

Chapter 70

Chapter 70 of *If These Wings Could Fly* begins with a sense of chaos and heightened tension as the air is thick with the scent of smoke, leaving confusion in its wake. This unusual aroma, caused by a fire that doesn't seem to fit the circumstances, hints at a deeper mystery, as guns typically don't set fires. Leighton, the protagonist, finds himself pushed against the stairs, with his mother anxiously trying to assess whether he has been injured in the melee. Despite his reassurances that he is unharmed, the scene around them paints a different picture. The wall near them has been shot, and it appears to be "bleeding" as if crying out for help, demanding immediate attention. This unsettling image serves as a metaphor for the damage that has been inflicted upon their world, both physically and emotionally. Leighton's internal turmoil intensifies as he realizes that the danger they're facing is more than just physical—it is psychological as well.

As the chaos continues to swirl around them, the urgency escalates. Someone begins frantically searching for keys, moving through the scene in a panic, their mind focused on the search rather than addressing the damage to the wall or the dangers around them. Their actions only serve to heighten the sense of confusion and distress, as priorities become misaligned in the face of mounting pressure. It is in this disordered moment that a crow named Joe unexpectedly makes his entrance, flying through an open window and landing on Leighton's shoulder with an almost supernatural presence. This sudden, almost surreal occurrence immediately draws the reader's attention, as Joe's arrival seems symbolic, reminiscent of the Morrigan, the mythical figure associated with fate, chaos, and transformation. Joe's erratic behavior only adds to the mounting disarray, as he knocks into a coffee table, sending trinkets and items flying across the room. Among these objects, Juniper's personal belongings—pennies, paper clips, and crucially, the truck keys—are scattered across the floor. The keys,

catching the light in the moon's glow, become a pivotal item in the chaos, signaling the need for escape and action.

The symbolism of Joe's entrance becomes even more apparent as fireworks light up the night sky, creating a brief moment of clarity amidst the surrounding confusion. The explosion of color and light contrasts sharply with the darkness and disorder within the house, amplifying the sense of urgency and the fragile nature of their reality. In a swift, almost predatory movement, Joe picks up the keys with his claws, his erratic flight leaving the room just as suddenly as he had entered. His departure, marked by the same chaos that preceded it, leaves behind an air of unpredictability. The protagonist, along with the others, is left in a heightened state of tension, wondering what the next move will be. The suddenness of Joe's actions and their impact on the unfolding events reflects the precariousness of their situation—one where control is elusive, and even the smallest actions can lead to profound consequences. As Joe exits through the window, the tension within the room reaches its peak, and the reader is left questioning what will come of the keys and whether this unexpected turn of events is a sign of fate or simply another chaotic twist in their unpredictable reality.

As the chapter unfolds, the urgency continues to build, blending danger with the inexplicable presence of Joe, who seems to embody the randomness and unpredictability of their situation. The tension between the supernatural and the everyday becomes more pronounced, with each event adding layers of complexity to the narrative. The fireworks that illuminate the night, along with Joe's unpredictable presence, create a surreal atmosphere, leaving the protagonist and the reader alike with a sense of unease. The randomness of Joe's actions, though seemingly inconsequential, serves as a reminder of the fragility of their world and the unpredictable forces that shape their reality. In the end, the chapter presents a vivid, almost dreamlike portrayal of chaos and vulnerability, blending supernatural elements with everyday struggles in a way that keeps readers on edge, uncertain of what will happen next. The scene leaves a lasting impression of both danger and hope, as the protagonist and those around him grapple with the unknown.