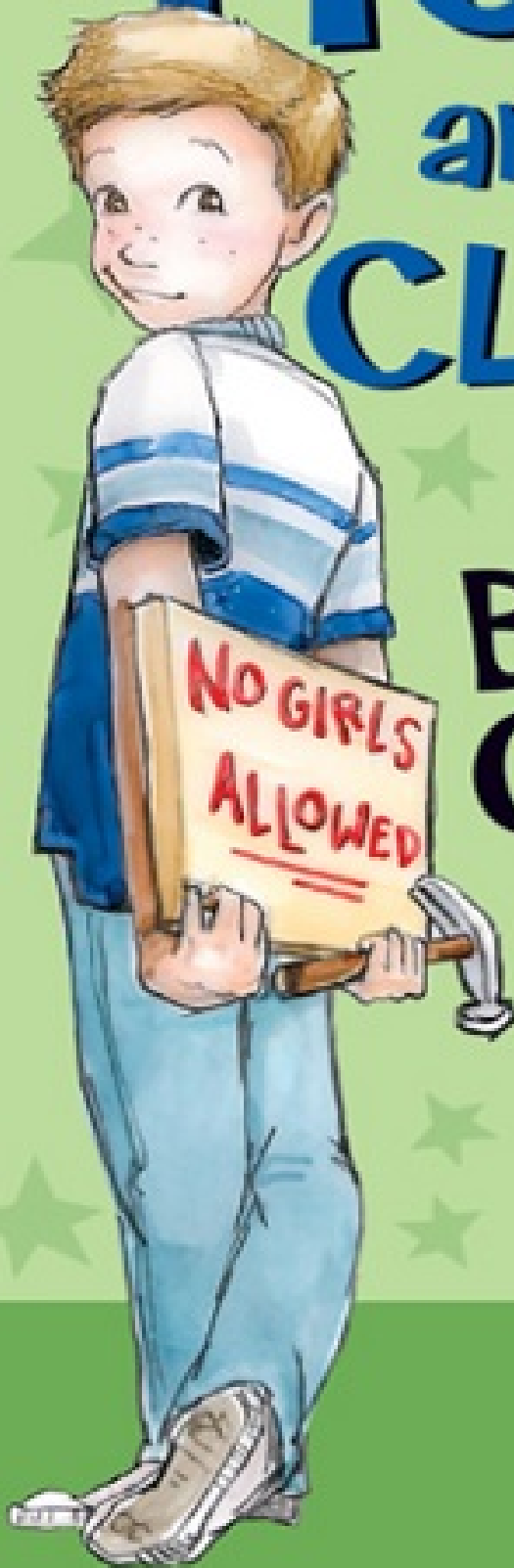


Henry and The Clubhouse

Beverly
Cleary



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Henry and The Clubhouse

Illustrated by Tracy Dockray

 HarperCollins e-books

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Henry Goes for a Ride

Henry Huggins had a lot of good ideas that fall when he first had his paper route, but somehow his ideas had a way of not turning out as he had planned. Something always went wrong.

There was, for example, that Saturday afternoon in October, when Henry found himself with nothing to do until it was time to start delivering *Journals*. Naturally he wandered into the kitchen and opened the refrigerator to see what he could find. At the sound of the door opening, his dog Ribsy and his cat Nosy came running in case he should be planning to feed them.



“Henry, you just ate lunch,” said Mrs. Huggins, who had washed her son’s slacks and was now struggling to shove metal stretchers into the legs. “Can’t you find something to do instead of opening the refrigerator every five minutes?”

"I'm thinking, Mom," answered Henry. He was thinking that he would like to build something, some kind of a house. ~~A doghouse, a tree house, or a clubhouse. A tree house would be pretty hard,~~ but he was sure he could build a doghouse or a clubhouse. All he needed was lumber and nails.

"Well, think with the refrigerator door shut," suggested Mrs. Huggins with a smile. She had succeeded in stretching Henry's slacks and now she leaned them, tight on their frames, against the sink. "And *please* find something to do."

"OK, Mom," said Henry, and walked out the back door in search of something to keep him busy. He considered. He could go over to the Quimbys' house and play checkers with Beezus, a girl whose real name was Beatrice, but her pesty little sister Ramona would probably spoil the game. He could go see if his friend Murph, who was the smartest boy in the whole school, was building anything interesting in his garage. Or he could try to sell subscriptions to the *Journal*. That was what he should do, but somehow Henry was not anxious to start ringing strange doorbells. No, what he really wanted to do was build something. He decided to scout around Klickitat Street and see if he could find enough boards for a doghouse. That would be the easiest to build and would not take much lumber.

As Henry walked around the side of his house, he noticed his next-door neighbor's car parked on the driveway with a U-Haul-It trailer attached. Now that was interesting, thought Henry. What was Hector Grumbie going to haul?

The front door of the Grumbies' house opened, and Mr. Grumbie appeared to be coming out backward. This was even more interesting. Why didn't Mr. Grumbie walk out frontward? Bit by bit more of his neighbor appeared, and Henry saw that he was tugging at something.

