

Chapter 64

Chapter 64 of *If These Wings Could Fly* begins with a charged atmosphere as the protagonist and a younger figure stand outside a small house, bathed in the red and blue flashing lights of police cars. The cold, biting air seems to seep into their bones, but despite this, the narrator grips the smaller hand tightly, an unspoken promise of protection. Both are dressed in flannel pajamas, barely sufficient to shield them from the harsh winter chill, which only heightens the feeling of vulnerability that hangs in the air. This physical discomfort mirrors the emotional strain they are under, adding a layer of tension to the already fraught scene. The arrival of Officer Bill DiMarco brings with it a wave of anxiety, as the protagonist is left wondering whether their father will be allowed to go free again, as he has in the past. However, this time, the outcome is different—Officer DiMarco makes a decisive move, arresting their father and placing him in handcuffs. His actions are carried out with a disturbing detachment, as though he has no personal connection to the man being apprehended, reinforcing the gravity of the moment and the emotional distance between them.

While Officer DiMarco moves to escort their father to the police car, another officer arrives quickly, taking the mother aside to explain the process for obtaining an emergency protection order. Due to the holiday season, the formal court hearing for this order may be delayed, but the officer assures the family that a temporary order can be issued in the meantime, offering a temporary shield from their father's return. This temporary protection order is of immense importance, as it will legally bar their father from entering the house and will require him to surrender his firearm within 24 hours if he is released. The significance of this order cannot be overstated—it represents a crucial step in the effort to reclaim their safety. As the officers continue their work, Officer DiMarco approaches the narrator and, with sincerity, expresses his sympathy for their difficult situation. He mentions the essay that the narrator had

written, one that he found deeply painful to read, reflecting the emotional weight of their family's struggles. The narrator, emotionally drained and fatigued from years of tension, responds with frustration, expressing weariness with the hollow apologies offered by adults who have failed to protect her family in the past.

The mother, however, remains resolute, her determination to protect her children unwavering in the face of the tumultuous events unfolding. Officer DiMarco reassures her that he will personally ensure the physical copy of the protection order is delivered to their home, allowing them to move forward with a sense of security. The weight of the night's events slowly begins to lift as the family feels, for the first time in what feels like forever, a glimmer of safety. This moment marks a shift for the narrator, who begins to feel a sense of empowerment that had been absent for so long. The relief that follows the arrest and the protection order signifies a turning point, a small but significant victory over the constant fear that has dominated their lives. For the first time, they have been heard, and a sense of control is beginning to emerge, however fragile. The narrator reflects on this newfound sense of security with a combination of hope and disbelief, realizing that this moment might be the first real opportunity to escape the grip of fear that has kept them tethered to an unsafe environment for so long. While the future remains uncertain and there are still many challenges ahead, this night symbolizes a shift toward something more positive, where the possibility of safety is no longer just a distant dream, but a real and attainable goal. The chapter encapsulates both the emotional exhaustion and the quiet empowerment that comes with moments of change, providing a sense of closure to the immediate danger and a hopeful outlook for what lies ahead.