

The Church Play

My ears are as good as theirs, Ramona told herself. The floor felt cold through the seat of her thin pajamas.

“Look at the little lambs!” cried an angel. “Aren’t they darling?”

“Ba-a, ba-a!” bleated Davy and Howie.

Ramona longed to be there with them, jumping and ba-a-ing and wagging her tail, too. Maybe the faded rabbits didn’t show as much as she had thought. She sat hunched and miserable. She had told her father she would not be a sheep, and she couldn’t back down now. She hoped God was too busy to notice her, and then she changed her mind. Please, God, prayed Ramona, in case He wasn’t too busy to listen to a miserable little sheep, I don’t really mean to be horrid. It just works out that way. She was frightened, she discovered, for when the program began, she would be left alone in the church basement. The lights might even be turned out, a scary thought, for the big stone church filled Ramona with awe, and she did not want to be left alone in the dark with her awe. Please, God, prayed Ramona, get me out of this mess.

Beezus, in a long blue robe with a white scarf over her head and carrying a baby’s blanket and a big flashlight, found her little sister. “Come out, Ramona,” she coaxed. “Nobody will notice your costume. You know Mother would have made you a whole sheep suit if she had time. Be a good sport. Please.”

Ramona shook her head and blinked to keep tears from falling. “I told Daddy I wouldn’t be in the program, and I won’t.”

“Well, OK, if that’s the way you feel,” said Beezus, forgetting to act like Mary. She left her little sister to her misery.