

Chapter Thirty-Two

In Chapter Thirty-Two of "If These Wings Could Fly," the protagonist, Leighton, is awakened by a man's harsh demands, highlighting the chaos and tension in her home life. The chapter begins with Leighton dreaming of lightning splitting the tree in their front yard, only to be jolted awake by the sound of her door slamming against the wall. The man's voice is menacing as he insists they need to correct their chores and follows through by disturbing her younger sisters, Juniper and Campbell.

Leighton pleads with him to spare the girls, but his response reveals a cycle of frustration and violence. Despite her mother standing nearby, mouthing apologies, Leighton internally rages against the situation. After pushing past the man, she takes Juniper to the living room where they sit quietly, waiting for orders amid the bright lights illuminating their home. The man returns, tossing their folded towels on the floor, demanding they show him the correct way to fold them.

Each sister tries but fails to meet his expectations, with Juniper visibly upset. In a moment of cold resentment, he directs his anger towards Leighton, calling her vile names and throwing a vase against the wall to punctuate his threats. This eruption of aggression is met with Leighton's pain and determination not to show tears. She feels the pressure to perform perfectly: she folds the towels meticulously while suppressing her emotions.

After everyone else heads upstairs, Leighton cleans the broken glass and turns off lights around the house, lost in thoughts of her chaotic reality. When she gazes in the bathroom mirror, she notices the emptiness of the shelves once filled with their towels, reinforcing the sense of disarray in her life. Exhausted and terrified of an uncertain future, Leighton chooses to study for an important calculus exam rather than succumb to sleep. Yet her focus wanes as she wrestles with the paradox of wanting to escape her troubled home while fearing for her sisters' well-being should she choose to leave. The chapter ends with Leighton staring helplessly at the dawning light, filled with dread about her unchangeable world .