

Chapter Sixty-Nine

In Chapter Sixty-Nine of "If These Wings Could Fly," the atmosphere is tense and oppressive as the lights are out in the house due to someone shutting off the power as punishment. The narrator, presumably Leighton, finds herself in a dimly lit room with her sisters, Juniper and Campbell, feeling a mix of fear and urgency. Despite the quiet, the panic in her chest is palpable, and the tension grows as she hears muffled arguments coming from downstairs, indicating a volatile situation.

With a desperate need to escape, Leighton contemplates calling for help but quickly shifts focus to the more immediate threat: the presence of a gun. Fireworks illuminate the sky, momentarily distracting her as she tries to reassure the frightened girls. She decides she must find their mother, feeling restless and knowing that doing nothing only heightens the anxiety. However, Campbell's plaintive plea adds weight to the reality of their situation—they all understand the danger they might face.

As Leighton approaches the living room, she is met by the shadowy figure of her mother and the man wielding the gun. His confrontational tone sends chills down her spine, and she becomes paralyzed with fear. The moment intensifies as she hears the creak of her bedroom door, realizing her sisters are at risk. She thinks urgently of how to protect them, but they seem to sense the danger too, retreating back into the safety of their room.

With her mother's calm, calculated movements, she positions herself between Leighton and the gunman, embodying a protective instinct that momentarily calms Leighton's racing heartbeat. Her mother's whispered instructions to go upstairs fight against the weight of Leighton's memories, where love and safety once resided. This bond feels unbreakable, yet as the moment escalates, Leighton is torn between wanting to heed her mother's words and her instinct to move closer, driven by an overriding need for their connection amidst the chaos. The chapter encapsulates a crescendo of fear, protective love, and the instinct to act in the face of potential catastrophe.