

Chapter Twenty-Six

In Chapter Twenty-Six of "If These Wings Could Fly," the narrative centers on the evolving routine between the protagonist and Liam, who drives her to school each morning. This consistent ritual becomes a comforting part of her day, allowing her to anticipate joyful moments rather than focus on her fears, particularly of the crawl space at night. The relationship between them remains platonic; they share conversations and laughter, but physical intimacy remains absent.

On a typical Friday, as they prepare for a literature exam, their playful exchange highlights Liam's exhaustion from football and the ease of their companionship. The protagonist offers Liam hot chocolate, contrasting with her own preference for coffee, showcasing their developing bond. They discuss music in the car, and when a Guns N' Roses song bothers her, she turns it off, indicating her evolving comfort in voicing her preferences.

The exam serves as a backdrop for a deeper conversation. The protagonist quizzes Liam on their summer reading, focusing on Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. As they tackle themes of social class and gender dynamics in literature, Liam surprises her with his thoughtful insights, acknowledging ongoing societal issues regarding harassment and discrimination. This perspective reveals a more profound understanding of current affairs than she initially expected from someone his age.

Their conversation delves into heavy themes about women's roles, societal expectations, and the consequences of voicing dissent. While the protagonist contemplates the dangers faced by women who fight for their voice, she expresses a desire to be a reporter one day, hoping to illuminate these stories and shed light on painful truths.

Ultimately, the chapter depicts a significant growth in the protagonist, as she balances her fears and desire for expression, building hope for her future while simultaneously navigating the complexities of her daily reality. The chapter closes on a note of determination, emphasizing her resolve to eventually speak out and challenge injustices, reflecting her inner strength and ambition.