

Chapter Seventy-Two

In Chapter Seventy-Two of *If These Wings Could Fly*, the tension escalates as Leighton and his mother navigate a terrifying situation. The chapter opens with Leighton being urged by his mother to escape, despite the chaos represented by Leighton's friend, who is holding a gun. Leighton feels an unsettling realization—his keys are gone, and escape routes are limited, compelling them to leave only by climbing upwards towards the girls.

As Leighton crawls up the stairs, exhaustion weighs heavily on him, underscored by the ominous scent of smoke that soon transforms into a visual reality when he sees it pouring from his room. He understands the dire implications: the lantern is spilled, igniting the curtains and threatening his belongings. The distress deepens when he realizes the girls are trapped inside the armoire, their screams muffled by the wreckage of flames and smoke.

Despite his attempts, the locked armoire presents an insurmountable barrier. A sense of panic grows as the smoke fills the room; memories of the key Joe once left, long thought lost, spur a desperate search that leads to a moment of hope. Leighton successfully unlocks the armoire, freeing the girls, whose faces reflect fear and tears from the heat surrounding them.

However, the danger escalates as something slams against the bedroom door, indicating they are trapped. The decision must be made to flee, and they rush to the window for safety, stepping onto the roof as the house continues to burn. Outside, Leighton and his family face an unexpected confrontation; a dark figure emerges from within the smoke.

As chaos unfolds with crows swarming and preventing the figure's escape, the family ascends to the highest point of their home amidst thickening smoke. A formidable shadow, symbolizing rage and anger, approaches from the roof's edge, adding to the sense of impending doom. Yet, despite the threat looming behind them, Leighton's attention is drawn to his family's calm demeanor, their collective gaze fixed on the approaching crows, hinting at the possibility of hope amid despair.