



# **A City Tossed and Broken: The Diary of Minnie Bonner, San Francisco, California, 1906**

*Judy Blundell*

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**A City Tossed and Broken: The Diary of Minnie Bonner, San Francisco, California, 1906** Judy Blundell  
From National Book Award-winning author Judy Blundell, a thrilling account of the San Francisco Earthquake of 1906.

When Minnie Bonner's father disappears after losing the Bonners' Philadelphia tavern, the wealthy gentleman Edward Sump, led by his avaricious wife, offers Minnie a chance to work as a lady's maid to support her family. The Sumps have grand plans, grander than the city of Philadelphia can offer, and decide to move to San Francisco--the greatest city in the west. But when a powerful earthquake strikes, Minnie finds herself the sole survivor among them. After the dust settles, Minnie discovers a bag belonging to the Sumps filled with cash and papers that could drastically change her fortune. With no one else to claim it, Minnie has turned into an heiress overnight.

Wealth comes at a price, however, and she is soon wrapped up in a deception that leads her down a dangerous path. As the aftermath of the earthquake ravages the city, Minnie continues to maintain her new identity. That is, until a mysterious but familiar stranger appears.

## A City Tossed and Broken: The Diary of Minnie Bonner, San Francisco, California, 1906 Details

Date : Published March 2013 by Scholastic

ISBN : 9780545310222

Author : Judy Blundell

Format : Hardcover 304 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Childrens, Middle Grade, Young Adult, Fiction, Adventure, Literature, American, Diary, Juvenile

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# **From Reader Review A City Tossed and Broken: The Diary of Minnie Bonner, San Francisco, California, 1906 for online ebook**

## **Taylor says**

i thought it was an awesome book i had a lot of emotions when i read this

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## **Kelsey Hanson says**

UGH! This is proof that some things were better in the 90s. This is one of the "new" Dear America books and quite frankly I haven't liked any of them. Part of the problem is that they changed the format. Instead of simply telling the story of a the day-to-day life of a young girl in certain time periods, they're trying to take a story with a specific plot and force into a diary style. This really doesn't work for events like the San Francisco fire which only occurs over a few days.. and its during a time when it is very unlikely that someone would find time to write. If this were written simply as a children's novel without the Dear America element I think it would have been much more effective.

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## **Katherine Kapellen says**

I really enjoyed this book. I liked that the details made you feel like you were part of the story.

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## **Drew says**

### **My reaction when I read that "Judy Blundell" was a pseudonym for Jude Watson:**

So. About the book.

Funny story: A few years ago, when I was around twelve, I was absolutely OBSESSED with the Dear America series; I tried to write my own Dear America book, and the historical moment I chose to write about was the San Francisco fire and earthquake.

Alas, I never finished that little story of mine. And, obviously, it wasn't nearly as good as *Judy Blundell's*.

I quite enjoyed this installment in the series. Minnie was an interesting character. I think the thing that most fascinated me, and what set it apart from the other books in the series, was the mystery about Minnie's father added alongside the plot.

I would have liked to read more details about the disaster itself. And I wanted SO much more of Minnie and Jake in the book. (view spoiler)

It was a lot more laid back than some of the Dear America books, probably too much, considering the historical event of the fire and earthquake. I would've liked that part in the book to be a little more intense, thus more realistic.

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### **Darcie Saunier says**

This was a good story for middle readers about the San Francisco earthquake with a little mystery thrown in to boot!

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### **Young Adult Historical Vault says**

Dreadful. Listen, Dear America books don't need dramatic stories of intrigue and double-crossing and thieves and spies. The San Francisco earthquake is plenty dramatic enough on its own! Dragging all of that into this book weakens it severely, and it doesn't lend itself well to a diary-style novel anyhow. Compared to other Dear America and Dear Canada novels that cover tragic events with a much better tone, this one is worth leaving behind.

