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*Dramatic Publishing*



Based on Sharon Creech's  
Newbery Medal-winning novel

# Walk Two Moons

By Tom Arvetis

**“Don’t judge a man until you’ve walked  
two moons in his moccasins.”**

# Walk Two Moons

**By Tom Arvetis. Based on Sharon Creech’s Newbery Medal-winning novel. Cast: 4 to 8m., 5 to 8w., 5 either gender. Walk Two Moons** is lovingly adapted for the stage with the same nuance and surprises offered by the original book. Utilizing multiple narrative frames, the play leaps back and forth through time and memory as 13-year-old Sal tells the story of the disappearance of her best friend Phoebe’s mother. Determined to find her, the two girls begin seeing murderous plots and schemes around every corner. Sal shares these conspiracy theories with her Gram and Gramps during a cross-country road trip to confront her own mother, who left her and her father a year ago. But it is only through telling Phoebe’s story that Sal truly understands why her mother left and whether or not they’ll ever be together again. *Unit set. Approximate running time: 90 minutes. Code: WG3.*

*Cover design: Jeanette Alig-Sergel.*

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By

TOM ARVETIS

Based on the book by

SHARON CREECH



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TOM ARVETIS

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SHARON CREECH

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(WALK TWO MOONS)

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“*Walk Two Moons* premiered at Adventure Stage Chicago  
on November 5, 2011, directed by Matthew Reeder.”

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The original script version of *Walk Two Moons* premiered at Adventure Stage Chicago (Tom Arvetis, producing artistic director and Scott Letscher, managing director) on November 5, 2011, and ran until December 8, 2011.

The production was directed by Matthew Reeder, with scenic design by Simon Lashford, lighting design by Mike Durst, costume design by Laura Kollar, sound design and composition by Andrew Wheatley and prop design by Lacy Campbell. The production’s stage manager was Ellen Willett. The original production utilized nine actors.

*Cast:*

Sal .....	Tanya McBride
Phoebe.....	Baize Buzan
Sugar/Mrs. Winterbottom .....	Casey Cunningham
Margaret/Mary Lou/Nurse .....	Dani Bryant
Gram/Mrs. Partridge/Police Officer.....	Millicent Hurley
Gramps/Sgt. Bickle .....	Sandy Elias
Mr. Winterbottom/Doctor/Sheriff .....	Michael Peters
Ben/Lunatic/River Bank Boy/Brother .....	Kyle Johnson
Mr. Birkway/John .....	Joe Zarrow

# Walk Two Moons

## CHARACTERS

SAL (SALAMANCA)	13 years old
JOHN	Sal's dad
SUGAR	Sal's mom
GRAM	John's mother
GRAMPS	John's father
MARGARET	John's friend
MRS. PARTRIDGE	Margaret's mother
PHOEBE	13 years old
MRS. WINTERBOTTOM	Phoebe's mom
MR. WINTERBOTTOM	Phoebe's dad
MR. BIRKWAY	Sal and Phoebe's teacher
MARY LOU	Sal and Phoebe's classmate
BEN	Mary Lou's cousin, also Sal and Phoebe's classmate
MIKE (The LUNATIC)	a mysterious figure
BOY	16 years old, a bully
DOCTOR	
BICKLE	Sergeant with the Euclid Police
POLICE OFFICER	
NURSE	
BROTHER	early 30s, a stranger
SHERIFF	



## CHARACTER NOTES

*(Suggested doubling for nine actors. If doubling, the characters of SUGAR and MRS. WINTERBOTTOM should always be doubled.)*

SAL

PHOEBE

SUGAR / MRS. WINTERBOTTOM

JOHN / MR. BIRKWAY

MARGARET / NURSE / MARY LOU

GRAM / MRS. PARTRIDGE / POLICE OFFICER

GRAMPS / BICKLE

MR. WINTERBOTTOM / DOCTOR / SHERIFF

BEN / LUNATIC / BOY / BROTHER

## PRODUCTION NOTES

The action of the play takes place within four narrative frames: the present (the road trip between Euclid, Ohio, and Lewiston, Idaho), the past (the story of Phoebe), Sal's memories of Bybanks and, lastly, her most private thoughts. This final frame is indicated in the script as direct address to the audience; no one else in the play is privy to these thoughts.

The action is continuous and should move seamlessly, nearly overlapping as we jump back and forth across these narrative frames through time and memory. Sometimes they flow naturally from one frame to the next, like daydreams that coax us from our present reality. Other times, they interrupt one another like competing trains of thought. This approach lends itself to the barest of scenic elements in order to maintain pacing and rhythm as well as invite the audience's imagination. The only essential scenic element is the tree, which should be prominently located in the scenic design.

The voices in the breeze are included to enrich the sound design. They can be interpreted literally or metaphorically depending on the director's vision.

