***Walk Two Moons***

***Chapter 43***

***Summary and Analysis:***

***Brief Summary***

In Chapter 43, the sheriff drives Sal back to Coeur d’Alene, and the deputy drives Gramps’ car. The sheriff lectures Sal about driving without a license. On the way, Sal asks the sheriff if he remembers seeing her mother. He says he doesn’t, but he does remember seeing Sal’s father when he came to the police station. Sal then asks if the sheriff remembers Mrs. Cadaver. He says everyone remembers Margaret. Nine hours after the bus rolled down the mountainside, when bodies were being carried from the wreckage, Margaret had raised her hand through a window. Sal reveals to the sheriff that she’d talked to Margaret the day after Mrs. Winterbottom returned home. Margaret says John had visited her in the hospital, the only survivor of the crash, and once he knew that Margaret had been sitting beside Sugar, they’d talked for hours. This prompted their friendship and was the reason John had chosen to move nearer Margaret. Margaret explains that John had merely needed to get away from the memories of Sugar that were haunting him at their Kentucky home. Margaret also says that John didn’t tell Sal how he met Margaret for fear that Sal would hate Margaret for surviving the crash that took Sugar’s life.

Sal sleeps the last few miles to the hospital and when they arrive she discovers that Gramps has left a note saying that “our gooseberry died at three o’clock this morning.” He instructs her to join him at a nearby motel. Gram’s body is being flown home but Gramps and Sal will drive.

***Brief analysis (Chapter 43-44):***

In these last two chapters, everything comes full circle for Sal. She is back on her beloved farm in Bybanks, Kentucky, a place teeming with life that is full of her mother's presence. Sal has returned home, but with greater wisdom than she had when she left. Her time in Euclid, Ohio, and her trip with her grandparents have taught her many things. She has learned how to be empathetic—as evidenced by her playing "the moccasin game"—and she has learned to accept the hard parts of life along with the good parts, which requires bravery. Sal has made peace with the past, is enjoying the present, and is happily anticipating the future. Her connection to nature is as strong as ever: "the sugar maple tree is [her] thinking place." The past is all around her, just as her mother's hair and postcards are buried underneath her floorboards, but the past does not pain Sal. Her painful journey away from home gave Sal the strength to live life with greater joy and less fear.

***Summary in detail:***

The sheriff drives Sal back to Lewiston, lecturing her about the dangers of driving without proper training. Sal questions him about the accident, explaining what she learned the day she decided to talk to Mrs. Cadaver. Mrs. Cadaver had been the lone survivor of the terrible crash, and had sat next to Sal's mother during the entire trip, listening to her stories about Bybanks and her daughter. After the accident, Sal's father, who came to Lewiston to bury his wife, met Mrs. Cadaver and discussed his wife's last days with her. During the conversation with Margaret, Sal had asked her if she planned to marry her father, and Margaret, surprised, explained that her father was still too much in love with her mother to marry anyone else.

When they arrive in Coeur D'Alene, Sal discovers that Gram has died. She finds Gramps, who has already arranged for Gram to be sent back to Kentucky, in a nearby motel. The two move mournfully through the room the rest of the day, and that night, Sal helps Gramps recite his nightly, now slightly altered, mantra: "This ain't my marriage bed, but it will have to do."

***Analysis in Detail (Chapter 41- 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.