

Chapter 15

Chapter 15 of *If These Wings Could Fly* begins with Juniper and the narrator spending a peaceful morning together in their backyard, with the crisp air of early autumn settling in. Despite the season's chill, the weather remains unseasonably warm, which leads to Campbell riding her bike outside, even though she's still recovering from a recent mishap involving a rosebush. This accident nearly ended her biking season early, but her resilience shows as she continues to enjoy the ride. Meanwhile, the narrator is balancing multiple responsibilities, including calculus homework, research for the school newspaper, and frustration over an art elective that hasn't been going well. Juniper, on the other hand, finds solace in reading a book of fairy tales, escaping into a world of imagination while the narrator struggles with the pressures of their academic and extracurricular life.

As they sit in the backyard, the persistent cawing of crows around them becomes a constant source of irritation. The narrator mentions their ongoing research into the increase in crow populations in towns across the country, including a nearby town where an astonishing fifty thousand crows have been counted migrating from Canada. This fact catches Juniper's attention and sparks a discussion about the local crow population and its sudden rise. During the conversation, the narrator also reflects on the success of Auburn's football team, something that feels peculiar to them, given the town's focus on the sport. While the crows remain a constant distraction, the conversation shifts between curiosity about the local wildlife and the team's success, highlighting the contrast between nature's uncontrollable forces and the more structured aspects of the town's life.

As more crows land nearby, the narrator impulsively decides to throw raisins at them, ignoring a local ordinance Juniper had mentioned in a recent paper. The rebellion against the rules brings a moment of joy to both of them, and they laugh together over Juniper's lost leather cuff bracelet, which she feels guilty about misplacing. The playful interaction transitions into a more serious conversation about how other towns have dealt with their crow populations, some even resorting to hunting practices to scare the birds away. This darker side of the situation makes Juniper uneasy, as she begins to question the safety of the local crows. The discussion of the crows' vulnerability introduces a sense of responsibility for the animals that hadn't been present in their earlier, more lighthearted banter. It serves as a reminder of the complexities in their seemingly simple interactions with nature.

The mood lightens again when Juniper reveals that she has been writing letters to Joe, a crow she admires, leaving treats for him in hopes of receiving gifts in return. The narrator is initially skeptical, but Juniper's earnestness convinces them to consider the possibility that Joe might actually be gifting her something. She proudly presents a shiny marble, claiming that it is a gift from Joe, which she believes is a sign of the crow's affection. Just as the moment is filled with wonder and childlike joy, Campbell enters and mocks the idea, trying to undermine the authenticity of Juniper's belief. However, Juniper remains unfazed, continuing to share her letters to Joe with the same confidence and hope she had when she first began this whimsical exchange. The playful mood lingers, even though there is an underlying tension between the sisters, as their interactions continue to reveal different perspectives on the world.

The chapter takes a sudden turn when Campbell's bike is run over by a truck returning to the neighborhood. The narrator witnesses Campbell's heartbreak and frustration as she stands motionless in the yard, facing the unexpected loss of her beloved bike. This loss signals a shift in the tone of the chapter, turning what had been a lighthearted and nostalgic scene into one of emotional weight and uncertainty. Campbell's future in biking now seems uncertain, and the reality of this setback leaves her feeling helpless and vulnerable. The emotional impact of this event deepens the narrative, showcasing the fragility of youthful dreams and the way unforeseen circumstances can abruptly alter the course of one's plans. The playful atmosphere from earlier in the chapter fades, replaced by the rawness of disappointment and loss, marking a poignant moment in the

story.

The chapter highlights the contrast between the carefree moments spent in nature and the harsh realities that can quickly disrupt one's life. Through the lighthearted moments of connection with the crows and the more somber moments of loss, the narrative explores the complexities of life's unpredictable nature. The characters, especially Juniper and Campbell, are shown navigating both the joy and pain that comes with growing up, providing readers with a deeply relatable experience. These emotional shifts are skillfully woven into the narrative, giving depth to the characters' relationships with each other and the world around them.