



Girls in the Moon

Janet McNally

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An exquisitely told, authentic YA debut about family secrets, the shadow of fame, and finding your own way.

Everyone in Phoebe Ferris's life tells a different version of the truth. Her mother, Meg, ex-rock star and professional question evader, shares only the end of the story—the post-fame calm that Phoebe's always known. Her sister, Luna, indie-rock darling of Brooklyn, preaches a stormy truth of her own making, selectively ignoring the facts she doesn't like. And her father, Kieran, the cofounder of Meg's beloved band, hasn't said anything at all since he stopped calling three years ago.

But Phoebe, a budding poet in search of an identity to call her own, is tired of half-truths and vague explanations. When she visits Luna in New York, she's determined to find out how she fits in to this family of storytellers, and to maybe even continue her own tale—the one with the musician boy she's been secretly writing for months. Told in alternating chapters, Phoebe's first adventure flows as the story of Meg and Kieran's romance ebbs, leaving behind only a time-worn, precious pearl of truth about her family's past—and leaving Phoebe to take a leap into her own unknown future.

Girls in the Moon Details

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From Reader Review *Girls in the Moon* for online ebook

Riley Redgate says

Janet McNally's poetic voice is put beautifully on display in this heartfelt, incisive book. Simultaneously wistful and energetic, *GIRLS IN THE MOON* has a tight lens on family and what it means to come of age in the context of your family's history. The excitement and alienation of striking out on your own, the careful moments you spend with people you thought you lost, the way you can understand the people closest to you so deeply but still feel like there's a whole world between you - there's so much exquisite emotional writing here, and always with this quiet understatement that gives it its dreamlike tone.

One thing I particularly loved was that, despite the story's trappings of fame and star status, everything felt tangible and real. Not like slipping into a fantasy, but like seeing the tangles in somebody else's life unfold. Phoebe is smart, articulate, daring - a heroine to root for and a wonderful anchor for the rest of the cast.

Also!! I don't want to spoil anything, but the way the narrative splits in parts was an unexpected delight! Really opens up the scope of the novel.

note: i received an ARC of this book in exchange for an honest review.

Karen Hattrup says

Before Janet McNally was a novelist, she was a poet – a fact that will come as no surprise to anyone who reads *GIRLS IN THE MOON*. This book is lush and lyric, full of beautiful metaphors, gorgeous description, heady atmosphere. It's also a nuanced and compelling portrait of a tentative girl on the brink of adulthood, standing at the edge of discovering who she is. She happens to be the daughter of (fictional) rock royalty, but she is first and foremost a deeply relatable character, one who will feel familiar to anyone who has struggled to find their voice and their sense of self as the end of adolescence approaches.

There are so many lovely aspects of this book. It has insightful explorations of the relationships between female friends, sisters, mothers and daughters, as well as thoughtful ruminations on fame and art. The sense of place is strong and memorable throughout as well, from the quiet, shady streets of upstate New York to the lights of Brooklyn. (For anyone who has spent a magic weekend sleeping on a friend's couch in NYC, the pacing, sights, and sounds of Phoebe's trip will ring extraordinarily true – for those who haven't, the book takes you there.)

If *GIRLS IN THE MOON* was a song, I think it would be an indie rock lullaby – hushed and sad and glittering, filled with emotion.

I received an ARC in exchange for an honest review.

Ashley Blake says

This book was so magical and so...New York. It felt like a beautiful, more romantic ALMOST FAMOUS. I absolutely loved McNally's writing and this sister-mother-daughter story was just what my heart wanted.

Dee says

This is such a beautiful book. I knew from the description that each of the characters has her own version of the story, but I didn't realize we'd get to see it with chapters from the mom's point of view (and the past) woven in. It was clever, worked very well, and added so much depth to the story and the characters.

Phoebe was someone I was rooting for the whole time, and I loved tagging along on her journey as she searched for answers. A story of relationships, family history, and music.

Definitely recommend!

I received an advanced copy in exchange for an honest review.

Emily says

A literary, complex, and warmwarmwarm coming-of-age story.

I had high expectations for this book and they were all beautifully met. This book is a snapshot of several moments in time, connecting a significant time in the lives of two teenage sisters (Phoebe and Luna) with a significant time in the life of their mother, former rock goddess Meg Ferris. It's supremely nuanced and thoughtful in the connections it draws, subtly nudging the girls toward questions of identity, heritage, and agency without becoming messagey or obvious. It felt very understated, like it was zeroing in on the quiet moments of revelation or transformation where so often our greatest revelations and transformations actually occur--the moments that WE know are significant more because of what was happening in our minds than because of what was happening in the physical world around us.

And it all feels so personal and intimate that it actually has the effect of making the Ferris girls story feel MORE universal. Because McNally pinpoints the thoughts and feelings that probably all of us have and probably all of us assume are too specific to us to be able to explain.

