

# Chapter Forty-Four

In Chapter Forty-Four of "If These Wings Could Fly," the emotional tension escalates during a harrowing night. Leighton is abruptly awakened by her mother's distressed cry, prompting her to rush to her siblings, Cammy and Juniper, who are terrified and whispering that something bad is happening to their mother. This urgency drives Leighton to seek safety for the girls in the armoire, instructing them to stay hidden and silent, despite her own anxiety about leaving them alone in the darkness.

As Leighton descends the stairs, she halts at the bottom step, frozen by the sounds coming from the kitchen. She strains to listen, hearing her mother's desperate plea for release, a moment that embodies the strain of familial bonds under pressure. Visually and emotionally stifled, she imagines herself blending into the house, hoping her invisibility will keep her mother safe while suppressing her instinct to intervene.

Despite her reluctance, she remains alert to the unsettling atmosphere. A crack on the wall, symbolizing the fracture in their lives, grows as she continues to push against it. As her mother's strained presence is revealed, it becomes evident she has been crying, despite not showing it directly. This scene builds the tension further as Leighton witnesses a volatile confrontation; her mother attempts to manage the man wielding a kitchen knife, their lives hanging in the balance.

With a mix of courage and recklessness, Leighton enters the kitchen, imploring her mother to leave with her, only to face violent resistance. The atmosphere shifts dramatically as a physical confrontation erupts, leading to a climactic moment where her mother shields her from the man's wrath. Leighton, grappling with the horror of the moment, flees back to the armoire, choking back tears, feeling the weight of helplessness in the face of familial violence.

After a tense silence, the man finally departs, leaving a shattered calm in his wake. Leighton emerges, hopeful yet shaken, marking a turning point of vulnerability and fortitude amidst their turmoil.