

# Chapter Sixty-One

In Chapter Sixty-One of "If These Wings Could Fly," the protagonist, Leighton, is called out of art class by Mrs. Riley to discuss an important matter in the newsroom. Mrs. Riley reveals that the council has decided to award Leighton a scholarship of five thousand dollars based on her essay. However, there's a caveat: they have decided not to publish her essay in the Auburn Gazette.

Leighton is initially thrilled about the scholarship, but confusion follows as she grapples with the reason behind the council's decision not to print her work. Mrs. Riley explains that while the council acknowledges the worthiness of Leighton's essay, they consider it a "liability." This term raises concerns for Leighton, as she questions who stands to be harmed by the essay's publication. Mrs. Riley implies that the danger may extend to both Leighton and her family, but it also reflects a wider thought about the town's interests.

While contemplating this, Leighton notices Joe, a character connected to her, sitting outside. His presence, a silent witness to her turmoil, adds to her feelings of unease. This leads her to suggest a solution: for the council to publish her essay anonymously. Although Mrs. Riley hesitates, Leighton insists that publishing anonymously would shift the liability from her to the council. She argues that if they still refuse, it would prove their attempt to protect her is not entirely altruistic.

Leighton further expresses her determination to ensure her work is recognized, suggesting she could use her essay for other college applications even if it doesn't appear in the Auburn Gazette. This resilient attitude highlights her commitment as she concludes her conversation with Mrs. Riley, who agrees to approach the council on her behalf. By the end of the chapter, when Leighton looks back out the window, the absence of Joe underscores her feelings of isolation amidst the circumstances she is facing.