In the original production, the figure of the Lunatic was seen only as a silhouette in all but the final scene. He was a felt presence but never a literal one. This helped reinforce the mystery surrounding this figure as well as our sense of Phoebe's fear and oversized imagination. It made the Lunatic seem larger than life.

## Walk Two Moons

*AT RISE: At C is a large, majestic tree with branches low enough to climb. The rest of the stage is bare and transforms into whatever space the scene calls for. Props should be minimal and suggestive. Action should move seamlessly, nearly overlapping, as we jump back and forth through time and memory.*

*We begin in darkness. Only the sound of wind through the trees. This breeze could be mistaken for whispering voices ...*

*Hurry. Hurry. Hurry ...*

*Rush. Rush. Rush ...*

*The breeze ebbs and flows. It is calling to someone.*

*Lights come up on SALAMANCA—a 13-year-old girl with waist-length black hair and dark eyes—sitting above the stage in one of the tree's branches. She holds a letter in her hand.*

SAL. One. Two. Three. Four.

*(The breeze continues to whisper ...*

*Rush. Rush. Rush ...*

*Hurry. Hurry. Hurry ...*

*SAL continues counting, her rhythm measured by the frequency of trees on the side of the road being passed by a car.)*

SAL (*cont'd*). Five. Six. Seven ...

*(Lights up on GRAM and GRAMPS in a separate space, riding in the front seat of a car.)*

GRAMPS. Sal?

SAL. Eight. Nine ...

GRAMPS. Sal.

*(The breeze subsides.)*

GRAM *(confidentially)*. I think she's counting trees.

SAL *(still in the tree, as if praying)*. Please don't let us get in an accident.

GRAMPS *(to SAL)*. I sure could use another pair of eyeballs on this map here.

SAL. Please let us get there by Momma's birthday.

GRAM *(playing along)*. Oh, I can't read these things worth a hill of beans. What do you think, chickabiddy?

*(SAL regards her grandparents and then addresses the audience directly.)*

SAL *(to audience)*. My grandparents' plan is to drive 2,000 miles west, all the way from Euclid, Ohio, to Lewiston, Idaho, in seven days. That's where my momma's waiting for me.

GRAM *(to GRAMPS)*. Two thousand miles. That's a heck of a haul. Are you sure we can make it in seven days?

GRAMPS. Don't make the girl nervous. We've got plenty of time. Heck, I expect we'll even take in a few sights along the way.

*(SAL descends the tree and continues speaking to the audience.)*

SAL *(to audience)*. While we drive, I pray to the trees. I pray the same thing over and over. "Please don't let us get in an accident. Please let us get there by Momma's birthday."

*(The breeze returns.)*

*Hurry. Hurry. Hurry ...*

*Rush. Rush. Rush ... )*

SAL (*cont'd, to audience*). I pray to the trees because it's easier than praying directly to God. There's nearly always a tree nearby.

*(Awkward pause. The breeze subsides.)*

GRAM. Why don't you tell her how we're going?

GRAMPS. Well, first, we'll follow the turnpike which gets us through Ohio, Indiana and Illinois. (*Pronounces it "Ill-uh-no-ways."*)

SAL (*to audience*). Momma left us a little over a year ago.

GRAMPS. Then we'll get up into Wisconsin, barrel straight across to Minnesota, through South Dakota and Wyoming—

SAL (*to audience*). Didn't even say goodbye.

GRAMPS. Sweep up into Montana, crossing the Rocky Mountains into Idaho!

SAL (*to audience*). Just left me a letter.

*(SUGAR appears—dreamlike—in yet another space. She is carrying a small suitcase.)*

SUGAR. Dear Sal,

It'd sound too permanent if I had to say this out loud, so I'm writing it down instead. I'm going away for a little while. Not forever. Just long enough to sort some things out. I need you to stay here and be brave. Your daddy needs you more than ever. I'll think of you every minute and I'll write you the entire time I'm away. I'll be back before the tulips bloom. I promise.

Love, Momma.

*(The memory of SUGAR fades.)*

SAL (*to audience*). The tulips bloomed but she never came back. She's still in Lewiston. And now I'm stuck in a car with my grandparents traveling halfway across the country to go see her on her birthday.

GRAMPS. Didn't I tell you? We'll see the whole ding-dong country!

SAL (*to audience*). I'm secretly holding out hope I can bring her back home. If there's any chance of that happening at all, it'll be on her birthday. But I can't tell that to Gram and Gramps. If I say it aloud to either of them, they'll say I might as well try to catch a fish in the air.

*(SAL joins GRAM and GRAMPS by taking the back seat in the car.)*

GRAM. Salamanca Tree Hiddle. You haven't said more than two words since we hit the road. It's going to be an awfully long trip with you giving us the silent treatment.

SAL. Sorry, Gram.

