

Chapter Seventy-Two

In Chapter Seventy-Two, tension escalates rapidly as the protagonist, urged by their mother, confronts a perilous situation involving Leighton, who is still holding a gun and appears trapped without his keys. The urgency to escape is complicated by the presence of smoke and fire originating from the protagonist's room, threatening the safety of the girls, Campbell and Juniper. The scene conveys a sense of exhaustion and disbelief as the protagonist crawls upstairs, symbolizing the overwhelming pressure of the moment and the fragile passage of time amid chaos.

Upon entering the burning room, the protagonist discovers the lantern spilled and flames spreading to the curtains and quilt, with smoke filling the space. The girls are trapped inside a locked armoire, their distress palpable through coughing and sobbing. Desperation mounts as the protagonist's fingers bleed from frantic attempts to open the door, until a rusted key, previously thought lost, is retrieved and used to free them. The girls emerge physically unharmed but emotionally shaken, while the protagonist's bloodied hands reflect the damage inflicted on the home itself.

The danger intensifies as the locked door is repeatedly slammed, signaling the presence of an intruder and trapping the group inside the smoke-filled room. Forced to flee onto the roof, the family navigates through billowing smoke and fire, with the threat of the intruder looming. The protagonist senses an instinctual call to move higher, driven by fear and an almost supernatural awareness. A chaos of crows descends, driving the intruder back into the burning house and symbolizing a protective force that temporarily contains the danger.

As the group reaches the highest point of the house, they face a new menace—a shadowy figure embodying rage and destruction, advancing through the smoke. Despite the imminent threat, the girls remain calm, their focus drawn to the approaching crows rather than the shadow. This moment highlights a juxtaposition of

fear and serenity, with the crows arriving as a beacon of hope and protection amid the engulfing fire and chaos. The chapter closes on this tense but hopeful note, emphasizing resilience and the mysterious forces at play in the family's struggle for survival.