

# Chapter Fifty-Four

In Chapter Fifty-Four of "If These Wings Could Fly," the protagonist, Leighton, enters her home, feeling hesitance as she experiences the underlying tension in the atmosphere. Her family appears gathered in the living room, with her parents, along with Campbell and Juniper, engaging in a casual movie night. The sight of her parents cozying up triggers a painful response within her, emphasizing the strain in their dynamics. As her mother invites Leighton to join, she learns they have canceled cable, showcasing a sense of guilt that her father seems to carry.

Leighton offers to make popcorn, a gesture meant to contribute to a semblance of normalcy. In the kitchen, her father helps her with the popcorn machine, and they engage in conversation about an upcoming football game where Liam, her boyfriend, will be playing. Despite the pressure surrounding the game and her father's acknowledgment of it, their exchange feels tentative as Leighton attempts to bridge the gap between them. His response to her attempts at connection is subdued, conveying disappointment over work, revealing layers of emotional complexity.

After their brief interaction, Leighton retreats to her room, seeking solace. Her peace is interrupted by Joe, a bird who has become a peculiar companion. Instead of waiting for him to leave, she eagerly opens her window, showcasing her willingness to engage with him. Joe drops a small rusted key onto her floor, adding to her growing collection of trinkets from her feathered friend.

As she reflects on her surroundings and the crows that dominate the town's skies, she recognizes their persistence and resilience. Though they have taken over the landscape, filling the air with their presence, Leighton feels an unexpected affection for them. The crows symbolize a defiance that resonates with her own struggles, marking them as a continual reminder of the realities she faces, emphasizing her desire for acknowledgment and connection in a world that often seeks to ignore pain.