Henry decided he had better investigate. From the Grumbies' front walk he discovered that Mr. Grumbie was pulling and Mrs. Grumbie was pushing a bathtub out of the house. They were sliding it across the floor on an old blanket.

Mr. Grumbie paused to wipe his forehead. "Whew!" he exclaimed. "These old bathtubs were built like battleships."

"May I help?" Henry asked eagerly. After all, his mother wanted him to find something to do.

"Sure," said Mr. Grumbie. "You can get on the other end and help push."

Henry ran up the steps, and because the bathtub was blocking the door, he climbed into it, out the other side, and joined Mrs. Grumbie in pushing.

Henry was secretly wondering, but was too polite to ask, if the Grumbies were planning to give up bathing. Instead he inquired, "What are you going to do with it?"

"Take it to the dump," answered Mr. Grumbie, "unless you would like to have it. We are remodeling the bathroom and have to get rid of it to make room for the new tub, which will be delivered Monday."

Henry thought it over. There were all sorts of interesting things he could do with a bathtub in his backyard. Wash his dog Ribsby in it, cool off in it himself on a hot day, bob for apples at Halloween.

Build a clubhouse around it if he had that much lumber. All sorts of things. A bathtub in the yard would be much more fun than a tub in the bathroom, but Henry was sure his mother would not feel the same way about it.

“No, thank you, Mr. Grumbie,” Henry said with regret and then he had a better idea. The new bathtub would come in a crate and perhaps Mr. Grumbie would let him have the boards to build a doghouse.

By that time several neighbors had come over to the Grumbies’ to watch. Even Ribsby had taken an interest and had come down from the Hugginses’ doormat where he had been napping. Mr. Grumbie tied a rope around the tub and with the help of Henry and the bystanders who hung on to the rope, eased the tub, bump-bump-bump, down the front steps, slid it across the lawn, and then boosted it onto the trailer, where Mr. Grumbie tied it securely.

“Want to go for a ride to the dump?” Mr. Grumbie asked Henry.

The dump! Immediately Henry pictured a fascinating jumble of old bathtubs, washing machines, tires, and baby buggies. There was no telling what he might find at the dump. There might even be some old boards he could bring home.

“Can I ride in the bathtub?” he asked eagerly.

“Sure.” Mr. Grumbie was agreeable. “Go ask your mother.”

Henry ran to the open kitchen window. “Hey, Mom! Mr. Grumbie wants me to ride to the dump with him. Can I go?”

“All right, Henry.” Mrs. Huggins’s voice came through the window.

“Come on, Ribsby!” Henry bounded across the lawn and climbed into the bathtub. Ribsby scrambled in behind him.

“All set?” asked Mr. Grumbie, opening the door of his car.

“All set,” answered Henry, and Mr. Grumbie maneuvered the car and trailer down the driveway and into the street.

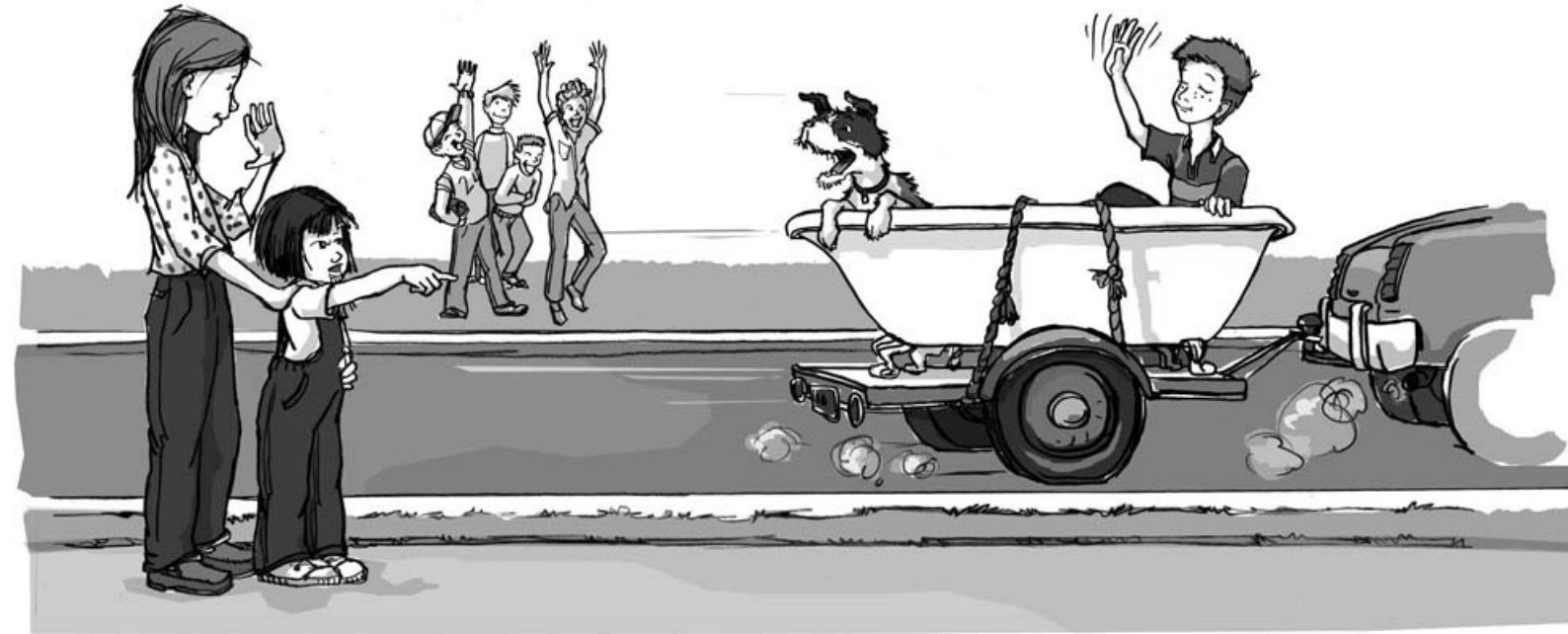
Riding in a bathtub, which of course had no springs or upholstery, was bumpy, but Henry did not care. No one else in the neighborhood had ever gone for a ride in a bathtub. He shouted and waved to his friends Scooter and Robert, who were playing catch on the sidewalk. They stared after him in surprise. Ribsby put his paws on the edge of the tub and barked.

