

## Ramona's Family

“Too bad about him.” Mr. Quimby blew a cloud of smoke toward the ceiling.

“He goes next door and mews as if we never give him anything to eat,” said Beezus.  
“It’s embarrassing.”

“He’ll just have to learn to eat what we can afford,” said Mr. Quimby. “Or we will get rid of him.”

This statement shocked Ramona. Picky-picky had been a member of the family since before she was born.

“Well, I don’t blame him,” said Beezus, picking up the cat and pressing her cheek against his fur. “Puss-puddy stinks.”

Mr. Quimby ground out his cigarette.

“Guess what?” said Mrs. Quimby, as if to change the subject. “Howie’s grandmother drove out to visit her sister, who lives on a farm, and her sister sent in a lot of pumpkins for jack-o’-lanterns for the neighborhood children. Mrs. Kemp gave us a big one, and it’s down in the basement now, waiting to be carved.

“Me! Me!” cried Ramona. “Let me get it!”

“Let’s give it a real scary face,” said Beezus, no longer difficult.

“I’ll have to sharpen my knife,” said Mr. Quimby.

“Run along and bring it up, Ramona,” said Mrs. Quimby with a real smile.

Relief flooded through Ramona. Her family had returned to normal. She snapped on the basement light, thumped down the stairs, and there in the shadow of the furnace pipes, which reached out like ghostly arms, was a big, round pumpkin. Ramona grasped its scratchy stem, found the pumpkin too big to lift that way, bent over, hugged it in both arms, and raised it from the cement floor. The pumpkin was heavier than she had expected, and she must not let it drop and smash all over the concrete floor.