GRAMPS. We got a long ride ahead of us, chickabiddy. Why don't you entertain us?

SAL. What sort of thing did you have in mind?

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

GRAM. Something about your momma, perhaps?

SAL (*putting the letter away*). Oh, I don't think so.

GRAMPS. Well then, what about your friends? You got any tales to tell about them?

*(PHOEBE—also a girl of 13, with huge eyes and curly yellow hair—enters a parallel exterior space under the cover of moonlight.)*

PHOEBE. Psst. Psst. Sal!

SAL. I guess there is one person I can tell you about.

GRAMPS. Oh, I knew she was holding out on us.

PHOEBE. Sal, come quick.

SAL. But I must warn you. It's an extensively strange story about a girl with the wildest imagination.

GRAM. That sounds delicious!

SAL. Her name is Phoebe Winterbottom.

PHOEBE. Here it is.

SAL. She was the first friend I made when Daddy and I moved from Bybanks to Euclid after Momma left.

*(SAL exits the car and enters the space with PHOEBE.)*

PHOEBE. This is where he's buried. I'm sure of it.

SAL. Phoebe, I don't think we should be back here. Aren't we trespassing?

PHOEBE. Don't worry. I told you, she's gone to work. She won't be back for hours.

SAL. I don't have a good feeling about this.

PHOEBE. Of course you don't. You're standing on an unmarked grave in my neighbor's yard in the middle of the night. It's creepy. Poor guy. What a way to go.

SAL. What do you mean? How did he go?

PHOEBE. A hatchet to the head, maybe. Or maybe rat poison in his breakfast. I'm not exactly sure. But it doesn't matter. The point is he was murdered. Maybe she hired an assassin who hid in their garage until they were asleep and then—

*(Shift. The car.)*

GRAMPS. Hold the phone. You said this would be a strange story. But you didn't say anything about gruesome.

GRAM. Oh, I thought it was just getting good. Very suspenseful.

GRAMPS. I'm just warning her. You know I get queasy at the sight of blood.

GRAM. Don't be such a sissy. It's only a story. Evidently, chickabiddy, you inherited your nerve from your mother's side of the family.

SAL *(to audience)*. I'm not sure what Gram means by nerve. There were lots of things I wanted to believe I'd inherited

from Momma, but nerve wasn't one of them. It took some nerve to leave her husband and daughter. It took some nerve to find a spot 2,000 miles away. It took some nerve not to come back.

GRAM. Would it help if I held your hand so you don't get scared?

GRAMPS (*smiling*). Why, yes. I think it would.

SAL (*to GRAM and GRAMPS*). Maybe I should start back at the beginning. Back before things got so mysterious.

GRAM. All right, chickabiddy, keep telling. We're all ears.

SAL. I had to start a new school when Daddy and I moved to Ohio. And as a farm girl from Kentucky, I stuck out like a pickle in a pea patch.

*(Shift. Interior. The classroom. As SAL transitions from the car into the classroom, she finds a spider in need of assistance. She cradles it in her bare hands and escorts it to the "window" where she sets it free.)*

MARY LOU. Alpha and omega! Did you see that?!

SAL (*to GRAM and GRAMPS*). I didn't try to be different but it didn't seem to matter.

BEN. That was unbelievable. Did you really do that?

SAL (*to GRAM and GRAMPS*). Phoebe had a particular idea about me right from the start. And, to tell you the truth, I was so surprised you could have knocked me over with a chicken feather.

PHOEBE. Sal, you are so brave.

SAL. Me? I'm definitely not brave.

PHOEBE. You are. You are brave.

*(MR. BIRKWAY enters.)*

MR. BIRKWAY. All right, scholars. Please settle down.



PHOEBE. That took real courage. I never could have done what you did.

MR. BIRKWAY. Let us thank our newest student, Miss ...

SAL. Salamanca Hiddle.

MARY LOU. Sala-what?

SAL. Salamanca. You can call me Sal.

MR. BIRKWAY. Well, thank you, Sal, for eradicating our classroom of that ferocious arachnid.

SAL. It was no big deal. Really.

BEN. But you picked it up like you were cradling a baby kitten or something. Who does that?

MARY LOU. Not me!

PHOEBE. Didn't I tell you? Brave.

SAL (*to audience*). There are plenty of things to be scared of in this world. I'm terrified of car accidents, death, cancer, brain tumors, nuclear war and pregnant women. But being a country girl, I'm not afraid of snakes, wasps or spiders.

MR. BIRKWAY. Thank you, Sal, for showing some restraint and escorting our eight-legged friend to the open window. Now, scholars, before we part ways for the afternoon, I'd like you to locate your summer journals so I may collect them and read them.

PHOEBE. Read them?! But I thought you said they were private. If I'd-a known you were going to collect them, I would have changed all the names to protect the innocent.

BEN. Innocent?!

