

SHARON CREECH
**WALK TWO
MOONS**

WINNER OF THE NEWBERY MEDAL





1

A FACE AT THE WINDOW

GRAMPS SAYS THAT I AM A COUNTRY GIRL AT HEART, and that is true. I have lived most of my thirteen years in Bybanks, Kentucky, which is not much more than a caboodle of houses roosting in a green spot alongside the Ohio River. Just over a year ago, my father plucked me up like a weed and took me and all our belongings (no, that is not true—he did not bring the chestnut tree, the willow, the maple, the hayloft, or the swimming hole, which all belonged to me) and we drove three hundred miles straight north and stopped in front of a house in Euclid, Ohio.

“No trees?” I said. “This is where we’re going to live?”

“No,” my father said. “This is Margaret’s house.”

The front door of the house opened and a lady with wild red hair stood there. I looked up and

down the street. The houses were all jammed together like a row of birdhouses. In front of each house was a tiny square of grass, and in front of that was a thin gray sidewalk running alongside a gray road.

"Where's the barn?" I asked. "The river? The swimming hole?"

"Oh, Sal," my father said. "Come on. There's Margaret." He waved to the lady at the door.

"We have to go back. I forgot something."

The lady with the wild red hair opened the door and came out onto the porch.

"In the back of my closet," I said, "under the floorboards. I put something there, and I've got to have it."

"Don't be a goose. Come and see Margaret."

I did not want to see Margaret. I stood there, looking around, and that's when I saw the face pressed up against an upstairs window next door. It was a round girl's face, and it looked afraid. I didn't know it then, but that face belonged to Phoebe Winterbottom, a girl who had a powerful imagination, who would become my friend, and who would have many peculiar things happen to her.

Not long ago, when I was locked in a car with my grandparents for six days, I told them the story

of Phoebe, and when I finished telling them—or maybe even as I was telling them—I realized that the story of Phoebe was like the plaster wall in our old house in Bybanks, Kentucky.

My father started chipping away at a plaster wall in the living room of our house in Bybanks shortly after my mother left us one April morning. Our house was an old farmhouse that my parents had been restoring, room by room. Each night as he waited to hear from my mother, he chipped away at that wall.

On the night that we got the bad news—that she was not returning—he pounded and pounded on that wall with a chisel and a hammer. At two o'clock in the morning, he came up to my room. I was not asleep. He led me downstairs and showed me what he had found. Hidden behind the wall was a brick fireplace.

The reason that Phoebe's story reminds me of that plaster wall and the hidden fireplace is that beneath Phoebe's story was another one. Mine.

"How about a story? Spin us a yarn."

Instantly, Phoebe Winterbottom came to mind. "I could tell you an extensively strange story," I warned.

"Oh, good!" Gram said. "Delicious!"

And that is how I happened to tell them about Phoebe, her disappearing mother, and the lunatic.

As Sal entertains her grandparents with Phoebe's outrageous story, her own story begins to unfold—the story of a thirteen-year-old girl whose only wish is to be reunited with her missing mother.

In her own award-winning style, Sharon Creech intricately weaves together two tales, one funny, one bittersweet, to create a heartwarming, compelling, and utterly moving story of love, loss, and the complexity of human emotion.

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