

Chapter Seventeen

In Chapter Seventeen of *If These Wings Could Fly*, the atmosphere in Leighton's home is tense following a series of problems, including family arguments and a lost construction bid. Leighton finds herself overwhelmed, juggling a massive stack of papers related to crow myths from various cultures that she's been printing due to issues with the newspaper room printer. As she navigates the busy space, she accidentally collides with Liam, a fellow student, causing her papers to scatter.

Their interaction reveals a growing familiarity between them; they exchange playful banter about each other's commitments and pressures, highlighting the intensity of their respective lives as they pursue academic and extracurricular goals. Liam expresses admiration for Leighton's writing, which she initially brushes off as flattery, but he insists it's genuine. Their exchange captures a moment where friendship seems to deepen, and Leighton allows herself to daydream about a romantic connection.

As they arrive at the newsroom, Liam surprises Leighton by offering an open line for conversation, a proposal to listen if she ever feels the need to talk. This moment brings on a wave of emotions for Leighton, compelling her to confront her feelings. In a moment of vulnerability, she admits to liking Liam under different circumstances but explains the complexity of her life with her sisters, indicating her significant responsibilities that prevent her from pursuing a relationship right now.

Their conversation brings Liam to reciprocate, sharing his own experiences with family, yet Leighton feels the weight of her responsibilities heavily on her. She grapples with the strong pull of emotions, wanting to say yes to Liam but ultimately prioritizing her familial obligations over her feelings. The chapter ends with a poignant reminder of Leighton's commitment to her family, signaling an inner conflict between personal desires and her role as a caregiver.