

Chapter Forty-Six

In Chapter Forty-Six of "If These Wings Could Fly," Leighton wakes up with a stomachache, surrounded by her family—her mom and sisters. She notices her father's truck is not parked outside, indicating he likely stayed at his workplace, a trailer for Barnes Construction, where operations are sluggish in winter. Despite the morning's familiar comforts, an aching sadness envelops her, which she can't quite identify.

Her mom, appearing exhausted, prepares coffee with a hint of weariness. They engage in a nostalgic game, mixing idioms and metaphors, an activity that once brought them joy but feels strained now, reflecting the tension within their family. The underlying issue looms: the undeniable need for a restraining order against her father upon recognizing the danger they face. Leighton's insistence on this matter escalates into an argument; her mother, while acknowledging the recent distress, refuses to act hastily, emphasizing her marriage.

Leighton, frustrated and feeling responsible for her younger sisters, decides she can't stay home and chooses to stay with a friend instead. Despite the tension, her mother clings to the notion of family unity, frustrating Leighton further. After an emotionally charged exchange, Leighton packs her things, aware that she must distance herself from the chaos.

Later, she encounters her friend Liam, who offers her shelter over the weekend, understanding the turmoil she's facing. As they drive to school, Leighton opens up about her family's troubles, discovering Liam's support, yet also feeling a sense of frustration that he has not experienced the ongoing instability she knows so intimately.

At school, she takes refuge in the newsroom to research protection orders, feeling the weight of doubt and fear as she reads about domestic abuse. She grapples with the concern that her father's reputation might overshadow her truth, pondering the cost of fear that many women face in society. The chapter encapsulates the complexity of family dynamics, the trauma of domestic issues, and the desperate search for safety amidst chaos.