

Richard Saves the Grand Parade

A children's novel by C.M. Miller

Synopsis, Book and Market, Characters, Plot Treatment

Synopsis

Every year, Richard camps out on the boulevard so his family can watch the Grand Parade on New Year's Day.

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



Book and Market:

Richard Saves the Grand Parade is a lower middle-grade novel (8 – 12) that's perfect for curious, adventure-loving readers. Comparable middle-grade novels with similar mischief and adventure would be *The Great Brain Series*, and N.D. Wilson's *Leepike Ridge*

Word count is around **19,000**.

Over twenty-one short chapters, and with the urgency of a parade that needs to be saved, the characters, settings, 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 good inspiration for companion drawings.

With celebrations of family, loyalty, 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 seeing (and writing down) how things actually work. 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 appears to be canceled, Richard’s devastation, rise to action, and sacrifice form a touching character arc.

Maddie – Richard’s older sister, a snarky teenager who hates being on time out from her phone. Albeit reluctantly, Maddie accompanies Richard and Grampa on their tour of the warehouse where the parade’s floats are assembled.

Mom – Wise and firm (though not quite ‘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 – Head of the volunteer float-builders and heir to Flem Family Farms (which holds their own, rival, New Year’s Day celebration). Oddly enough, and despite her involvement in it, she does not like the Grand Parade.

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!

Plot Treatment

Chapters One through Three

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

With a promise to feed Richard and Maddie and then drive them home himself later that night, Gramps gives them a lift to the float warehouse, where all the floats are getting finishing touches of decoration for the big morning. The float that Richard’s mom and family have worked on to represent their home town of Los Topos is there... and almost ready.

On the drive over, Gramps tells them one of Richard’s favorite parade legends—the origin 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 the volunteer coordinator: a suspicious lady with purple hair, ties to a food festival that takes place after the parade, and a strange dislike for their float!

Lost in the commotion and mesmerized by the floats, Richard wanders off to find his hometown’s float—a celebration of local history with an oil derrick, baskets of oranges and cherries, and grassy hill, and a towering figure of his town’s founder, Lionel Bixby. When he examines the float up close, Richard is surprised to find a mysterious box at Lionel Bixby’s heel... something that he didn’t know was part of the float’s design. But when Richard examines the box, a tall, mean-looking man with oil and dirt on his clothes catches him by surprise.

On the drive home, and to have a little fun with her parade-loving brother,

Maddie tells Richard a tall tale of her own—the tall man who caught him is none other than ‘Bad News’ Dennis, a gopher 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 Six, Seven, Eight, and Nine

At home, Richard learns from his parents that the parade has been canceled.

Canceled? Richard is devastated... and when he learns 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 has a plan to head down to the warehouse and join a secret clean up effort to 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. The lady with the purple hair arrives with the police to shut down the cleanup effort! For reasons of ‘safety’ she insists that the parade must be canceled. 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 no doubt get him into more trouble... what if he drives?

Chapters Sixteen and Seventeen

After he volunteers to drive, Richard realizes what that means... and he nearly cries. It means the only parade he'll see will be the cheering crowds through the windows next to him. No floats, no marching bands... all he'll hear are Dennis's directions and his floats theme music playing on repeat!

But if he stays in the belly of the float and drives, then all of his family, and thousands of people will see the parade they've been waiting for.

With the lady with the purple hair shouting at them to stop, and with Dennis guiding him through a walkie-talkie, 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

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...) Instead, the lady with the purple hair brings a police officer and an entire crowd to arrest him—and she nearly does, until Dennis stops her.

Turns out, Dennis isn't the bad guy! In fact he's the grandson of Mayor Harbuckle, who began the parade's traditions. Having seen Richard's heroic decision, he goes around and opens the mysterious box behind the float. Reading from a small paper called 'City Codes for the Grand Parade,' Dennis explains that Richard can't be in trouble because the parade was threatened—and he helped it. In the eyes of the law he's a 'Good Samaritan' and cannot be cited for disturbing the crime scene of ruined floats.

The officer agrees, but when the lady with the purple hair hears this, she gets nervous, and the angry crowd starts complaining.

“He's not even getting arrested? So we bought all that orange paint and broke into the warehouse for nothing? You promised us there would be no parade and everyone would go to the foods fair instead!”

The officer takes the lady away for questioning...

And with Richard's family watching, Dennis brings one more thing out of the mysterious box in the back of the float—a thick, leather-bound history book with old pictures and article clippings about the parade. It's a historian's dream!

Before they part ways, Dennis and the parade's judges nominate Richard to be next year's honorary judge of the parade. He'll get to keep the history book safe, work with city leaders, and guide the float-building to a successful parade.

Chapter Twenty-One

Richard, Gramps, the whole family, (and their new friend Dennis, who brings along an actual gopher) head over to the park while traffic dies down. The New Year's Day picnic and frisbee game is one to remember... and before they all head home, the youngest honorary judge spends some time alone with his notebook, writing some history first hand so he'll remember what happened.

***Completed manuscript available upon request.**

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