For my full recap and review including spoilers, check out Young Adult Historical Vault.  
<https://yahistoricalvault.com/2016/11...>

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### **Margo Tanenbaum says**

Dear America is a go-to for historical fiction for young people, and the series keeps expanding with more titles by award-winning authors. One of the newest entries is by Judy Blundell, author of award-winning YA novel *What I Saw and How I Lied*, among others. In this novel, she presents the diary of a 14-year old Philadelphia girl, Minnie Bonner, the daughter of a French tavern owner who has deserted his wife and child. His wife sends her only daughter Minnie into service as a lady's maid for the young daughter of a rich family, the Sumps, who are moving to the great city of San Francisco.

As the reader can guess by the title, they arrive to a luxurious life in San Francisco just days before the earthquake strikes. Without giving away too much of the story, let's just say that in the immediate chaos after the great shock, Minnie finds herself confused for the Sumps' daughter, a great heiress, and confronted by moral dilemmas she never contemplated. As the disaster spreads into a firestorm that threatens to destroy the entire city of San Francisco, Minnie must decide who she is, who she wants to be, and what her destiny will be.

This is a real page turner for middle-grade readers. In the addition to the obvious excitement of the earthquake and its aftermath, Blundell adds a story of con men, political graft, and good and evil, personified by corrupt politicians and courageous firemen, among others. Although there is a female heroine, and this series is predominantly marketed to female readers, this novel, with its great sense of adventure, could easily appeal to boys as well. Highly recommended!

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## **Dorkmissile says**

I loved this book because it had a twist that we don't normally see with this series. It felt like they went outside their normal boundaries for this one.

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## **Literary Strawberry says**

Actual rating: 3.5

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## **Ami says**

This one was...weird. I'm used to the Dear America books from my childhood, which were usually less about adventure and more about history. It seems like most of the books in the relaunch are the opposite. I'm not sure if that's a good or bad thing, but it doesn't seem to fit the formula for me.

The earthquake that sparks most of the latter part of the story seems to be well researched, at least, but the story itself is just strange for a Dear America novel. I'm giving it three stars because if viewed as a diary-form novel and not specifically a Dear America one, it is an entertaining story. As realistic historical fiction, it seems a little far-fetched and not about an accessible, normal girl that the old books were about. Mostly, it's a story of mistaken identity, leading to Minnie's reluctant participation in a con game that is resolved all too quickly in the end.

The setup in the main story for the romance in the epilogue is a little strange, as well, in that it doesn't seem likely that things would progress in that way nine years later, but I suppose it's possible in the way a normal girl being mistaken for heiress and being drawn into a criminal plot is possible.

Basically, it's a decent book, even if it's not what I've come to expect from this series up to this point.

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## **Jenny Clark says**

Honestly, I really liked the older Dear Americas better. I would like to pick up one of the new editions of one of the originals just to compare. With the exception of Cannons At Dawn, these new diaries have been a little too plot driven, where the originals just followed day to day life. Like, this one could have started out the same, but then just dove into the aftermath of the great quake as it affected everyone, as it did mostly, instead of having the whole mistaken identity thing, and con men plot. I would not say it was bad, just different.

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## **Itzae says**

A city tossed and broken by Judy Blundell is a good book. I think it's a good book because it's about a girl who her family was poor. She had to become a maid so she can get money for her family. The book has 304 pages and it's the one of the books of Dear America.

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**Diane says**

A new maid experiences moving from Philadelphia to San Francisco, and being part of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire.

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**Kim G says**

My daughter loves these Dear America books, so just for fun, I decided to read one to see what it was all about. I enjoyed it very much. It reads like a diary or a young teen girl. A historical fictional account of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake which destroyed most of SF.

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**Pam says**

This is the Diary of Minnie Bonner who is living in Philadelphia Pennsylvania after her family losing their tavern in a card game is forced to become a lady's maid for the Stump family. They are going to San Francisco, California to start new life. They go by train and Minnie is kept busy taking care of the needs of Lily Stump and her Mom. They arrive in San Francisco and all the servants have left to work for someone else and Minnie takes care of everything. The next day a earthquake hits San Francisco and it is a very terrible time for Minnie and everyone else as they deal with it.

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