***Walk Two Moons***

***Chapter 41***

***Summary and Analysis:***

***Brief Summary***

In Chapter 41, they arrive in Coeur d’Alene and Gramps drives directly to the hospital where Gramps and Sal learn that Gram has had a stroke. Sal wonders if the snake bite had anything to do with Gram’s illness. She believes that it’s possible her grandmother wouldn’t have had a stroke if they hadn’t stopped by the river. She also thinks that her baby sister might not have died if Sal hadn’t fallen from the tree, forcing her mother to carry her back to the house. It’s after midnight before Sal is allowed in to see Gram.

***Brief analysis (Chapter 41-42):***

In these chapters, Sal finally achieves the closure that she has been seeking for her entire journey from Ohio to Idaho. While waiting at the hospital, she experiences a revelation about the nature of guilt and responsibility. She isn't responsible for her mother's stillbirth, nor her mother's subsequent trip and death—just as [Gramps](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Walk-Two-Moons/character-analysis/#Gramps) isn't responsible for [Gram](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Walk-Two-Moons/character-analysis/#Gram) being sick, and Moody Blue wasn't doing anything unnatural by rejecting her puppies. Sal is connected to these events, but not responsible for them, because life is unpredictably complex. It is impossible to anticipate the effects of one's actions, but this doesn't mean that life should be avoided, living in fear, inside a house with the doors and windows locked—like Phoebe and [Mrs. Winterbottom](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Walk-Two-Moons/character-analysis/#Mrs._Winterbottom) tried to do. Life is meant for living—and living includes both joy and tragedy.

Visiting her mother's grave brings Sal the closure she needed. Until she saw the grave, some part of her could not accept that her mother had really died. The grave symbolizes the finality of death. Sugar may not be returning, but she continues to live in Sal's heart, as well as in nature, "singing in the trees." Sal's kissing the singing tree in the graveyard symbolizes this new understanding: death is a change in form that involves a return to nature. Her mother is now inseparable from the natural world that she loved so much when she was alive. This thought brings Sal peace.

***Summary in detail:***

At the hospital in Coeur d'Alene, [Gramps](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Walk-Two-Moons/character-analysis/#Gramps) and Sal learn that [Gram](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Walk-Two-Moons/character-analysis/#Gram), who is unconscious, has had a stroke. Sal considers whether Gram's stroke is Gramp's fault since he took her to the river where she was bitten, but she decides "a person couldn't stay all locked up in the house like Phoebe and her mother."

Sal recalls the beagle her family used to have, Moody Blue. Sal was upset to see that Moody Blue started ignoring her puppies when they were six weeks old. Her mother explained, "It's normal....They have to become independent." Sal thinks perhaps her "mother's trip to Idaho was like Moody Blue's behavior."

Gramps gives Sal the car keys and some money so she can go to Lewiston while he waits by his wife's side. Sal drives four hours in the dark along a dangerous, curving mountain road. When she gets out of the car at an overlook in Lewiston, a man smoking a cigarette points out the wreckage of the bus below and tells Sal something she already knows: the wreck had one survivor. Gram falls unconscious, and Sal and Gramps rush her to the hospital in Coeur D'Alene, where the doctors tell them that Gram has had a stroke. Despite the protests of the doctors, Gramps refuses to leave her side for even a second. Sal, reflecting on grandfather's emotions, wonders if he suspects the snakebite caused the stroke and blames himself for taking her to the river. Sal realizes then that just as Gramps should not blame himself for Gram's illness, so she cannot blame herself for her mother's miscarriage. She then recalls the process through which their dog weaned her puppies: though the beagle was protective and caring when the puppies were first born, after a few months, she roughly pushed them away. Sal's mother had explained to Sal that the mother dog wanted her puppies to be able to take care of themselves in case something happened to her, and Sal realizes that in a way, her mother's trip to Lewiston was her way of trying to make Sal more able to take care of herself. Later that night, Gramps tells Sal that he must stay with Gram, but hands her the car keys and all his money, tacitly giving her permission to drive to Lewiston herself.

Sal spends four hair-raising hours driving down to Lewiston. When she reaches the tall hill just outside the city, she creeps down the hairpin curves, finally stopping at an overlook. Another man stops and, pointing out the broken trees and a faintly glinting hunk of metal, begins to tell her about the terrible bus crash that took place a year ago in exactly that spot. He goes on to tell her that only one person survived the crash, but Sal already knows all this.

