

# Chapter Thirteen

In the quiet, unsettling hours of early morning, the narrator is abruptly awakened by the creaking of her bedroom door, her heart pounding with fear. Despite the lingering terror of a nightmare, she reassures herself that her family is safe. The tension in the household is palpable as she hears agitated voices downstairs, signaling a troubled night ahead. Her younger sister, Juniper, seeks comfort and asks to sleep with her, while the older sister, Campbell, remains elusive and distant, embodying a mix of anger and resignation born from their difficult circumstances.

The narrator attempts to soothe her sisters by engaging them in a comforting game called "Anywhere But Here," which serves as a mental escape from the harsh reality surrounding them. They imagine themselves in faraway, peaceful places like the Galápagos Islands and London, weaving vivid scenes to distract from the distressing sounds and fears that permeate their home. This shared imaginative play is a fragile sanctuary, momentarily lifting their spirits and allowing them to bond amidst the chaos.

As the situation escalates with noises from downstairs, the sisters seek refuge inside their grandmother's large armoire, transforming it into a cozy, protective hideaway. Equipped with a kerosene lantern, a cherished heirloom, they create a warm and adventurous atmosphere that shields them from the tension outside. This small, enclosed space becomes a place of safety and imagination, where the girls can momentarily forget their troubles and embrace the roles of explorers and astronauts, united in their resilience and hope.

The chapter closes on a tender note as the sisters play shadow puppets, a simple yet meaningful activity that highlights their closeness and the narrator's role as a caretaker. Despite the challenges they face, their interaction is filled with warmth, humor, and a sense of normalcy. The narrator's dedication to protecting and

comforting her siblings shines through, offering a glimpse of strength and love that persists even in the darkest moments.