

Willie Jean in her rabbit mask understood. She laughed and slapped her hands on the tray of her stroller.

Ramona saw Henry's dog Ribsy trotting along, supervising the parade. "Yah! Ribsy! I'm going to get you, Ribsy!" she threatened, as she marched past.

Ribsy gave a short bark, and Ramona was sure that even Ribsy knew who she was as she marched off to collect her doughnut and apple juice.

## 7

### THE DAY THINGS WENT WRONG

Ramona's day was off to a promising start for two reasons, both of which proved she was growing up. First of all, she had a loose tooth, a very loose tooth, a tooth that waggled back and forth with only a little help from her tongue. It was probably the loosest tooth in the morning kindergarten, which meant that the tooth fairy would finally pay a visit to Ramona before long.

Ramona had her suspicions about the tooth fairy. She had seen Beezus search under her pillow in the morning, after losing a tooth, and then call out, "Daddy, my tooth is still here. The tooth fairy forgot to come!"

"That's funny," Mr. Quimby would answer. "Are you sure?"

"Positive. I looked everyplace for the dime."

"Let me look," was always Mr. Quimby's suggestion. Somehow he could always find the tooth fairy's dime when Beezus could not.

Now Ramona's turn would soon come. She planned to stay awake and trap the tooth fairy to make sure it really was her father.

Not only did Ramona have a loose tooth to make her feel that she was finally beginning to grow up, she was going to get to

walk to school all by herself. At last! Howie was home with a cold, and her mother had to drive Beezus downtown for an early dental appointment.

"Now Ramona," said Mrs. Quimby, as she put on her coat, "I'm going to trust you to stay all by yourself for a little while before you start to school. Do you think you can be a good girl?"

"Of course, Mama," said Ramona, who felt that she was always a good girl.

"Now be sure you watch the clock," said Mrs. Quimby, "and leave for school at exactly quarter past eight."

"Yes, Mama."

"And look both ways before you cross the street."

"Yes, Mama."

Mrs. Quimby kissed Ramona good-by.

"And be sure to close the door behind you when you leave."

“Yes, Mama,” was Ramona’s tolerant answer. She could not see why her mother was anxious.

When Mrs. Quimby and Beezus had gone, Ramona sat down at the kitchen table to wiggle her tooth and watch the clock. The little hand was at eight, and the big hand was at one. Ramona wiggled her tooth with her finger. Then she wiggled it with her tongue, back and forth, back and forth. The big hand crept to two. Ramona took hold of her tooth with her fingers, but as much as she longed to surprise her mother with an empty space in her mouth, actually pulling the tooth was too scary. She went back to wiggling.

The big hand moved slowly to three. Ramona continued to sit on the chair wiggling her tooth and being a very good girl as she had promised. The big hand crawled along to four. When it reached five,



Ramona knew that it would be quarter after eight and time to go to school. A quarter was twenty-five cents. Therefore, a quarter past eight was twenty-five minutes after eight. She had figured the answer out all by herself.

At last the big hand



crawled to five. Ramona slid off the chair and slammed the door behind her as she started off to school alone. So far, so good, but as soon as Ramona reached the

sidewalk, she realized that something was wrong. In a moment she understood what it was. The street was too quiet. No one else was walking to school. Ramona stopped in confusion. Maybe she was mixed up. Maybe today was really Saturday. Maybe her mother forgot to look at the calendar.

No, it could not be Saturday because yesterday was Sunday. Besides, there was Henry Huggins's dog Ribsy, trotting along the street on his way home from escorting Henry to school. Today really was a school day, because Ribsy followed Henry to school every morning. Maybe the clock was wrong. In a panic Ramona began to run. Miss Binney would not want her to be late for school. She did manage to slow down and look both ways before she walked across the streets, but when she saw that Henry was not guarding his usual intersection, she knew that the traffic boys had

gone in and she was even later than she had thought. She ran across the kindergarten playground, and then stopped. The door of the kindergarten was shut. Miss Binney had started school without her.

Ramona stood puffing a moment trying to catch her breath. Of course, she could not expect Miss Binney to wait for her when she was late, but she could not help wishing that her teacher had missed her so much she had said, "Class, let's wait for Ramona. Kindergarten isn't any fun without Ramona."

When Ramona caught her breath, she knew what she should do. She knocked and waited for the door monitor to open the door. The monitor turned out to be Susan, who said accusingly, "You're late."

"Never mind, Susan," said Miss Binney, who was standing in front of the class holding up a brown paper sack with a big T

printed on it. "What happened, Ramona?"

"I don't know," Ramona was forced to admit. "I left at a quarter after eight like my mother told me."

Miss Binney smiled, and said, "Next time try to walk a little faster," before she continued where she had left off. "Now who can guess what I have in this bag with the letter *T* printed on it? Remember, it is something that begins with *T*. Who can tell me how *T* sounds?"

"*T-t-t-t-t*," ticked the kindergarten.

"Good," said Miss Binney. "Davy, what do you think is in the bag?" Miss Binney was inclined to bear down on the first letters of words now that the class was working on the sounds letters make.