When Mr. Grumbie stopped at the first stop sign, Henry saw his friend Beezus and her little sister Ramona, who had a lot of string stuck to her chin with Scotch tape. Henry guessed she was trying to copy one of the many disguises of Sheriff Bud on television. Ramona never missed the Sheriff Bud program.

“Hi!” called Henry.

“Hello, Henry.” Beezus looked with admiration at Henry in the bathtub. He could tell she wished she could go for a ride in a bathtub, too.

Ramona scowled ferociously and pointed straight at Henry. “Remember—only *you* can prevent forest fires.”



Henry ignored Ramona. He knew she was only repeating what she had heard Smokey Bear say on television all summer. “So long!” he called to Beezus as Mr. Grumbie drove on.

Ribsy, tired of barking over the edge of the tub, curled up and tried to go to sleep, but whenever the trailer went over a bump, he lifted his head and looked annoyed. In the bathtub little bumps felt like big bumps. They rumbled and bumped down Klickitat Street to a main thoroughfare, and then Henry had an idea. He was the president of the United States riding in a parade! He sat up straight in the bathtub, nodding and waving and doffing an imaginary hat. Mr. Grumbie’s car became a column of tanks preceding him down the avenue, and one airplane in the sky became a formation of fighter planes overhead. Henry could practically hear the cheers of the throngs crowded along the curbs to watch his journey to the White House.

Henry did in fact hear a few real cheers, or perhaps *jeers* was a better word, mostly from boys along the way.

“Hey! Don’t forget to wash your back!”

“Be careful! Don’t step on the soap!”

With great dignity Henry nodded and waved. A great man on his way to the White House could afford to ignore such people, especially when he was surrounded by Secret Service men.

Henry was having too much fun to act dignified very long. He saw several boys standing in front of a bicycle shop and could not resist waving and shouting, "Hats off! The flag is passing by!"—

"Boo!" yelled the boys. "Boo! Boo!" They held their noses and waved Henry on down the street.

Ribsy scrambled to his feet and barked over the edge of the tub. Henry, who was the kind of man who *would* take his dog to the White House, folded his arms and grinned in a superior manner, because he was riding in the bathtub and the boys were standing on the sidewalk. The afternoon had turned out better than he had expected, and he still had the dump to look forward to.

And then Henry passed a *Journal* truck heading in the opposite direction. Suddenly he was no longer president of the United States. He was no longer interested in lumber for a doghouse. He was plain Henry Huggins, a boy who had completely forgotten that he had forty-three papers to deliver that afternoon. This was terrible! If he did not get those papers delivered, his route might be taken away from him before he had had it a month. Then, because he was the youngest *Journal* carrier in the neighborhood, Mr. Capper, who was the district manager, and everyone else, would say he was not old enough to handle a route. And that would be about the worst thing that could possibly happen. He would never live it down.

"Mr. Grumbie! Mr. Grumbie!" yelled Henry, but Mr. Grumbie drove on down the street unaware that he was carrying his passenger farther and farther from his paper route.

"Mr. Grumbie! Mr. Grumbie!" There was no response but the bump and rattle of the trailer. Henry was trapped in a bathtub in the middle of Lombard Street. "Mr. Grumbie! Mr. Grumbie!"

At the next stop sign Henry stood up in the bathtub and frantically waved both hands, hoping to attract Mr. Grumbie's attention in the rearview mirror.

It worked, because Mr. Grumbie stuck his head out the window and called, "Something wrong back there?"

"My route!" yelled Henry. "I forgot my paper route!"

The signal changed and cars and trucks began to honk. Mr. Grumbie, in the center lane of traffic, had to drive on.