MR. BIRKWAY. Fear not, Miss Winterbottom. I've no doubt your pages are filled with brilliant ideas and observations.

MARY LOU (*reluctantly handing over a stack of journals*). I don't even remember what I wrote.

MR. BIRKWAY. I'm sure you're just being modest, Miss Finney.

*(The sound of the school bell.)*

BEN. See you tomorrow, Sal.

*(BEN hands over his journal to MR. BIRKWAY and exits.)*

MR. BIRKWAY. Thank you, Ben. As for you, Miss Hiddle—

SAL. I'm new.

MR. BIRKWAY. Ah, new! How blessed. There's nothing in this whole wide world that is better than a new person!

SAL. So I didn't know about the journals—

MR. BIRKWAY. Not to worry! Not to worry! What shall we do? A-ha!

*(MR. BIRKWAY hands SAL a blank journal.)*

MR. BIRKWAY *(cont'd)*. You'll record a mini journal!

SAL. A what?

MR. BIRKWAY. Come now, Sal. You strike me as a bright young lady. Just fill this up with whatever interests you. A place, a room, a person—don't worry about it too much. And I'll collect it in two weeks. Good? Fantastic! I will see you both tomorrow.

*(MR. BIRKWAY exits.)*

PHOEBE. I wish he wasn't going to read my journal. It's not for the faint of heart.

SAL. What do you mean?

PHOEBE. Can you keep a secret?

SAL. Sure.

PHOEBE. I live next door to a murderer.

*(Shift. The car.)*

SAL *(to GRAM and GRAMPS)*. Murderers are definitely on the list of things I'm afraid of.

GRAMPS. Of course they are. They're murderers!

GRAM. Will you calm down, please. She's trying to tell us a story.

GRAMPS. But murderers?! I'm not sure I approve of where this whole enterprise is going.

GRAM. What's to approve? She lived to tell us about it, didn't she? Keep going, Salamanca. You're on a roll. Don't let this old geezer distract you. You're telling a mighty fine story and I, for one, am riveted. Feels almost like I was there.

GRAMPS. You always were one for a good story.

SAL. Well, funny thing is, before I met Phoebe I never suspected anyone of murder. But, when Phoebe Winterbottom is your best friend, the possibility was always right in front of you and as real as your next door neighbor.

*(Shift. Exterior. MARGARET's house. Lights up on MRS. PARTRIDGE sitting in a rocking chair. A thick, gnarled cane with a handle carved in the shape of a cobra's head lay across her knees. MARGARET can be seen gardening or hanging laundry further upstage. SAL and PHOEBE walk past on their way to PHOEBE's house next door.)*

MRS. PARTRIDGE. Sal? Sal? Is that you?

PHOEBE *(whispering emphatically)*. Keep walking!

MRS. PARTRIDGE. Where you scurrying off to in such a hurry?

PHOEBE *(still whispering, tugging at SAL)*. Don't stop!

SAL. It's only Mrs. Partridge. Come on.

MRS. PARTRIDGE. Who's that with you?

SAL. This is Phoebe Winterbottom. Your next door neighbor.

MRS. PARTRIDGE. I thought I recognized her footsteps. Margaret?

MARGARET *(from a distance)*. Yes, Mother?

MRS. PARTRIDGE. Come here and meet our next door neighbor.

MARGARET. One minute. I'll be right there.

PHOEBE *(urgently)*. Sal, I really think we ought to be going.

MRS. PARTRIDGE. What's your hurry? You only just got here. I've got cookies coming out of the oven any minute—

PHOEBE. No thank you. Sal?!

MARGARET (*approaching*). Oh, hi, Sal. I didn't know you'd be stopping by.

PHOEBE (*suddenly pulling SAL away from the conversation*).

OK, well, great seeing you all. Gotta be going now. Right, Sal?!

SAL. Uh. We have a lot of homework to get done over at Phoebe's house, so—

MRS. PARTRIDGE. Well, maybe next time.

MARGARET. See you later this evening, Sal?

PHOEBE. Bye-bye!

*(Lights dim on MRS. PARTRIDGE and MARGARET, who returns to her yard work, as the girls cross to in front of PHOEBE's house. They watch MARGARET from a safe distance.)*

PHOEBE (*cont'd*). Phew! That was close.

SAL. It was?

PHOEBE. Oh, don't pretend to act like she doesn't scare you half to death.

SAL. Who? Mrs. Partridge? She's just a sweet old lady.

PHOEBE. No. Not her. The other one.

SAL. Oh. Margaret.

*(As the scene continues, MRS. PARTRIDGE exits and MARGARET's yard work becomes more physical and aggressive. She should be lit to emphasize PHOEBE's imaginative description.)*

PHOEBE. Yes. Margaret. You don't find her the least bit strange? That wild red hair sticking out all over the place? And that last name ...

SAL. Cadaver?