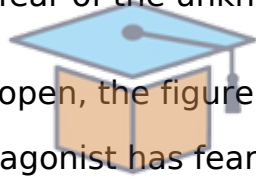


# Chapter 68

Chapter 68 of *If These Wings Could Fly* presents the protagonist in a poignant moment of reflection, standing alone on the edge of the sidewalk as she watches Liam's red taillights fade into the darkness. This fleeting sight sparks within her a vision of a hopeful future, one filled with promises of happiness and togetherness. For a brief moment, she allows herself to imagine a life shared with Liam, free of the obstacles and struggles that have defined her past. The image of their future together contrasts sharply with the tension that lingers in her reality, a tension that only heightens as she approaches her home. Despite the warm and loving vision of the life they could build, a nagging sense of discomfort begins to creep back in as she turns toward the house, signaling the harsh shift from hope to the heavy reality of her situation. Though the sight of Liam's disappearing taillights initially fills her with joy, this joy is quickly interrupted by the explosion of fireworks in the sky, marking the arrival of the New Year. The fireworks, bright and loud, symbolize both celebration and the underlying chaos that still governs her life, making the contrast between what is possible and what is real all the more pronounced.

As she nears her home, a sense of dread fills the air, a tangible weight that pulls at her chest. The darkness that envelopes the house seems to swallow her whole, and she immediately notices the strange and unsettling sight of the windows wide open, something that doesn't sit right with her. The house, which should feel like a sanctuary, now feels alien and ominous. When she steps onto the front step, the quiet stillness of the night is broken by the overwhelming sense that someone else is inside, their presence impossible to ignore. Her heart begins to pound in her chest, and her worst fears seem to materialize as she sees the shadow of a man lurking in the foyer. This figure, standing in stark contrast to the warmth and safety she longs for, is someone she knows all too well—someone who has already broken a protection order

meant to keep him away. The realization strikes her like a lightning bolt, and with it comes the crushing awareness that her safety, and the safety of her sisters, is hanging in the balance. Fear tightens its grip on her, and the instinct to run flickers in her mind, but the weight of her responsibility pulls her back. The thought of abandoning her sisters, leaving them exposed to this man's potential danger, makes the idea of running seem impossible. The protagonist's heart races as she stands frozen, unsure of the best course of action, caught between her instincts to protect her loved ones and the paralyzing fear of the unknown threat inside.



Summary

As the door creaks open, the figure standing inside comes into full view, and everything the protagonist has feared is suddenly real. The man's presence, amplified by the darkness around him, feeds into her growing panic. What should have been a moment of relief—a return to the safety of her home—has turned into a nightmare. The house, which she once believed could offer her peace, is now a suffocating reminder of everything that is wrong in her life. The love and safety she once associated with this place have been replaced by the haunting reality of the dangers lurking within. In that moment, the future she had briefly imagined with Liam seems impossibly far away. The simplicity of the life she wanted, filled with warmth, connection, and safety, is overshadowed by the brutality of her current situation. The optimism she had once held onto, the belief that things could be better, fades as she faces the overwhelming danger inside her own home. This chapter perfectly encapsulates the tension between hope and fear, illustrating how easily dreams of a better life can be shattered by the harsh realities that the protagonist must confront. The internal battle between the desire to escape to a brighter future and the need to protect those she loves becomes the central theme of the chapter. As the protagonist grapples with the intensity of the moment, the reader is left questioning what will happen next, torn between the protagonist's hope for a future of safety and her immediate need to confront the terrifying presence in her life.