Henry sat down with a bump. The Saturday afternoon traffic was heavy and it would be difficult for Mr. Grumbie to change lanes while pulling a trailer. They were still in the center lane when they came to the next stop sign.

"I'll pull over as soon as I can," Mr. Grumbie called back to Henry.

Henry now felt ridiculous sitting in the bathtub in the middle of a heavily traveled street. He wondered why he had thought riding in a tub would be fun in the first place. A boy who was old enough to have a paper route was too old to do such a silly thing. Cross street after cross street went by and Henry was carried farther and farther from his route. By this time the other boys were counting and folding their papers and Mr. Capper was probably wondering what had happened to Henry, the youngest carrier. Maybe Mr. Capper was already wondering what boy could take over Henry's route.

Maybe he was saying to Scooter and the other boys, "I'm afraid Henry isn't old enough to handle a route. Do you know any older boy who could take his place?" It was not a happy prospect.

A gap appeared in the right-hand lane of traffic and Mr. Grumbie eased his car and the trailer in it. There was a solid line of cars parked along the curb, and no place to stop. Another block went by. Still there was no place where Mr. Grumbie could stop. Henry caught a glimpse of a clock inside a dry-cleaning shop. Four thirty-five. He would never get to the district manager's garage and get his papers folded and delivered by six o'clock.

Mr. Grumbie signaled and made a right turn into a service station. Henry, followed by Ribsby, scrambled out of the bathtub as Mr. Grumbie got out of his car.

"I'm sure sorry I forgot about my route," Henry apologized.

"What are we going to do about it?" asked Mr. Grumbie. "I can't turn around and take you home now, because the dump closes at five and I've got to get rid of this tub this weekend. Besides, I am renting the trailer by the hour and I want to get it back as soon as I can."

"That's all right," said Henry. "I have enough money for bus fare."

"Do you know the way home?" asked Mr. Grumbie.

"Sure. I can catch the bus across the street and I know where to transfer to the other bus." Henry was eager to be on his way.

"OK," agreed Mr. Grumbie, and climbed back into his car.

"Wait!" yelled Henry as Mr. Grumbie started to drive off. "Ribsby! Can you take Ribsby with you? I can't take him on the bus."

Across the street a bus pulled up to the stop, discharged a passenger, and departed with a puff of exhaust.

"I guess so. Come on, pooch." Mr. Grumbie opened the rear door of his car and Henry shoved Ribsby inside and slammed the door. He knew from past experience that a dog was not allowed on a bus unless it was in a box tied shut. Henry had enough problems without searching for a box.

When Mr. Grumbie drove off, Henry waited for the traffic light to change from red to green before he crossed the street to the bus stop. He had just missed a bus, he knew, and as he wondered how long he would have to wait for the next bus, he fingered the change in the pocket of his jeans. Bu fare and a dime left over. Enough for one telephone call. Probably he should call one of the boys and ask him to go over to Mr. Capper's garage and start folding his papers for him. But which boy? He had only one dime. What if he called Robert's house and Robert's mother answered and said he wasn't home? His dime would be gone.

Henry decided to telephone his own house and ask his mother to call Robert or Murph for him. Once more Henry waited for the traffic signal to change, ran back across the street, and into the glass telephone booth in the corner of the service station. He pushed his dime into the smallest hole, dialed and counted four rings.

~~“Hello?” It was Mrs. Huggins.~~

“Say, Mom,” began Henry, his eye on the bus stop, “my paper route sort of slipped my mind and I wondered if you would phone Robert or Murph or one of the fellows and ask them to fold my papers for me. I’ll get there as soon as I can.”

“Henry, where are you?” asked Mrs. Huggins.

“In a filling station out on Lombard Street,” answered Henry.

“It is twenty minutes to five now.” Mrs. Huggins sounded exasperated. “You’ll never get your papers delivered on time.”

“Mom, I can’t stand here all day arguing,” Henry pointed out as a bus pulled up to the curb. “Here’s my bus now!”

“Honestly, Henry, sometimes I wonder—”

Henry had to cut his mother off.

The traffic signal changed to red just as Henry reached the curb. “Hey, Mr. Bus Driver!” Henry called frantically. The bus driver glanced at him and pulled out into the stream of traffic. He had a schedule to follow and could not wait for one boy. Henry groaned and then he discovered it was not even his bus.

When the signal changed to green Henry walked across the street. He had done all he could do to get his route started and there was no use worrying about it. But Henry did worry. He wondered if his mother was able to find a boy to fold his papers and what Mr. Capper would say when the boy folded Henry’s *Journals*. Henry worried when the bus finally came. He worried while he rode on what seemed to be the slowest bus in the world. He worried when he got off and waited for the second bus. He worried when he had transferred to the second bus, which seemed even slower. If there was ever a contest to find the slowest bus in the world, this bus would win. A snail could beat it any day.