***Analysis in Detail (Chapter 31- 44):***

The end of Chapter 41 is another instance of foreshadowing. The man tells Sal that only one person survived the bus wreck, but Sal already knew that. She doesn’t say the name of the survivor, and the reader may jump to the conclusion that it’s Sugar. Sal has learned, by this point, that it was Margaret and that her surviving the wreck is why her father feels a connection to Margaret.

Sal says that it’s not until she sees her mother’s grave marker that she truly believes Sugar is dead and isn’t ever going to return home. Sal has needed this closure from the time of her mother’s death, It’s interesting that her grandparents were the ones to see that need and set out to fill it.

Sal, truly in tune with nature, is pleased with the setting of her mother’s grave. She asks for a few minutes to sit near her mother’s tombstone where she sets out to memorize the sights and sounds. This is important to Sal because she’ll hold to those memories for years to come as she continues to deal with the loss of her mother.

As Sal is thinking back on the trip with her grandparents from the security of her home in Bybanks where she and Gramps have begun to recover from Gram’s death, she reveals some key points. She says that her father had determined that there was no need to return Sugar’s

body to Bybanks. He said he is reminded of her in every inch of their farm in Kentucky, meaning it didn’t matter where her grave was. Sal says John had been caught up in his own grief in the days after her mther’s death and he’d refused to take her to Idaho because he’d anted to keep her from the harsh reality of her mother’s funeral. He didn’t realize that Sal would be unable to find closure in the situation until she’d seen her mother’s gravesite. Sal notes that her grandfather’s situation after Gram’s death was somewhat different. Gramps needed to have Gram’s grave nearby so that he could visit it regularly.

In the final few chapters of the book, Sal undergoes the most extreme and literal version of separation she experiences in the book: she drives by herself through the night to the site of her mother's death. Her father and her friends are thousands of miles away. Her grandparents, who have been her constant companions and support during her separation from her home, now wait, immobilized, in the hospital. This separation is emotionally and physically dangerous, as she is retracing the perilous trek down the side of the mountain that resulted in her mother's death. Sal must negotiate the treacherous turns while simultaneously negotiating the knowledge that her mother's last moments alive were spent on that very road. Sal endures this trial bravely and successfully. She inspects the site and finds a capable adult, the sheriff, who drives her to see her mother's grave in Lewiston. Sal's experience of separation extends even beyond her solo pilgrimage to the site of her mother's death and her final resting place. When she returns to Lewiston, her grandmother is dead. Sal bears up under this trauma as well, bravely supporting Gramps in his grief.

However, in a way, Sal has already undergone her trial long before she reaches Lewiston. Her quest was to sift through the details of her mother's death, to verify it, and to reconcile herself with it. Sal, who knows more about the accident than the sheriff, despite the fact that he was present at the scene of the crash a year ago, has already faced the reality of her mother's death when she confronts Margaret Cadaver. Her decision to speak with Margaret that day in Euclid signifies her willingness to confront the possibility that her father may be falling in love with someone else, that her mother's death is permanent, and that the world is moving on without her. Sal's quest is not so much to change the world, but to accept it as it is, and she moves close to obtaining this acceptance with her decision to hear Margaret's story.

After a romantic hero's separation and trial, he or she is united with earlier companions in a new, more adult role. Appropriately, Sal, having undergone her trial and gained the reward of a wiser and more adult perspective, returns to Bybanks, where she is reunited with her home, Gramps, her father, and the spirit of her mother. The final pages of her narration demonstrate her more adult attitude: she accepts the losses she has suffered, and she actively seeks to understand and sympathize with the people around her. Though she may have not gained exactly what she set out to achieve, she has gained the ability to accept and make the best of that which life offers her.

As the book draws to a close, Sal mentions both Prometheus and Pandora in passing, but closes with one final myth: that of Estsanatlehi. Estsanatlehi, the mother goddess who grows old and dies only to be reincarnated as an infant in an endless cycle, represents not only the eternal cycle of the seasons, but the hope that humans, too, or some unidentifiable aspect of them, live on beyond death. Indeed, as Sal moves around the farm, she senses her mother's presence continually. This hope, that Sal's mother has left her with irreplaceable memories and gifts through which she lives on, is the hope at the bottom of the Pandora's box opened by the tragic chain of events leading to her death.