"*Taterpillars?*" said Davy hopefully. He rarely got anything right, but he kept trying.

"No, Davy. Caterpillar begins with *C*. *C-c-c-c-c*. What I have in the bag begins

with *T*. *T-t-t-t-t*."

Davy was crestfallen. He had been so sure caterpillar began with *T*.

*T-t-t-t-t*. The class ticked quietly while it thought. "*TV?*" someone suggested. *TV* began with *T*, but was not in the bag.

"*T-t-t-t-tadpoles?*" Wrong.

"*Teeter-totter?*" Wrong again. How could anyone have a teeter-totter in a paper bag?

*T-t-t-t-t*, Ramona ticked to herself as she wiggled her tooth with her fingers.

"*Tooth?*" she suggested.

"*Tooth* is a good *T* word, Ramona," said Miss Binney, "but it is not what I have in the bag."

Ramona was so pleased by Miss Binney's compliment that she wiggled her tooth even harder and suddenly found it in her hand. A strange taste filled her mouth. Ramona stared at her little tooth and was astonished



to discover that one end was bloody. "Miss Binney!" she cried without raising her hand. "My tooth came out!"

Someone had lost a tooth! The kindergarten began to crowd around Ramona. "Seats, please, boys and girls," said Miss Binney. "Ramona, you may go rinse your mouth, and then you may show us your tooth."

Ramona did as she was told, and when she held up her tooth for all to admire, Miss Binney said, "Tooth. T-t-t-t-t." When Ramona pulled down her lip to show the hole where her tooth had been, Miss Binney did not say anything because the class was working on *T* and hole did not begin with *T*. It turned out that Miss Binney had a t-t-t-t-tiger, stuffed, of course, in the bag.

Before the class started seat work, Ramona went to her teacher with her precious bloody tooth, and asked, "Would you



keep this for me?" Ramona wanted to be sure she did not lose her tooth, because she needed it for bait to catch the tooth fairy. She planned to pile a lot of clattery things like sauce pans and pie tins and old broken toys beside her bed so the tooth fairy would trip and wake her up.

Miss Binney smiled as she opened a drawer of her desk. "Your first tooth! Of course, I'll keep it safe so you can take it home for the tooth fairy. You're a brave girl."

Ramona loved Miss Binney for understanding. She loved Miss Binney for not being cross when she was late for school. She loved Miss Binney for telling her she was a brave girl.

Ramona was so happy that the morning went quickly. Seat work was unusually interesting. The kindergarten now had sheets of pictures, three to a row, printed in purple ink by a ditto machine. One row

showed a top, a girl, and a toe. The kindergarten was supposed to circle the top and the toe, because they both began with *T*, and cross out the girl, because *girl* began with a different sound. Ramona dearly loved to circle and cross out, and was sorry when recess time came.

"Want to see where my tooth was?" Ramona asked Eric J., when the class had finished with *T* for the day and had gone out to the playground. She opened her mouth and pulled down her lower lip.

Eric J. was filled with admiration. "Where your tooth was is all bloody," he told her.

The glory of losing a tooth! Ramona ran over to Susan. "Want to see where my tooth was?" she asked.

"No," said Susan, "and I'm glad you were late, because I got to open the door my very first day as door monitor."

Ramona was indignant that Susan had

refused to admire the bloody hole in her mouth. No one else bravely had lost a tooth during kindergarten. Ramona seized one of Susan's curls, and, careful not to pull hard enough to hurt Susan, she stretched it out and let it spring back. "Boing!" she cried and ran off, circling the jungle gym and coming back to Susan, who was about to climb the steps to the traveling bars. She stretched another curl and yelled, "Boing!"

"Ramona Quimby!" shrieked Susan. "You stop boinging me!"

Ramona was filled with the glory of losing her first tooth and love for her teacher. Miss Binney had said she was brave! This day was the most wonderful day in the world! The sun shone, the sky was blue, and Miss Binney loved her. Ramona flung out her arms and circled the jungle gym once more on feet light with joy. She swooped toward Susan, stretched a curl, and uttered

a long drawn-out, "Boi-i-ing!"

"Miss Binney!" cried Susan on the verge of tears. "Ramona is boinging me, and I bet she was the witch who boinged me at the Halloween parade!"

Tattletale, thought Ramona scornfully, as she circled the jungle gym on feet of joy. Circle Ramona, cross out Susan!





"Ramona," said Miss Binney, as Ramona flew past. "Come here. I want to talk to you."

Ramona turned back and looked expectantly at her teacher.

"Ramona, you must stop pulling Susan's hair," said Miss Binney.

"Yes, Miss Binney," said Ramona, and skipped off to the traveling bars.

Ramona intended to stop pulling Susan's curls, she truly did, but unfortunately Susan would not cooperate. When recess was over and the class was fling back into the room, Susan turned to Ramona, and said, "You're a big pest."

Susan could not have chosen a word that Ramona would resent more. Beezus was always saying she was a pest. The big boys and girls on Ramona's street called her a pest, but Ramona did not consider herself a pest. People who called her a pest did not

understand that a littler person sometimes had to be a little bit noisier and a little bit more stubborn in order to be noticed at all. Ramona had to put up with being called a pest by older boys and girls, but she did not have to put up with being called a pest by a girl her own age.

