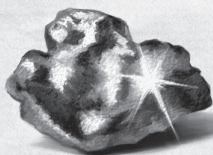


I SURVIVED

THE SAN FRANCISCO
EARTHQUAKE, 1906



by **Lauren Tarshis**
illustrated by **Scott Dawson**

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FOR VALERIE

CHAPTER 1



APRIL 18, 1906

RINCON HILL

5:12 A.M.

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

The sky was still dark when the ground began to shake.

Most people in San Francisco were still sleeping. Just a few were awake. Shopkeepers arranged their stores, getting ready for the day.

Carriage drivers fed their horses. Newsboys ran down the sidewalk to pick up their newspapers to sell.

And eleven-year-old Leo Ross was in a broken-down building, high on Rincon Hill.

When the rumbling started, Leo thought it might be thunder. He had no idea that deep below the city, two gigantic pieces of earth were pushing past each other. Powerful shocks exploded up through the underground layers of dirt and rock. All across the city, streets ripped open. Buildings swayed. Walls crumbled and houses came crashing down. Broken glass, hunks of wood, and piles of bricks tumbled into the streets.

Leo stood in shock as the floor beneath him rose and fell like ocean waves. Hunks of plaster hit him on the head. Windows shattered, spraying glass all around.

He tried to scream, but his throat was coated with dust.

He wanted to run, but he couldn't even stand.
The shaking was too hard.

And then there was a sound like an explosion.
The ceiling above his head burst open.

A brick hit him, *smack*, on the back.

And then another, *thud*, hit him in the shoulder.

Crash!

Dozens of bricks poured down.

Leo fell to the floor and curled into a ball.

The bricks kept coming, raining down.

He couldn't see.

He couldn't breathe.

Soon he would be buried alive.

CHAPTER 2



20 HOURS EARLIER

“President Roosevelt is coming to town!” Leo shouted. “Read all about it!”

Leo was standing on his corner, selling that morning’s newspaper. The sidewalk was crowded with men rushing to work. They barely slowed down as they handed Leo their nickels and grabbed the newspapers from his hands.

It was barely 7:00 in the morning, and Leo

had sold almost all of his papers. He jingled his pockets, which were heavy with coins. He thought about the fresh roll he'd buy for breakfast. And maybe even some cold milk to wash it down with.

He smiled to himself.

Papa would have been proud of him.

Leo patted his right-hand trouser pocket and felt the gold nugget that he always kept with him.



It didn't look like much — kind of like a chewed-up yellow rock. But it was worth a fortune, Leo knew. Probably he could get more money for it than he earned in months of selling papers.

But he'd rather sell his heart than this gold nugget.

Leo's grandfather had found it in a riverbed east of here, during the gold rush.

He'd handed it down to Papa, who had carried it with him everywhere. Grandpop got sick and died before Leo was born. But Papa kept him alive through the stories he'd tell to Leo. Each night, when Papa was putting Leo to bed, he'd take out the gold nugget. Leo would hold it tight in his hand as Papa told tales of Grandpop's adventures—crossing America all alone in a creaky old wagon, almost getting eaten by a giant grizzly in the Rocky Mountains, surviving a forest fire in the Sierras, living in San Francisco when it was just a bunch of rickety houses in the mud.

“You’re just like your grandpop,” Papa always said. “I see it in your eyes. You’ve got his good luck. You’ve got his guts. Something remarkable is going to happen to you. I can feel it, can’t you?”

And the way Papa would look at him, with shining eyes, Leo did feel it.

These past few months since the fever took Papa away, there had been days when sadness would surround Leo, a feeling as cold and gray as the San Francisco fog. He’d feel scared, and very alone. He’d miss Papa so bad, his whole body would hurt.

But then he would think of Grandpop, who made his way from New Hampshire to California all by himself, when he was just sixteen years old. And he’d hear Papa’s voice in his mind, bright and clear, telling him that he was lucky, and brave, and that something remarkable was going to happen to him.

Papa’s voice was loud and clear on this sunny day.

Or it was, until Leo finished selling papers.

He was walking down an alley, cutting through to Market Street.

Somehow he didn't notice the two boys who had crept up behind him.

Next thing Leo knew, he'd been smashed against a brick wall, and blood was gushing out of his nose.