

Tommy and the Order of Cosmic Champions

Anthony J. Rapino

Anthony D. Grate, Contributor

Greenleaf Book Group Press

(392pp)

978-1-62634-966-7

Tommy and the Order of Cosmic Champions is an energetic adventure novel in which a bullied boy leaves home and has to decide whether or not he wants to become like a villain.

In Anthony J. Rapino and Anthony D. Grate's young adult novel *Tommy and the Order of Cosmic Champions*, a boy faces bullies with the help of characters from his favorite science fiction franchise.

In 1988 in Ohio, during the summer between elementary and middle school, twelve-year-old Tommy is heartbroken when his best friend abandons him for a group of bullies. His ex-friend also decries Tommy's favorite television show, *Order of Cosmic Champions*. Tommy's parents are in the process of separating, too.

When the school year begins, Tommy is terrorized, given swirlies, and subjected to fistfights. Only an *Order of Cosmic Champions* drawing contest sustains him. The winner will have their drawing turned into an action figure. When Aaron, who's from Brooklyn, wins the contest instead, Tommy begins hearing voices from his action figures. He decides to travel to Brooklyn to convince Aaron to use his prize for Tommy's benefit. On the ensuing adventure, Tommy learns the value of self-worth and how to defend his honor.

The story moves slowly in the beginning, but it does so to set up its background in thorough terms. Distinct, humorous details are used to hone in on the 1980s setting. By the book's dramatic second half, it is immersive. Tommy meets a stylish array of others during his adventure, all of whom help to move the story forward. The amusing heroes and villains of the *Order of Cosmic Champions* universe have witty exchanges, helping to join the story's two worlds in an imaginative way.

At the book's center, Tommy yearns to be a hero, a successful artist, and a good friend. He also dreams of revenge against his bullies for most of the story: he is "prepared for a real fight" and participates in violence, dodging hits as a defense. He is both energetic and short-sighted. His grandiose behaviors are romanticized, though the fact that he hears the voice of the *Order of Cosmic Champions'* evil villain in his head hints at potential dangers. There are occasional dips into Tommy's distressed parents' thoughts, too. When Aaron's parents learn that Tommy is headed their way with unknown intentions, though, they underreact—an unrealistic moment within the fantastical tale.

Tommy and the Order of Cosmic Champions is an energetic adventure novel in which a bullied boy wields the tools and wisdom of a striking science fiction universe.

AIMEE JODOIN (August 18, 2022)

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