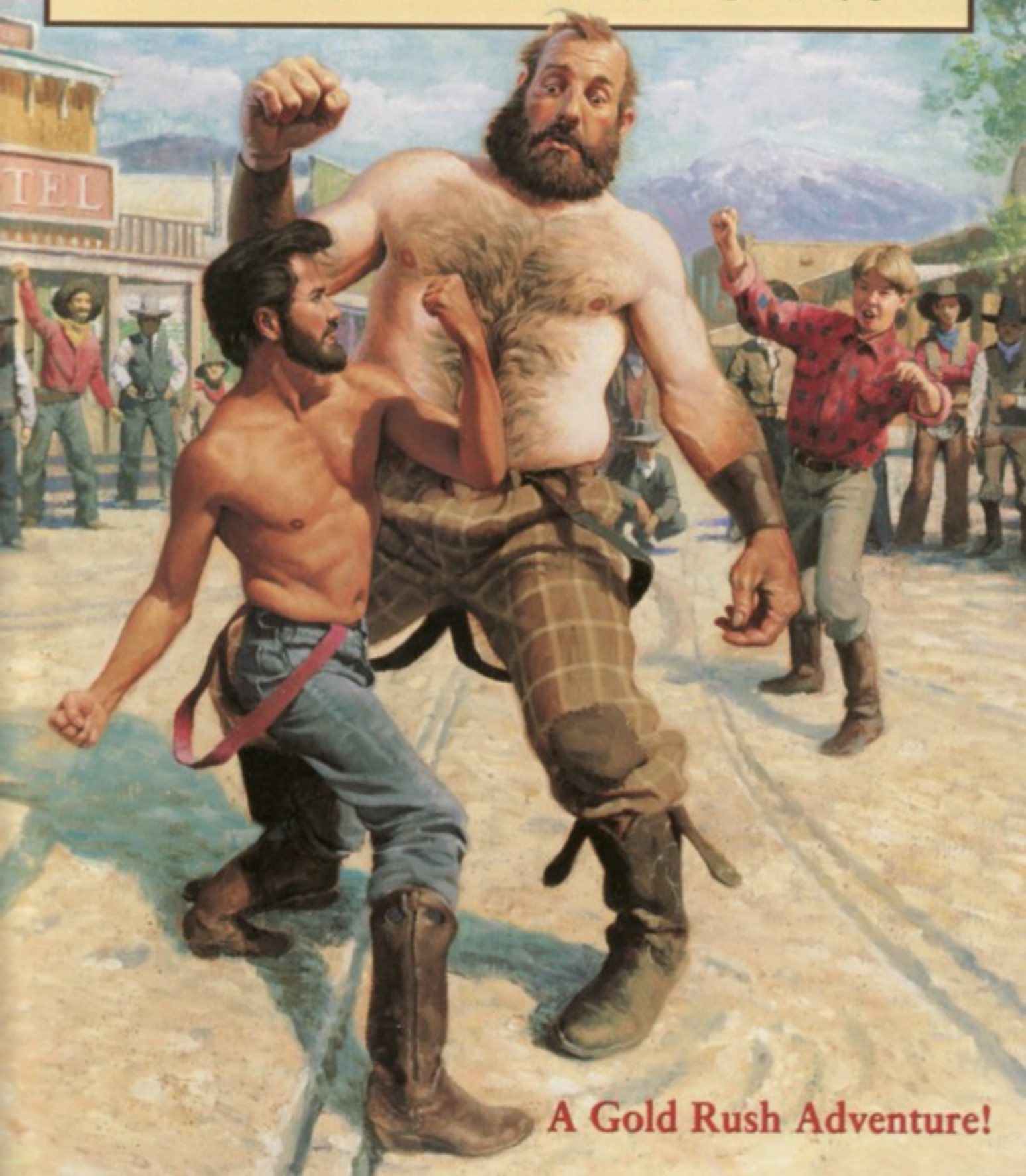


From Newbery Award-winning author

SID FLEISCHMAN

BY THE GREAT HORN SPOON!



A Gold Rush Adventure!

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The Stowaways

A sailing ship with two great sidewheels went splashing out of Boston harbor on a voyage around the Horn to San Francisco. Below decks, in the creaking darkness of her cargo hold, there sat eighteen barrels of potatoes. Inside two barrels, side by side, there squatted two stowaways.

It was not once upon a time — it was precisely the twenty-seventh day of January in the year 1849. Gold had been discovered in California some twelve months before and now, in a rush, the Gold Rush was on.

The good ship *Lady Wilma*, overcrowded and heavy in the water with cargo, thrashed her way to the sea. Her paddlewheels churned and her smokestack stained the frozen winter sky like ink. She was bound for the gold fields with 183 passengers — not counting the stowaways. Hundreds of gold-seekers had been left at the dock clamoring for passage. The California fever was sweeping through the cities and towns and villages like a heady wind. Men were buying picks and shovels and trying to get from the east coast to the west — as soon as possible and all at once.



On the second day at sea, just after dawn, the lid rose silently off a potato barrel. Cautiously, a man raised his eyes above the rim of the barrel to look about. Slowly, he unfolded his long arms and legs. Then he stood, an elegant gentleman in a black broadcloth coat. He would be the first to admit that being folded up in a barrel, with a bowler hat balanced on his knees, was not the most comfortable way to travel. Now he brushed off the hat and placed it smartly on his head. He hooked a black umbrella on his arm, for he never traveled without it, and pulled on a pair of spotless white gloves. He felt very nearly frozen solid, but permitted himself a most contented smile. Then he gave a small tap to the barrel beside him.

"All clear, Master Jack."

"Is that you, Praiseworthy?" came a young, muffled voice from the depths of the barrel.

"Your obedient servant," the man replied and lifted the lid.

There rose from this barrel a school boy of twelve. He had been sucking a raw potato to slake his thirst. A patch of hair fell across his forehead in a yellow scribble. He had never been so cold, hungry or miserable in his life. On the other hand, he had never been so happy. He wouldn't have traded places with anyone. His pepper-black eyes were considerably brightened with the fever of adventure. He smelled of potatoes from head to toe. His thin nose, which was smudged, felt like an icicle, but he permitted himself a most contented smile.

"We made it, Praiseworthy," he said.

"We did indeed, Master Jack."

Jack gazed at the dark cargo shapes piled high around them and listened to the scrape of the sea along the wooden hull. He thought of home and Aunt Arabella and the friendly blaze in the big stone fireplace. There was no turning back now. They were on their way to the gold fields.

"Hungry?" asked Praiseworthy.

"I could eat, I guess," said Jack, who didn't want to give the impression that he had any complaints.

"Cold?"

"I've been colder, I guess," said Jack, although he couldn't think when.

"I suggest that we see what can be done about improving our accommodations," said Praiseworthy, tapping his bowler hat firmly in place. "Shall we go?"

"Go?" Jack replied. "Go where?" He fully expected to pass the voyage below decks with the cargo. He had

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"We intend to come sailing back to Boston in a year. We will be rich as can be."

If your money has run out, why not mine some gold in California? It seemed obvious to twelve-year-old Jack and his seafaring companion and butler, Praiseworthy. Join them as they stow away on a ship bound for California with the hope of striking it rich so that Jack's Aunt Arabella won't lose her estate—the home where she has raised Jack and his sisters since they were small. Will Jack and Praiseworthy find gold, or will they find trouble instead?

This rollicking adventure tale, set in the Gold Rush days, is "another uncommonly original . . . delectable story, told and illustrated with zest and gusto to the very last page."

—*The Horn Book*

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