And then as the bus finally reached Henry’s neighborhood and drove down one of the streets on which Henry should have been delivering papers that very minute, Henry saw a car exactly like the Hugginses’ car. In fact, it was the Hugginses’ car. Henry could tell, because he saw his mother get out and throw a folded *Journal* toward a house. She threw awkwardly. The paper did not go far enough so she picked it up and threw again. Henry was horrified. A boy did not want to see his mother delivering papers, especially when she was such a terrible thrower. It was awful. He did not see how anybody could grow up and throw that way.



Hastily Henry jerked the cord that stopped the bus at the next corner. He bounded out of the door and ran back to Mrs. Huggins, who was consulting his route book to see where to throw the next paper. Henry could not help feeling that he had reached her in the nick of time. He did not want the passengers on the bus to see her throw again.

“Hey, Mom,” he panted. “How come you’re delivering my papers?”

“There wasn’t anyone else to do it,” answered his mother. “I couldn’t reach Robert or Murph so I drove over to Mr. Capper’s and found the other carriers were leaving with their papers. I’ve delivered twenty-eight of them.”

“Gee, Mom, did you *fold* my papers?” asked Henry. If she had she was better at folding than throwing.

“The other boys had already folded them for you,” answered his mother. “They must have known you were going to be late.”

Henry opened the car door and pulled out his bag of *Journals*. “I’ll take over, Mom,” he said, as he slipped the bag over his shoulders. “Thanks a lot. You saved my life.”

“You’re welcome,” answered Mrs. Huggins and then added, “I guess,” as she climbed into the car.

Henry had to know something. “What did Mr. Capper say?” he called after his mother.

“He just laughed and wanted to know if I was taking over your route,” answered Mrs. Huggins.

Henry wished he had his bicycle. He could actually cover his route almost as fast on foot, but it

was more fun to deliver papers on his bicycle. Because he was short for his age the bag of papers bumped against his legs when he went on foot. He walked up one driveway and down the next, remembering which customer wanted his paper left on the doormat and which one had warned him against breaking the geraniums in the flower box on the porch.

Henry walked as fast as he could and soon covered his route. He was late, he knew, but with luck no one would complain—and so far he had been lucky. There was no reason why he should not continue to be. He was tired and sweaty when he reached home, but he was cheerful. The papers were delivered, weren't they? That was all that mattered.

When Henry opened the front door he was surprised to see his father wearing a white shirt and a necktie. Mr. Huggins always wore a sport shirt around home. "Hi, Dad. How come you're all dressed up?" he asked.

"Because your mother had quite a day with one thing or another around here, and we are going to take her out to dinner for a change," said Mr. Huggins.

"Oh—maybe I had better get cleaned up." Henry was surprised at this change in routine. He hoped they would not go to a fancy place with cloth napkins and a long menu. When he went out to dinner he liked to order a hamburger and pie.

"Well, Henry!" Mr. Huggins sounded stern. "Don't you have anything to say for yourself?"

"Why...uh...I finally got the papers delivered," answered Henry, not quite certain what his father expected of him.

"It seems to me your mother also delivered quite a few papers," said Mr. Huggins.

"Yeah, and golly, Dad, you should see her throw," confided Henry, demonstrating to his father the way his mother delivered papers. "It is pretty awful."

"Henry, I want one thing clearly understood," said Mr. Huggins, ignoring his son's remark. "The paper route is yours. It is not your mother's route and it is not my route. You are to deliver the papers and collect the money and do all the work yourself, and if you can't do it without any help from us, you will have to give the route to someone else. Do you understand?"

Henry looked at the carpet. His father did not often speak to him this way, and he felt terrible. He wanted his father to be proud of him because he was the youngest paper carrier in the neighborhood. "Yes, Dad," he answered. He felt he should offer some explanation for forgetting his route. "I was planning to get some old boards to build a doghouse."



Mr. Huggins grinned. “You don’t need to build a doghouse. You’re in a doghouse with your mother already.”

Mrs. Huggins came clicking into the room on high heels. Henry caught a whiff of perfume and noticed she was wearing one of her best dresses, which meant a restaurant with cloth napkins. She looked so nice Henry felt ashamed of himself for criticizing the way she threw and for wanting a hamburger for dinner. “Gee, Mom, I’m sorry I caused you so much trouble,” he said. “It just seemed like such a good chance to go for a ride in a bathtub that I just—well, I forgot all about my route.”

“In a bathtub!” exclaimed Mrs. Huggins.

“Sure. Didn’t you know? Mr. Grumbie had this old bathtub he was hauling to the dump on a trailer.”

“A bathtub! I had no idea—” Mrs. Huggins sat down and began to laugh. “You mean you were riding down Lombard Street in a bathtub?”

“You told me to find something to do,” Henry pointed out.

“Yes, I know I did,” admitted Mrs. Huggins, “but riding around town in a bathtub wasn’t exactly what I had in mind. Honestly, Henry, sometimes I wonder how you get into these things.”

“I don’t know, Mom, I just do,” said Henry thinking with regret of the good idea that had somehow gone wrong. He knew one thing for sure. If he was going to keep his paper route he had better not get into things. He had better keep out of things—especially late in the afternoon.

