

Richard Saves the Grand Parade

A children's novel by C.M. Miller

Synopsis, Book and Target Audience, Characters, Plot Treatment

Synopsis

Every New Year's Eve, young historian Richard Mulligan camps out on the boulevard so his family can watch the Grand Parade the next morning.



But when a mysterious saboteur ruins all the floats, it's up to him, his older, snarky sister Maddie, and his trouble-making Gramps to save the day... and that secret box hidden on the back of one float might hold a clue.

Book and Target Audience

Richard Saves the Grand Parade is a lower middle-grade novel (Ages 6 - 10) that's perfect for curious, adventure-loving readers. It's written with a playful realism, comparable to kids' adventure movies like *The Sandlot*, and middle-grade novels that draw adventure and mischief from real life settings like *The Great Brain Series*.

Word count is around **23,500**

Over twenty-two short chapters, and with the urgency of a parade that needs to be saved, the characters, twists, and surprises make for a lively journey. The subject matter of civic traditions, backstage float preparation, and float driving make for an enriching world—and no doubt—great inspiration for companion drawings.

With celebrations of bravery, steadfastness, sacrifice, and hints of the prophet Samuel's story, Christian parents will be delighted to hand this to their seven, eight, or nine-year-olds—or read it themselves.

Parade lovers (or camper-outers the night before) are more than welcome!

Characters:

Richard – a parade-loving ten-year-old who loves experiencing (and recording) exciting events like an annual parade. Trusting, curious, and a tad competitive, Richard savors every aspect of his family’s parade and float-building tradition. He’s convinced that the float his family helped build to represent their home town will win the coveted Spirit Award. When the parade is sabotaged and cancelled, Richard’s shock, righteous indignation, and eventual sacrifice form a touching character arc.

Maddie – Richard’s older sister, a snarky teen who hates being on time from her phone. Albeit reluctantly, Maddie accompanies Richard and Grampa on their tour of the warehouse where the parade’s floats are assembled. Later on, her viral following and persona ‘Madster’ helps their efforts at a pivotal moment

Mom – Wise and firm (though not ‘strict’) Richard’s Mom helps organize the float building. When the parade is sabotaged, she is devastated, and in a surprise to everyone, she’s not upset when Richard (and Grandpa) break a few rules to save the parade.

Gramps – Eccentric, energetic, and always inspired, Grandpa is the heart and soul of the family’s tradition of building a float, and then saving seats to watch the parade. In his red, checkered hunting hat and his tiny car, Grandpa is much more mischief than anyone might realize... but always to a good end.

‘Bad News’ Dennis – Gruff, tall, and somewhat mean-looking, ‘Bad News’ Dennis has a scary reputation... and he’s rumored to have once been offered a spot as ‘Guest of the Grand Parade,’ only to have that spot taken away from him. Is he plotting revenge? Or as Richard starts to suspect, does his knowledge about floats and the parade hide a different motivation?

Regina Flem – Purple hair. Megaphone. Oddly enough, this bossy, volunteer coordinator for the Parade Judge’s Association doesn’t seem to like the parade herself. But considering she’s from the same family who runs ‘Flem Market’ and an annual Danish Foods Faire on New Year’s Morning that competes with the parade, her antipathy to the parade and its floats makes a little more sense.

The Mutant Gopher – A parade legend. In the middle of the very first parade, a Gopher popped out of one of the floats and chewed up all the flowers! A mad scramble, and even a ‘Gopher Wanted’ manhunt ensued... but the rodent was never found. Is the gopher, or its offspring, alive today?

Mayor Harbuckle – A figure from history. The town’s very first mayor, and an organizer of the very first Grand Parade. Legend runs that the mayor and his family are archenemies of the rumored mutant gopher!

Brief Plot Treatment

Chapters One through Three

Right when he finishes setting up the family parade-viewing spot, Richard’s Mom and older sister Maddie arrive to take him home. But as always, Richard’s mischief-loving Gramps has something up his sleeve.

Later that night, Gramps takes Richard and his sister to the float warehouse, where all the floats are getting touched up for the big morning. Richard is excited—the float his Mom and family have worked on to represent their home town of Los Topos is almost ready. On the drive over, Gramps tells them an old parade legend—the story of the *very first* Grand Parade, and an ongoing feud between the town’s mayor and one ornery gopher who chewed up the winning float!

Chapters Four through Six

At the warehouse, Richard, Gramps and Maddie check-in with volunteer coordinator Regina Flem. With her negative comments about their float, they realize that she’s part of the Flem family Market Empire that puts on a New Year’s Day Foods Faire—a longstanding rival of the Grand Parade.

Lost in the commotion and mesmerized by the floats, Richard wanders off to find his float—a celebration of local history with an oil derrick, baskets of oranges and cherries, and a grassy hill with a figure of his town’s founder, Lionel Bixby.

When he examines the float up close, Richard finds a mysterious box at Lionel Bixby's heel... something that he didn't know was part of the float's design. But he's startled when a tall, mean-looking man with oil and dirt on his clothes and a purple scar chases him away.

On the drive home, Maddie mischievously adds her own tall tale to the parade's origin story—the tall man who caught him is none other than 'Bad News' Dennis, a animal trainer who landed on the wrong side of the mayor's feud with the gopher, and has been planning his revenge on the parade ever since.