"I'm not a pest," said Ramona indignantly, and to get even she stretched one of Susan's curls and whispered, "*Boing!*"

Ramona's luck was bad, however, for Miss Binney happened to be watching. "Come here, Ramona," said her teacher.

Ramona had a terrible feeling that this time Miss Binney was not going to understand.

"Ramona, I'm disappointed in you." Miss Binney's voice was serious.

Ramona had never seen her teacher look so serious. "Susan called me a pest," she said in a small voice.

"That is no excuse for pulling hair," said Miss Binney. "I told you to stop pulling Susan's hair, and I meant it. If you cannot stop pulling Susan's hair, you will have to go home and stay there until you can."

Ramona was shocked. Miss Binney did not love her anymore. The class was suddenly quiet, and Ramona could almost feel their stares against her back as she stood there looking at the floor.

"Do you think you can stop pulling Susan's hair?" asked Miss Binney.

Ramona thought. Could she really stop pulling Susan's curls? She thought about those thick, springy locks that were so tempting. She thought about Susan, who always acted big. In kindergarten there was no worse crime than acting big. In the eyes of the children, acting big was worse than being a pest. Ramona finally looked up at Miss Binney and gave her an honest answer.

"No," she said. "I can't."

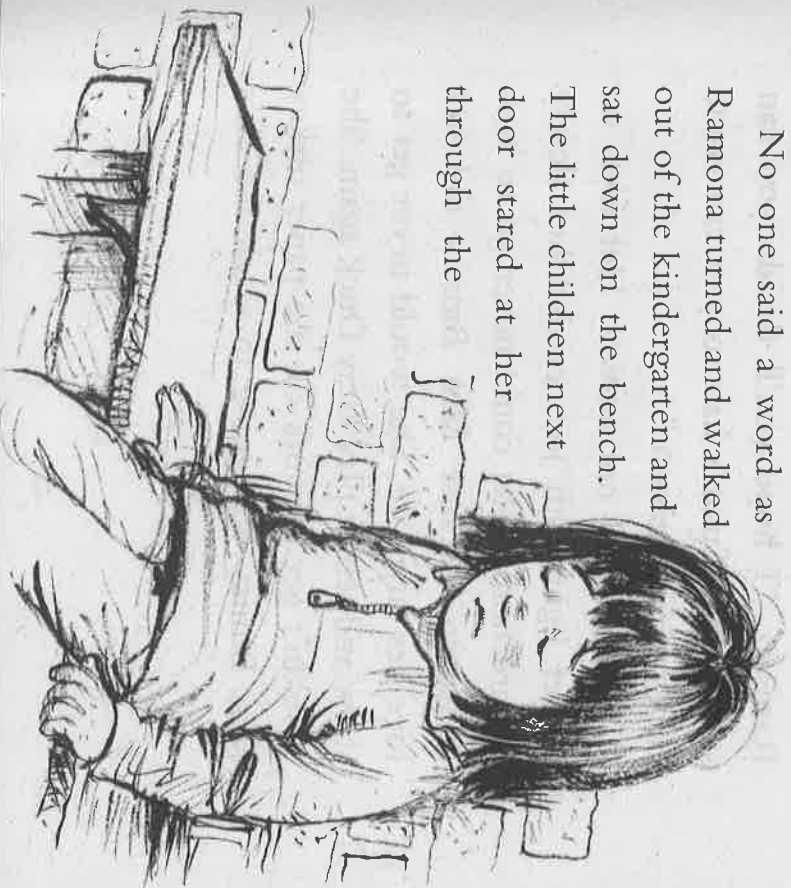
Miss Binney looked a little surprised. "Very well, Ramona. You will have to go home and stay there until you can make up your mind not to pull Susan's curls."

"Now?" asked Ramona in a small voice.

"You may sit outside on the bench until it's time to go home," said Miss Binney. "I'm sorry, Ramona, but we cannot have a hair puller in our kindergarten."

No one said a word as Ramona turned and walked out of the kindergarten and sat down on the bench.

The little children next door stared at her through the



fence. The workmen across the street looked at her in amusement. Ramona gave a long shuddering sigh, but she just managed to hold back the tears. Nobody was going to see Ramona Quimby acting like a baby.

"That girl has been bad again," Ramona heard the four-year-old next door say to her little sister.

When the bell rang, Miss Binney opened the door to see her class out, and said to Ramona, "I hope you'll decide you can stop pulling Susan's hair so you can come back to kindergarten."

Ramona did not answer. Her feet, no longer light with joy, carried her slowly toward home. She could never go to kindergarten, because Miss Binney did not love her anymore. She would never get to show and tell or play Gray Duck again. She wouldn't get to work on the paper turkey Miss Binney was going to teach the class

to make for Thanksgiving. Ramona sniffed and wiped the sleeve of her sweater across her eyes. She did love kindergarten, but it was all over now. Cross out Ramona.

Not until she was halfway home did Ramona remember her precious tooth in Miss Binney's desk.