Henry and The New Dog

Henry soon found that there was not enough wood in a bathtub crate to build a really good doghouse. As he rode around the neighborhood delivering papers, he kept his eye out for any old boxes or packing cases that he could use. There was one empty house in the neighborhood which he passed every day hoping he would get some packing cases from the new owners, but the house remained empty. Wood was so scarce that he was about to give up the idea of a house for Ribsby when he had an unexpected piece of luck.

Most of the houses in Henry's neighborhood had been built way back in the nineteen-twenties when cars were shorter and narrower than they are today. Now many people were finding their new cars too long for their old garages and so they built boxlike additions onto the ends of their garages to make them long enough for their cars.

One neighbor, Mr. Bingham, was not so fortunate. When he proudly drove his new car into his garage he found there was no way for him to get out of it. His garage was so narrow he could not open the door of his car. So poor Mr. Bingham backed out and parked his car on the driveway. All the neighbors on Klickitat Street had a good laugh over this, and Mr. Bingham announced that he was going to tear down his old garage and build a larger one.

As soon as Mr. Bingham began to tear down the garage, Henry rode his bicycle over to his house to ask if he could have some of the old lumber.

"Sure, Henry, help yourself," said Mr. Bingham, who was prying at a board with a crowbar. "Take all you want but get it out of here before Saturday, when the truck comes to haul it away."

"OK, Mr. Bingham," agreed Henry. "Do you want to get rid of the windows, too?"

"Take anything you want," said Mr. Bingham.

Doghouse! Why, there would be enough lumber for a clubhouse, a clubhouse with windows and a good one, too. He would save up his paper-route money and buy one of those down-filled sleeping bags he had seen in the window of the sporting goods store and sleep out in the clubhouse he would build out of all the secondhand lumber.

Now Henry found himself with more to do than he had time for. He could not neglect his paper route, so he saw that he would have to have help. He told his friends Robert and Murph about the free

lumber and they saw the point at once.

“Sure, we’ll help,” they both said. The boys borrowed wagons and every afternoon between school and paper-route time they hauled lumber from Mr. Bingham’s driveway to the Hugginses’ backyard. When Henry left to fold his papers, Robert and Murph went on hauling. By Saturday the boys were sure they had enough lumber for a clubhouse.

“Let’s start building,” said Henry eagerly.

“Nope,” said Murph. “When you build a house, you’ve got to have a plan. You can’t build it any old way.”



“Aw, Murph,” said Robert. “Where are we going to get a plan?”

Henry, too, was skeptical. He thought that any old way was the only way to build a clubhouse. “Yes, where are we going to get a plan?”

“I can draw one,” said Murph. “I’ll do it this weekend. But remember, when we get the clubhouse built, no girls allowed.”

“No girls allowed,” vowed Henry and Robert.

“And when we get it built, we can sleep in it in our sleeping bags,” added Henry, thinking to himself, when I get a sleeping bag. The boys agreed this was the thing to do with a clubhouse.

Mrs. Huggins looked at the old lumber in her yard and said, “My goodness, Henry, isn’t that a lot of lumber?”

“Don’t worry, Mom,” Henry assured her. “The clubhouse will be real neat when we get it finished and I’ll saw up the leftover boards for kindling.”

Mr. Huggins looked at the old lumber. "I don't know about this, Henry. It looks to me as if you have taken on a pretty big job."

"The three of us can do it, Dad," said Henry, eager for his father's approval. "And I won't let it interfere with my paper route. Cross my heart."

"See that you don't," said Mr. Huggins. "If you can't handle them both you'll either have to give up your route or tear down the clubhouse."

That weekend Murph, who was the smartest boy in the whole school and practically a genius, drew a plan. He drew it on squared paper, each square equaling one foot. Henry was pretty impressed when he saw it and realized that Murph had been right. It would not do to build a clubhouse any old way.

Murph would not hear of building the clubhouse directly on the ground. "We don't want termites eating our clubhouse," he said.

Henry agreed that it would not do to have bugs chewing away at their clubhouse. This meant the boys had to buy some Kwik-Mix concrete and make four cement blocks for their clubhouse to rest on. It was soon plain to Henry that there was more to building a clubhouse than he had realized and that it was going to take a lot of time—time that he was not sure he had to spare because of his paper route. However, he could not back out now that Robert and Murph had already worked so hard on their new project.

Then one afternoon when Henry was folding his *Journals* on Mr. Capper's driveway with the other paper carriers, Scooter McCarthy spoke. "Say, Mr. Capper, I will be needing one more paper after this," he said.

"Is that so?" Mr. Capper sounded interested. "A new subscriber?"

"That's right, Mr. Capper." Scooter quite plainly was pleased with himself for having sold a subscription.

Henry suddenly pretended to be interested in a headline in the paper he was folding, because he hoped that if he did not look at Mr. Capper, Mr. Capper might not look at him. Henry was ashamed, because it was already October and he had not sold a single *Journal* subscription. Not that he hadn't tried—a little bit. He really had rung several strange doorbells before he became interested in the clubhouse, and had tried to sell subscriptions, but the results were discouraging. Strangers had a way of listening to his sales talk about the *Journal's* easy-to-read type with amused smiles and then saying "No thank you." One man interrupted with a brusque "Not today" and closed the door in Henry's face. A lady embarrassed him by telling him what a splendid little salesman he was and then saying she couldn't afford to take another paper. Splendid *little* salesman! That was the last straw. After that Henry found it easy to think up excuses for not trying to sell new subscriptions.

