

May 6, 1901

Skagway, White Pass

Dearest Kate,

I hope this letter finds you in good health and spirits. As I sit down to write to you, the sound of the wind whistling through the trees and the distant rumble of the White Pass Railway echoes through the valley. It's hard to believe it's been five years since I left Seattle with a grubstake and a dream. The memories of those early days still linger, but the harsh realities of life in the Yukon have tempered my optimism.

The winter was brutal this year, with temperatures plummeting to -50°F and snowdrifts reaching as high as 10 feet. I lost count of the number of times I had to thaw out my frozen gear, but fortunately, my cabin held up against the worst of it. The other prospectors and I banded together, sharing what little we had to get through the long, dark nights. It's a strange thing, but when you're out here in the wilderness, you form bonds with your fellow men that can't be broken.

This season's been a mixed bag. I've found some decent gold, but nothing that would make me rich – yet. The streams are running low, and the water's getting colder by the day. It's a sign that summer's on its way, and with it, the influx of new prospectors. I've seen some of the old-timers around here, the ones who've been here since the beginning. They're a hardy bunch, but even they're starting to show the strain. Some have given up and headed back to the Outside, but I'm not one to give up easily.

Speaking of which, I've heard rumors of a new strike up at the Bonanza Creek. I'm thinking of heading up there as soon as the weather permits. It's a long shot, but you never know when fortune might smile upon you. I've been saving up my resources, and I've got enough to last me for a while if things don't pan out.

The saloon's been doing well, with the usual mix of prospectors, traders, and adventurers coming through. We've had our share of excitement, what with the occasional fistfight and the constant flow of whiskey. I've taken to playing cards with some of the locals, trying to win back some of the losses I've incurred. It's a slippery slope, but it's a way to pass the time.

I've been thinking a lot about our future, Kate. If I can just strike it rich, I promise to send for you and the kids, and we can start a new life together. I know it's a long shot, but I've got to hold onto hope. Until then, I'll keep writing, keep searching, and keep dreaming.

Yours truly,

Jack

P.S. I've included a small sketch of the White Pass valley. I hope you like it. I've also included a photo of myself, taken by one of the photographers who came through. I look a bit rough, but that's just the way it is out here.

[Sketch of White Pass valley]

[Photograph of Jack]

[Personal Addendum]

Dear Kate,

I almost forgot to mention that I received a letter from my brother, Tom. He's doing well in Seattle, and he's promised to send some more grubstake money if I need it. I've also heard rumors of a new shipment of supplies coming in on the next steamer. I'll make sure to get some of the essentials, including your favorite tea and some decent coffee.

Take care, and write back as soon as you can. I miss you and the kids dearly.

Your loving husband,

Jack