Chapters Seven, Eight, and Nine

At home, Richard learns from his parents that the parade has been cancelled. When they tell him that someone got into the warehouse and damaged all the floats right after he left, he's certain he knows who it is... *Bad News Dennis!*

Stuck at home, and upset that his parents don't want to go and spend all night fixing the floats with him, Richard goes to bed. But later that night, a voice outside the window calls his name—it's Gramps! And Gramps is heading down to the warehouse for a secret clean up effort that might save the parade.

Richard knows he'll probably be in trouble if he joins him... but Gramps reminds him that once in the bluest of blue moons, and for the right reason, it's OK to step into trouble.

Chapters Ten, Eleven, and Twelve

Gramps and Richard arrive at the warehouse, where they see that someone threw orange paint all over the floats! With a dozen volunteers, they get to work cleaning them, fixing them, and getting everything ready to thousands of people can enjoy the parade the next morning.

In the restroom, Richard overhears Bad News Dennis talking about what happened... and it sounds like he's planning something! But before Richard can tell Gramps about it, there's a problem. Regina Flem arrives with the police to shut down the cleanup effort! For reasons of 'safety' she insists that the parade must be cancelled. Gramps and the volunteers push back, and when Richard finds Bad News Dennis coming after him, he climbs up onto a tall ladder... which falls and crashes him THROUGH the grassy hill and into the belly of his own float!

Chapters Thirteen, Fourteen, and Fifteen

Humming, shushing movement, a furry surface—when Richard thinks he meets the mutant gopher, rumored to live in one of the floats, his hairs stand on end!

Oh wait... when Richard realizes that the furry surface is a patch of carpet, not of gopher, he understands that he's found the driver's seat of the float, the place where someone sits for several hours and drives!

With Gramps just outside, Richard is trapped... and when he learns that Bad News Dennis is a float expert and the only one able to get him out, his feels even more trapped! While Gramps and Dennis work to get Richard out, there's commotion outside—the warehouse doors are being sealed by police so that the floats can't drive out to the parade route.

Knowing that there might not be a parade if someone doesn't step up, Richard has a scary idea, and one that will get him into even more trouble... what if he drives?

Chapters Sixteen and Seventeen

After volunteering to drive, Richard realizes what that means—the only parade he'll see will be the cheering crowds through the small windows next to him. No floats, no marching bands... all he'll hear are Dennis's directions and the float's theme music playing on repeat! But if he stays and drives, then his family, and tens of thousands of people will see the parade they've been waiting for.

With Dennis guiding him through a walkie-talkie, and Gramps setting off fireworks as a distraction, Richard surprises everyone and drives his float out the back door of the warehouse! All the floats and their drivers follow, and despite the attempt to shut it down, the Grand Parade begins!

Chapters Eighteen, Nineteen, and Twenty

During the parade, Richard is surprised when Maddie runs beside him—with her phone out! Having learned he's driving their float and making history, she's making a *CloseUp* reel for her followers and will stop at nothing to feature him.

Richard drives the float to the parking lot at the end of the parade route. With Dennis's help, he crawls back through the belly and comes out through a narrow opening.

While they wait for Richard's family to come (and possibly tell him his punishment for sneaking out...) Richard learns that Dennis is *not* bad news. But he is still hiding a secret—and before he can find out what it is, Regina Flem and an angry crowd show up. She even has a police offer ready to arrest them both.

Instead, Dennis goes back to the mysterious box behind the float. Reading from a small paper called 'City Codes for the Grand Parade,' Dennis explains the old rule that protects Richard from arrest—he's a 'Good Samaritan' who helped make the parade happen during an extraordinary time. While the policeman leaves without arresting them, Regina and her crowd (turns out, they are Flem Market employees, and splattered with the orange paint found all over the floats...) gang up on them.

Chapters Twenty-One and Twenty-Two

But before Regina, the *real* saboteur can do any harm, a crowd of shrieking teenagers surrounds them. Turns out, they are Maddie's online fans, and they recognize Richard from Maddie's viral video. Despite an escape attempt, Regina is stopped and arrested when evidence from the black box shows her and her employees trashing the floats. When Gramps, Mom and Dad, and everyone else join the commotion, they realize that Regina's hatred of the Grand Parade comes from her family's rivalry—and the fact that she was never, ever allowed to see it!

Here, Richard speaks up and asks the police officer to let her go. Instead, Regina and Dennis are both invited to the family's annual post-parade Picnic. But before they go, Dennis takes out one more item from the mysterious box—a history volume documenting the Grand Parade's story! With pictures of the mayor, and the original mischievous gopher, it's a great treasure, and now it's entrusted to Richard, the new 'protector of the parade' for safekeeping.

***Completed manuscript available upon request.**

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Author Bio

C.M. Miller, is an author, a former teacher, and a writer for *PragerU Kids*. He's also a recovering Rose Parade enthusiast. So far, his fiction has been published in *Dead Mule School of Southern Literature*, and his articles have appeared in arts and entertainment sections of *City Journal*, *American Greatness*, and *The Federalist*. He lives in Southern California with his wife Rebekah and his one-year-old son Theo.



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