***Walk Two Moons***

***Chapter 42***

***Summary and Analysis:***

***Brief Summary***

In Chapter 42, Sal climbs under the railing at the side of the road and down the side of the mountain toward the wreckage of the bus. Sal says she’d really wanted to look through the bus to search for anything that might be familiar. She finds that she can barely move around inside. It’s nearly daylight when she climbs the hill and finds the sheriff is parked behind her car. He questions her. Sal tells her story, including that her grandparents are a hundred miles away. The sheriff continues asking questions, and Sal tells him why it was so important for her to find the site of the bus wreck on this day, her mother’s birthday. The Sheriff drives Gramp's car to take Sal to the cemetery where they find Sugar’s grave.

***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:***

As dawn is gathering, Sal climbs down the hillside toward the overturned bus. She looks into its mangled and moldy interior and sadly realizes that there is nothing she can do here. When she climbs back up to the car, a sheriff greets her. At first he is angry with her for climbing around the bus and driving at the age of thirteen, but when Sal tells him her story, he drives her to her mother's grave, which is on a hill overlooking the river. Sal sits down to drink in all the details of this spot and, to her joy, finds a nearby "singing tree," a tree with a songbird living in its highest branches. Only then she leaves, knowing that, in a way, her mother is alive in this place.

***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.