

Chapter Fourteen

In "Chapter Fourteen" of *If These Wings Could Fly*, the scene unfolds in the bustling Auburn Diner on a Saturday morning, a place where the aroma of pancakes fills the air and families gather for breakfast. The protagonist reflects on her family legacy in Auburn, tied to her grandfather's construction business, which built many buildings in town, including their own home. This legacy, while substantial, raises questions about the duality of people's lives—how they present themselves outwardly compared to their internal realities.

As the family eagerly awaits their food, the waitress Christine greets them warmly, reflecting a camaraderie that contrasts with the family's underlying tensions. Her invitation to join a girls' night out is met with a quick refusal from the father, Jesse Barnes, who has been increasingly isolating his wife from friends. This dynamic highlights the strain within the family, pointing to a pattern of suppression and control from Jesse.

The chapter introduces Officer DiMarco, a long-lost friend of Jesse, whose visit brings a fleeting moment of normalcy. However, a sudden revelation about Jesse's lost bid for a significant library renovation contract shifts the atmosphere. While Jesse attempts to brush off the news with a nonchalant attitude, the tension between him and the mother becomes palpable, as his hand on her shoulder betrays more than a supportive gesture; it shows the strain of control in their relationship.

As the children, including the narrator, observe their parent's facade of happiness, they too fall into the act, nodding and smiling in response to their father's remarks. The narrator's inner turmoil escalates as the meal, once a source of comfort, turns bitter in her mouth. The chapter closes on a poignant note, as the protagonist, overwhelmed by the nightmarish reality masked by the morning's false charm, rushes to the restroom to vomit—not just the breakfast, but the sorrow and fear lurking beneath the surface. This stark contrast between the public display of normalcy and the private agony encapsulates the family's struggles and the protagonist's quiet rebellion against their oppressive dynamic.