

Meet Me in San Francisco

San Francisco, April 25, 1906

Dear Benny,

It's yer old (ha ha) pal Jimmy writin you from General Delivery in Frisco. Where you might of heard back in St Louie we had a little earthquake on my birthday Wednesday last. What a way to turn 19 (ha ha). No birthday cake for me like the one we had two years ago when we had that special birthday party at the St Louie World's Fair before I lit out for Frisco on the train. I ain't forgot what we did. Sorry I ain't writ you much but I bin thinkin about you, &, pal o mine, I wish you were here, but I'm glad yer not. What I seen in the last week could break a man's heart. This whole city it ain't gone, but sorely wounded. Ma Sloat's boardin house where I live is all gone down South of the Slot an so is all the buildins South of the Slot. It's all us workin men down here an pore families because nice San Franciscans never cross South of the Slot in Market Street. Remember I toll you last letter that the cable car slot ran down the center of Market Street from the Ferry Buildin west toward Twin Peaks like a line between us an the rich folk we work for. It were terrible after the shakin woke us all up yellin in our longjohns runnin out into the streets at 5:12 in the AM. The Chronicle paper says 60,000 us souls live down South of the Slot, & we was all runnin for it, tryin to get away from the fire that started in a Chinee laundry near Ma Sloat's at Third & Brannan. It just spread & spread through all the broken wood & gas mains shootin flames into the air. I don't want to make you sick, dear Benny, but there was lots of men, some of um I knew, trapped in the wreckage & beggin at first to pull um out till they was beggin anybody to shoot um, & they was shot, because they was about to be burned to death. It was a vision of hell. Nothin none of us could do to keep somethin like 3000 souls alive in our disaster. Somethin like 500 looters was shot

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HOW TO LEGALLY QUOTE FROM THIS BOOK

on site includin 2 fellas I knew who was just tryin to get their pants out of the wreckage. Gun fire & flames & smoke & explosions. I left Ma Sloat's with nothin. I don't know where I'm gonna live, despite rumors of Tetrzzini singing at Lotta Crabtree's fountain for us survivors at Geary & Market, as I am now campin next to a tent in Golden Gate Park which you may recall I once told you you'd like since I could see us walkin there, hand in hand through Paradise. So I was wondrin if you wanted to come out here to the ruins (ha ha, but I mean it) because you said you were needin work & there's lots of it. Just so's you know—I been takin my once-a-week salt-water at the Sutro Bath that's as fine as any building at the St Louie Fair. Maybe we could work for room & board for Ma Sloat. She says she's rebuildin over on Folsom Street upstairs over where her brother Hallam has a piece of property for a new saloon because he believes in the future of Frisco even South of the Slot. She says he believes in the future of thirst, & he be namin the little street next his after their father the older Hallam. If you have work there in St Louie then maybe you could send your old secret chum a couple bucks to help out, but, dear Benny, if I have to start over, & I do have prospects, I'd a damn sight rather start over with you by my side here in Frisco cause you never know what's gonna happen next, but this survivor can tell it's gonna happen here, & it would be good for us because our kind has to know how to take care of ourselves if you get what I mean. I can't meet you in St. Louie, Louie, but I can meet you at the Golden Gate. & you might want to see Tetrzzini as much as me (ha ha). Down on Folsom Street I found some French postcards like you never seen. I love this place, but not as much as you know who. Put that in your pipe, dear Benny, & smoke it. Two bucks would be fine. Your face an other assorted parts would be better cause I'd like to show you my South of the Slot.

Your devoted pal,
Jimmy