she sensed that she had better hurry up with her story or her mother would ask Beezus to tell it. Ramona never liked to lose an audience. "And I said, 'Beezus, push me,' and some big boys, big bad boys, heard me and one of them said—" Ramona, eager to be the one to tell the story but reluctant to repeat the words, hesitated.

"Said what?" Mrs. Quimby was baffled. "Said what, Ramona? Beezus, what did he say?"

Beezus wiped the back of her wrist across her eyes and tried. "He said, 'J-j-j-'"

Eagerness to beat her sister at telling what had happened overcame Ramona's reluctance. "He said, 'Jesus, Beezus!' "Ramona looked up at her mother, waiting for her to be shocked.