Now Mr. Capper was saying, "Good for you, Scooter. Suppose you tell us how you went about selling the subscription."

"Aw, it was easy," boasted Scooter, stuffing his folded papers into his canvas bag. "I just told the

man what a good paper the *Journal* was and he said he didn't have time to read it, because he went fishing every Sunday and I said, 'You could use it to wrap your fish eggs in,' and he laughed and said OK, put him down for a subscription, so I did."

"I call that quick thinking on your part, Scooter," said Mr. Capper. "The rest of the boys could take a lesson from you."

Out of the corner of his eye Henry could see Mr. Capper looking around the group of boys. "What about you, Henry?" asked Mr. Capper. "You haven't turned in any subscriptions since you have had your route."

"Well...I—I have been trying," Henry said, admitting to himself that he really had not tried very hard. He had been much too busy with the clubhouse.

"I know it's hard to get started sometimes," said Mr. Capper sympathetically. "I'll tell you what you do. The other day I saw a *Sold* sign on a house on your route. When the new owners move in, you march right up to that front door, ring the doorbell, and sell them a subscription to the paper."

"Yes, sir." Mr. Capper made it sound so easy—march right up and sell them a subscription, just like that. "I'll try, Mr. Capper," said Henry, who knew the house the district manager was referring to. It was the house where he had once hoped to get enough old boxes to build a doghouse. It seemed a long time ago.

And so each day, as Henry delivered his papers, he watched for the new owners to move into the empty house. When he finally did see packing crates and empty cartons stacked on the driveway he decided he should give the people a little time, say about a week, to get settled before he marched right up and rang that doorbell.

The next afternoon Mr. Capper said, "Well, Henry, I see the new owners have moved into the empty house."

"I am going over today as soon as I finish my route," promised Henry, knowing he could not put off the task any longer.

When Henry had delivered his last paper he hung his canvas bag in the garage, washed his hands, combed his hair, and, followed by Ribsby, walked the two blocks to call on the new neighbors. He did not ride his bicycle, because it seemed more businesslike to go on foot. Fuller Brush men did not ride bicycles.

As he approached the house he whispered to himself some of the things he planned to say. "Good afternoon. I am Henry Huggins, your *Journal* newsboy. I deliver the *Journal* to a lot of your neighbors." That much he was sure of, but he did not know what to say next. Find a selling point, Mr. Capper always said. Talk about some part of the paper that would interest a new subscriber.

Henry walked more and more slowly. Ribsby finally had to sit down and wait for him to catch up. The *Journal* had a good sports section...a good church section.... How was Henry supposed to know what would interest a new subscriber? What if he told someone about the church section when all he

wanted was to read the funny papers?

But before Henry could decide what to say, he met Beezus and her little sister Ramona. Ramona was wearing a loop of string around her neck. The ends of the string were fastened with Scotch tape to a cardboard tube.

“Hi,” said Henry to Beezus. “What are you doing?”

“Keeping Ramona away from the television set,” answered Beezus. “Mother says she spends too much time in front of it.”

“Ask me my name,” Ramona ordered Henry.

Henry could feel no enthusiasm at all for this new game of Ramona’s. “What’s your name?” he asked in a bored voice rather than risk Ramona’s having a tantrum because he would not play.

Ramona held the paper tube in front of her mouth. “My name is Danny Fitzsimmons,” she answered, looking down at the sidewalk and smiling in a self-conscious way that was not at all like Ramona.

“It is not,” contradicted Henry. “You aren’t even a boy.”



“She’s just pretending she’s being interviewed on the Sheriff Bud program,” explained Beezus. “That’s her microphone she’s holding.”

“Oh,” was all Henry could find to say.

“My name is Danny Fitzsimmons,” repeated Ramona, smiling shyly in an un-Ramona-like way, “and I want to say hello to my mommy and my daddy and my sister Vicki, who is having a birthday, and Mrs. Richards, who is my kindergarten teacher, and Lisa Kelly, who is my best friend, and Gloria Lofton, whose cat just had kittens and she might give me one, and her dog Skipper and all the boys and girls in my kindergarten class and all the boys and girls at Glenwood Primary School and Georgi

Bacon's sister Angela, but I won't say hello to Georgie, because I don't like him, and..."

"Oh, for Pete's sake." Henry was disgusted with Ramona's new game. "Why don't you just say hello to the whole world and be done with it?" He had no time for this sort of thing. He was on his way to sell a *Journal* subscription and get back to the clubhouse. "So long, Beezus," he said.

"...and Bobby Brogden who has a loose tooth..." Ramona was saying as Henry went on down the street.