I looooooved how wholly this was the Ferris girls' story. While each of the girls has a love interest (and the sisters are also separately exploring thoughts about their relationship with their father), it's so clearly THEIR book about THEIR relationships to one another and THEIR futures/identities. And on that note, I absolutely LOVED the sisterly relationship. The peaks into their mother's old journal allow us a view of Luna and Phoebe from childhood on, showing us the way their relationship evolved and how the girls' two personalities have always been so distinct. Some of these flashback sections were my favorites. I would honestly love a prequel centering on Meg's life in her twenties because I found her sections to be so ridiculously rich and poignant.

The pockets of pop culture, real and imagined, gave the book such a thorough, real feeling and were also just one of the most fun parts. These details made the story come to life. It's interesting to think about "world building" in terms of realism but this book kept making me think "what amazing world building!!" I'm not

sure I've never had that thought while reading a contemporary novel. But I did this time.

While there was so much I adored about this book, I honestly think my favorite thing of all was the language. McNally blends simplicity with lush, surprising phrases. Pretty much anytime the sky, moon, or stars were described I found myself pausing to let the words sink in. I honestly felt like I was learning to be a better writer the whole time I was reading, and the book left me feeling inspired, eager to work on my own voice.

Very quiet but very beautiful. I highly recommend for fans of pop culture, sophisticated writing, and nuanced stories about family.

Kali Wallace says

This is such a beautiful book! It's the story of a family told past and present, from the points of view of both a daughter and a mother, It's like being invited to spend one dreamy, lyrical week with this family of poets and musicians. They're a complicated, fractured family, sure, with problems and rifts pushing them apart, with secrets and misunderstandings, and they all feel so incredibly REAL.

The way McNally writes them and their relationships with each other is stunning. I love the different versions of each person they see, the different stories they all remember and cling to, and the fact that they're all carrying their own version of the truth. They're people who have hurt and disappointed each other, but there is so much love and hope and understanding here too.

I don't even know how to explain it except to say that reading this book feels good. It feels like wandering through a beloved city on a summer afternoon, or listening to a favorite record on scratchy vinyl, or sharing a starlit walk with a loved one. It's that kind of feeling, warm and so full of life, and I am in awe of Janet McNally for capturing it so well.

Janet McNally says

I'm pretty partial to this one. :)

Maxwell says

You know that feeling when you really want to *love* something, but then your experience turns out to be more like 'okay'? This book was that for me. It has all the fixings of a book I'd really enjoy: **lyrical writing**, **multiple perspectives**, **unique narrative structure**, and **music**. But even with all that it never really *wowed* me.

The story follows Phoebe Ferries, daughter to famous musicians and bandmates, Kieran and Meg Ferris of the 90's band Shelter (I took it to be a sort of Fleetwood Mac-inspired group). She's going to NYC to spend a week at the end of summer with her sister, Luna, who's now also in a band and starting to find success. Phoebe wants to get away from her mom and ex-best friend in Buffalo, to see her sister, and find her dad in the city who she hasn't talked to in 3 years.

Plot-wise, that's pretty much it. This isn't a story that's heavy on action; Phoebe is both a very observant and introspective narrator, so most of the story is her perspective. But we also get some chapters sprinkled in from the mom's perspective, chronicling her rise to fame and subsequent fallout with her husband. These chapters are told in reverse order, so we move from the present to the past. And honestly, I expected this structure to serve a purpose to the story, like we'd get some big reveal by the end that would inform everything I just read...and I don't think it did. It had a slight pay-off, but ultimately that reverse order did very little to move the plot or add to anything within the story.

I think the author is also a poet, and that definitely shows in the writing. **If you're turned off by lyrical writing, lots of metaphors and descriptions, you probably won't like this.** I loved it. The writing was some of the best stuff about the book for me.

Even though it sounds like I'm harping on this book, I would still recommend it to people—especially people who love young adult novels. This had some of the most accurate dialogue in a YA novel that I've read, as far as sounding like real teenagers. I wouldn't hesitate to recommend it to anyone that is intrigued by it.

Zemira (Kylo Ren fangirl) Warner says

Holy balls! Girls in the Moon rocks!

After I read the first chapter I had to stop to think how I was already in love with this book. Everything was perfect. Writing was phenomenal. Characters were relatable and their problems weren't unconventional. Chapters were on the shorter side but they kept me reading until I was finished. Girls in the Moon was simply irresistible.

This might sound wrong but the whole book reminds me of all the filler (tv) episodes I ended up loving- Girl leaves her problems behind in order to visit her musician sister in New York and maybe seeing her estranged, rock-star father along the way. It was brilliant!

I love everything about this book. Subway rides, music sessions with her sister's band; walking around the city with Archer made me feel like I was there. Phoebe and Archer's relationship also impressed me. I kind of wished it remained platonic (view spoiler) but I guess you can't have a book without a kiss or two.

Can't wait to see what Janet McNally comes up with next. Whatever it is, I'll read it!

Jennifer says

Absolutely gorgeous, stunning and moving. A book about sisters and families - the way we come together and the ways we fall apart. A love story about all different kinds of love. The love of family. A love for the places you've been and the places you're going. A love for music and words.

And it's so, so beautifully written. The images. The language. Stunning.

I highly recommend immersing yourself in this story. Loved. 1000 stars!

