

Chapter Nine

In Chapter Nine of "If These Wings Could Fly," the protagonist, Leighton, finds herself in a lunch booth with Liam McNamara, who sits next to her friend Sofia. Their conversation starts casually, with Liam commenting on the cold tater tots on Leighton's tray. As the conversation unfolds, it becomes evident that Leighton has been hiding something from Sofia, and she feels the tension of being found out.

Liam candidly mentions broaching a confrontation with Brody, who has been rude in class. Leighton appreciates Liam's support, especially since she typically avoids conflict and hasn't spoken to Brody since she turned him down. The dynamic shifts as Liam casually asks Leighton out, which flusters Sofia and leads to an awkward moment. Leighton declines his offer, stating her commitment to focusing on college applications and homework, which resonate with her priorities.

Despite her rejection, Leighton can't help but feel drawn to Liam's direct attention and kindness, contrasting it with her overwhelming responsibilities and the turmoil of her home life. As they chat, Liam throws out compliments that surprise her, suggesting he sees potential in her. Resisting her growing affection, Leighton insists she doesn't have time for dating, regardless of the fun it might bring.

When Liam adopts a melodramatic, heartbroken persona after her rejection, Sofia finds it entertaining, and even Leighton struggles to suppress her laughter. As their exchange concludes, Liam leaves with a playful farewell, which heightens Leighton's awareness of the chemistry between them—something both exhilarating and unsettling for her.

Sofia's comments afterward reveal her belief that Liam genuinely likes Leighton, which makes Leighton uneasy. Although she enjoys their interactions, she mentally berates herself for having feelings for him. The backdrop of her family obligations looms large over her, as she has less than a year to stabilize her home life to ensure her sisters' safety. This ticking clock complicates her feelings, as she grapples with the thought that romance could lead to heartbreak. With the specter of a picture commemorating a past "ever after" stuck in her living room, she reflects on the inevitable heartaches of life, hinting at the complexities that love entails.