When Henry came to the house that was his destination, he turned to Ribsby and said, "Sit," not because he expected Ribsby to sit, but because he wanted to put off ringing that doorbell a little longer. He had not decided what to use as a selling point, because he could not even guess what might interest a new neighbor.

Ribsby sat a moment and then got up and sniffed at the shrubbery.

"I said 'Sit,'" Henry told his dog, deciding that it would be a good idea if Ribsby really did sit. Some people were very particular about dogs running through their flowers and he was anxious to make a good impression.

Like the good dog he was, part of the time, Ribsby sat once more, but he did not stay seated. He stood up and wagged his tail.

"Sit!" ordered Henry sternly, as he started up the steps.

Ribsby appeared to think it over.

"Sit!" Henry raised his voice.

Ribsby waved his tail as if to say, Do I really have to?

A strange dog, a Dalmatian, came trotting around the house and began to investigate Ribsby. The dogs sidled around each other, sniffing. Henry did not pay much attention. Dogs who were strangers to each other always did this.

Next a woman who was wearing an apron, and had a smudge of dust on her cheek, appeared on the driveway at the side of the house. She was older than Henry's mother. Probably she was old enough to be a grandmother. Before Henry had a chance to speak, the Dalmatian left Ribsby and frolicked over to his owner. Ribsby, an agreeable dog who was ready to play, followed.

That was Ribsby's mistake. Now he was trespassing on the Dalmatian's territory. The Dalmatian began to growl deep in his throat and to hold his whiplike tail stiff and straight.

Ribsby stopped short. This was his neighborhood. He was here first. It was the Dalmatian who was trespassing. Each dog began to resent the other's looks, sound, and smell.

"Ribsby!" Henry spoke sharply.

"Ranger!" The woman spoke sharply, too.

The dogs paid no attention to their owners. Each was too intent on letting the other know exactly what he thought of him. The growls grew louder and deeper and they raised their lips and bared their teeth as if they were sneering at each other. And just who do you think you are? Ribsby's growl seemed to say.

I have just as much right here as you have, Ranger's growl answered.

No, you don't, said Ribsby. I was here first.

I'm bigger, growled Ranger.

You're a bully, growled Ribsby.

Get off my property, Ranger told Ribsby.

You make me, Ribsby told Ranger.

"Cut it out, both of you," ordered Henry.

Planning to grab Ribsby's collar and drag him away, Henry jumped down from the steps to the lawn just as the growls erupted into snarls and the dogs went for each other's throat.

"Ranger!" shrieked the woman.

"Ribsby!" shouted Henry. The dogs were on each other in a twisting, tumbling tangle that seemed to be made up of feet, fangs, and tails.

Henry ran over to the snarling, yelping pair and just as he was about to grab Ribsby's collar, he found the other dog's mouth in front of his hand. Quickly he drew back. He saw that he could not stop the fight and since he could not, he wanted Ribsby to win. If it had not been so important for him to see a *Journal* subscription he would have yelled, "Go get 'im, Ribsby."

"Look out!" shouted the woman. "Don't let him bite you!"

Neighbors began to gather on the sidewalk to watch the excitement. "Dogfight! Dogfight!" a boy yelled.

"The hose!" shouted someone. "Turn the hose on them!"

"I can't," cried the new neighbor. "I don't know where it is!"

"Hey, look at old Ribsby," said Scooter, who had ridden over on his bicycle to see what all the noise was about. "Go get him, Ribsby!"

"You keep quiet!" ordered Henry, even though he wanted to cheer his own dog on.

"Aw, your old mutt couldn't lick a Chihuahua," scoffed Scooter.

"He could, too," said Henry hotly. He wasn't at all sure Ribsby could lick a Dalmatian, but he

could lick a Chihuahua. Henry was positive of that.

“Who’s winning?” asked Robert, who had just arrived, along with Beezus and her little sister Ramona.

“The new dog,” answered Scooter, and rode on down the street as if the fight was already over.

Half afraid that Scooter might be right, because the new dog was both bigger and younger than Ribsby, Henry tried once more to reach into the snarling, rolling mass of dog to grab Ribsby’s collar. He did not have a chance.

A man grabbed Henry by the arm and pulled him away. “Don’t you know that’s a foolish thing to do?” he demanded. “Those dogs might bite you.”

“Yes, but he’s my dog,” Henry tried to explain. “I don’t want him to get hurt.”

The next-door neighbor was screwing the garden hose to the faucet. He turned on the water and advanced toward the dogs with the gushing nozzle in hand. “Stand back, everybody!” he yelled and turned the full force of the hose on the dogs.



Water sprayed in all directions. Still the dogs snarled and snapped. The man with the hose moved closer, so that the force of the hose was stronger. The stream of water caught Ribsby right in the face and blinded him for the moment. This gave Ranger the advantage. He seized Ribsby by the scruff of the neck, and though Ribsby was a medium-sized dog, Ranger began to shake him. The man turned the hose in Ranger’s face.

Ribsby wrenched free and ran dripping down the street with his tail between his legs, ki-yi-ing all the way. The Dalmatian was after him in a flash of black and white.

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