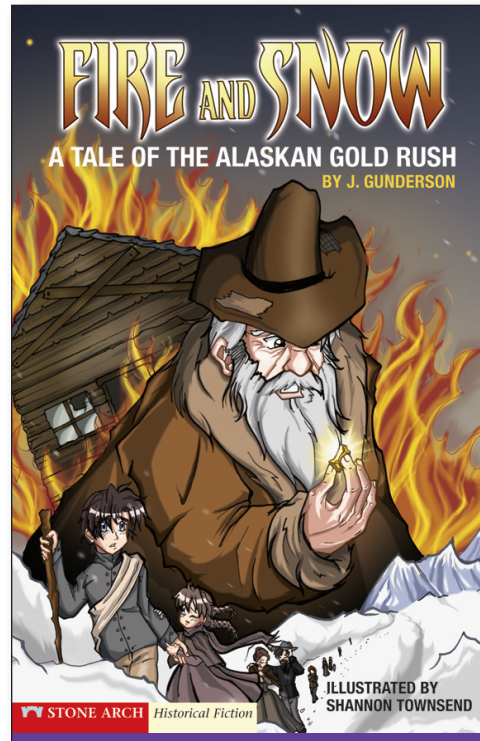




READER'S THEATER



Fire and Snow **by J. Gunderson**

Characters: **Robert Michelson**
 Narrator
 Ethan Michelson
 Sugar Gold Charlie
 Cassie Michelson
 Eliza Michelson

Genre: **Historical Fiction**

Ages: **8-11**

Fire and Snow page 1

Robert:

There it is, Ethan! Alaska, land of fortune!

Narrator:

The year was 1897. It was dawn on a cold day in October when the steamship *The Stampede* neared the coast of Alaska carrying hopeful gold hunters.

Ethan:

I'm going to tell Mom and Cassie. We're about to reach shore!

Narrator:

The Michelson family had been struggling to make ends meet. Mr. Michelson owned a dry goods store, but no one had money to buy things because there was a depression in the United States. The family was broke. One day, not long before their journey to Alaska, they met a man getting off a steamship along the waterfront. His name was Sugar Gold Charlie.

Sugar Gold Charlie:

Folks, my name is Sugar Gold Charlie. And this here is \$100,000 in Klondike gold! Gold runs like water in Alaska. You, too, can be rich like me! But you need to be prepared. Alaska is bitterly cold and a dangerous place.

Ethan:

Why do they call you Sugar Gold Charlie?

Sugar Gold Charlie:

Because my gold is as sweet and abundant as sugar. I can never get enough!

Narrator:

Ethan and his father set off for home with a plan to strike it rich in Alaska.

Robert:

Just think, son. We'll make a fortune! We'll be rich! We'll be millionaires!

Narrator:

Mrs. Michelson was not excited about their plan. After a lot of discussion, she was convinced to go to Alaska, but only if Robert promised they would return after one year. So they sold the store, searched for the supplies they needed, and boarded the steamship several days later along with hundreds of other folks who had caught gold fever. After many weeks at sea, they finally reached Alaska.

Ethan:

Mom, Cassie, we're in Alaska, land of gold and riches galore!

Cassie:

In Alaska I won't be seasick anymore.

Fire and Snow page 2

- Eliza:** I can't wait.
- Ethan:** But aren't you excited about finding gold?
- Eliza:** This is just another of your father's schemes to get rich. How can I be happy about that?
- Narrator:** With a bump, they hit land. They raced to the upper deck for their first look at Alaska.
- Ethan:** Look over there, Dad! It's Sugar Gold Charlie.
- Narrator:** Among the hundreds of strangers stood Sugar Gold Charlie.
- Ethan:** Sugar Gold Charlie! What are you doing here?
- Sugar Gold Charlie:** Same thing you are. Looking for gold.
- Ethan:** But don't you have enough?
- Sugar Gold Charlie:** That's the thing about gold, kid. Once you have a little, you always want more. Is all this stuff yours? If it is, you better get rid of it.
- Ethan:** Why?
- Sugar Gold Charlie:** To get to the gold, first you have to climb that!
- Narrator:** Sugar Gold Charlie was pointing to a huge mountain in the distance. Mrs. Michelson's face turned pale with fear.
- Eliza:** Please, Robert. I want to go back to Seattle.
- Robert:** Give it a chance, Eliza. Just over that mountain, riches await!
- Cassie:** I'm tired and cold. And hungry.
- Narrator:** The family set out, but soon found the mountain was not the only obstacle in their path. The trail they followed came to an icy river that could only be crossed by foot. Ethan stepped cautiously but confidently into the river.

Fire and Snow page 3

Ethan:

Ahh! Help!

Narrator:

Halfway across the river, a strong current pulled Ethan from his feet. He was unable to kick or swim because his legs had turned to ice. The current swept him down the river. Suddenly, a figure stepped out from behind some bushes.

Sugar Gold Charlie:

Ethan! Grab this rope! Hold on! I'll pull you out.

Ethan:

Sugar Gold Charlie, you saved my life!

Sugar Gold Charlie:

It was nothing, kid. Happens every day.

Eliza:

Oh Ethan! Thank goodness you are okay!

Robert:

Thank you for rescuing him, Charlie.

Sugar Gold Charlie:

I'd better be on my way. See you on the other side of the mountain.

Narrator:

The Michelson family was shaken by their near tragedy, yet continued on their journey. Little did they know that more dangers lay ahead. Would they all make it to the top of the mountain alive? Was it worth risking their lives for a chance to strike it rich? To read more about the Michelson's adventure, and the mystery of Sugar Gold Charlie in Alaska, read *Fire and Snow: A Tale of The Alaskan Gold Rush*.

THE END