Kathleen Glasgow says

I love, love, loved this story. Janet McNally is also a poet, and her prose shines like nobody's business. This YA debut is part giant, soft nostalgic kiss for the music scene of the 90's, when women ruled microphones and guitars and drums, and part beautiful, contemporary coming-of-age-story. Phoebe Ferris is lovingly drawn, as are all the characters, especially her mother, Meg, whose rise to musical stardom comes at a price. There are finely meshed subplots, complicated teen friendships and romances, and a starring role for Brooklyn as an incubator of angst and art. This book would be great for teen book clubs and discussion groups and should also see success as an adult cross-over.

Jeff Zentner says

This is an absolutely gorgeous, lyrical exploration of family, love, and art. It manages to be page turny without ever resorting to any gimmick; just compulsively readable characters with achingly real problems and vivid personalities. I read this book weeks ago and I still think about it. This is a summer-night-full-of-stars of a book that will leave you breathless with how it shimmers and pulses. Also, I would not hesitate to recommend this to adults as well as young adults. Janet McNally, I am your fan.

Heidi Heilig says

GIRLS IN THE MOON is a lovely book, lyrically written.

I read this book straight through in less than a day; I couldn't put it down. It's a sophisticated, dreamy novel about fame and regret and secrets and sacrifice. GIRLS IN THE MOON slips back and forth between the past and the present in the way of a summer night spent talking with old friends--nostalgic but very real, very present. As a person with a sister, I adored the relationship between the sisters, Luna and Phoebe. And the themes of coming to terms with parents, the past, choice, and regret are right up my alley. If you are looking for a dreamy, beautiful book about growing up and learning to take your own future in your hands, pick up GIRLS IN THE MOON.

Sarah says

(Source: I received a digital copy of this book for free on a read-to-review basis. Thanks to HarperCollins and Edelweiss.)

“Secrets, my mother told me once, and just stories turned inside out.”

This was a YA contemporary story about a girl visiting her old sister for 1 week in New York.

Phoebe was an okay character and she seemed to care about her family, even when her father hadn't spoken to her for nearly 3 years. Luna seemed a little more focused though, and seemed to have a clear plan for what she wanted to do with her life.

The storyline in this was about Phoebe going to visit her older sister Luna for a week. Luna was just about to take a break from college to go on tour with her band, which her mother didn't want her to do. Phoebe didn't really know what the right thing for Luna to do was though, and was more concerned with tracking down her father. We got a bit of mystery surrounding Luna and Phoebe's father, a bit of mystery surrounding the person that Phoebe was always texting, and a bit of a musical theme to the story with both of Luna and Phoebe's parents having previously been in a band.

We also got chapters that were from Luna and Phoebe's mother's point of view (Meg), which seemed to chronicle her time in her band, and finding out she was pregnant, but I found these a little odd as they seemed to go backwards in time, from Meg leaving to when she first signed a record deal, and I didn't really feel like they added much to the story.

The ending to this was okay, and we did get some answers to the mysteries. This book was missing something for me though, and even though I found it enjoyable, I didn't love it.

6.5 out of 10

Laurie Flynn says

Warning: I'm writing this review under the influence of a massive book hangover. I'm in that dreamy, gauzy state where my head is still in the pages I just read, full of their beauty and wonder. And I have a feeling this particular book hangover will be long-lasting, because the pages of *GIRLS IN THE MOON* are rich and sumptuous and soaked in gorgeous language and depth.

GIRLS IN THE MOON is the story of Phoebe, the daughter of rock stars who were famous in the 90s with their band, Shelter. Phoebe lives with her mother, Meg, and hasn't seen her father in over three years. In the heart of summer, she visits her older sister Luna in New York City, where Luna has recently dropped out of school to pursue her own musical career—a choice Meg isn't too happy about. Phoebe wants to get the kind of answers from her family that nobody can provide, as Meg avoids talking about Shelter and Luna has seemingly convinced herself that she doesn't need her father in her life. Phoebe's story in the present is interlaced with flashbacks from Meg's point of view in the early days when Shelter was being formed, and I loved the contrast—that as Phoebe surges forward in her quest for truth, Meg's journey is going backwards, from marital breakup to the first seedlings of fame.

I cannot adequately describe how incredible the writing is in this book. Janet McNally is a poet as well as a writer, and this comes as no surprise—her use of words is thoughtful, visceral, lush, and utterly original. Her descriptions of things through Phoebe's eyes are so unique and compelling that I wanted to highlight pretty much every line. Her sentences are infused with grace, hope, curiosity, sometimes sadness, always so much insight.

This is a book that deals with a lot of things. It's about relationships—sisters, mother-daughter, father-daughter, friends, romantic love. It's about regret and mistakes and choices. It's about faith and taking chances and finding not only yourself, but different versions of yourself that you may not have yet stepped into. It's the brassy collision of music and reality and fame and responsibility. And it's completely captivating.

I'm so excited for everyone to discover **GIRLS IN THE MOON**. This is a book I'll come back to when I need to feel inspired, because it has this magnetic energy. If there's a formula to make words jump off a page, Janet McNally has fully mastered it.
