

Chapter 56

Chapter 56 of *If These Wings Could Fly* opens with the protagonist experiencing an intense moment of emotional distress as they find the parking lot unexpectedly empty. Realizing that someone significant has left, the weight of the situation becomes overwhelming, and they are left sitting on the cold ground, struggling to breathe through the heaviness in their chest. As they sit in the chill of the moment, Sofia, a devoted friend, finds them and sits by their side in the freezing mud. Despite the ongoing festivities of the halftime show at the game, Sofia chooses to prioritize her friend's emotional state over her cheerleading duties. This act of compassion underscores the strength of their friendship, as Sofia provides the support needed to help the protagonist regain composure in the midst of their emotional storm. Her willingness to pause her own life for a moment to help a friend in distress highlights the depth of their connection, emphasizing that emotional support can offer solace during times of overwhelming grief.

As the two friends sit together, Sofia's comforting presence allows the protagonist to slowly regain control over their emotions. The conversation naturally shifts toward the issues the protagonist has been facing at home, which Sofia has long suspected but never pressed due to her friend's desire to keep such matters private. Their bond is highlighted by Sofia's understanding and respect for her friend's boundaries, as well as her unwavering support in difficult times. Sofia offers refuge by suggesting a sleepover at her house, which lightens the mood, providing a moment of light-hearted relief amid the protagonist's internal struggles. The idea of spending time with friends and pets allows for a brief respite from the weight of the problems they are dealing with at home. It becomes clear that their connection is a source of strength, with Sofia's ability to create space for comfort and support becoming essential in helping the protagonist navigate through their emotional turmoil. This moment of connection

serves as a reminder of the importance of friendships during times of hardship.

Once the protagonist feels ready, they return to the stadium, where they share a moment of warmth with their mother, who stayed despite the turbulence at home. The protagonist expresses gratitude for their mother's presence, appreciating her support in such a difficult time. As they discuss how to get home, the protagonist suggests a bus route that passes by their grandmother's house, which signals a desire to return to a familiar and safe environment. The idea of home lingers in their thoughts, prompting a deeper internal reflection on what home means to them. This reflection reveals a fear of being forgotten or left behind, much like snowflakes that disappear upon contact with the ground, leaving no trace behind. The metaphor of fleetingness and impermanence resonates deeply, evoking a sense of longing for something lasting and stable amidst the chaos of their current life. The protagonist's internal struggle centers around the desire for connection and the fear of disappearing into the background, unsure of where they truly belong.

As the chapter progresses, a metaphor of seasons emerges, with the protagonist reflecting on their own emotional state. Instead of seeing themselves as delicate spring blooms or the gentle warmth of summer, they begin to liken themselves to a fierce winter storm—cold, harsh, and full of mourning. This metaphor reflects their inner turmoil, as they acknowledge the darker parts of their personality and emotions, yet it also symbolizes a longing for transformation. There is a glimmer of hope within this self-realization, as the protagonist yearns for a personal miracle, something that will help them emerge from the storm stronger and more resilient. This desire for change and personal growth amidst chaos becomes a driving force as the protagonist contemplates their future. The chapter ends with the realization that Auburn, once seen as home, no longer feels like a place of belonging. However, there is a hint of optimism that despite the challenges, a personal miracle may still be possible, offering the possibility of finding a new sense of home, or at least a place of inner peace.