

Chapter Twenty-Two

In Chapter Twenty-Two of "If These Wings Could Fly," the narrator, Leighton, reflects on the sunset as she travels to Liam's house, noting Auburn's beauty despite its flaws. The glowing red sun reminds her of a chaotic moment with her sister Juniper using highlighters on her copy of "The Bell Jar," a contrast of bright colors against dark words. As they arrive, Leighton's mother questions her story about needing a tutor, teasing her about the necessity of help in art class. This light-hearted banter leads to Leighton showing her mother her latest still life project, which provokes a laugh, and a tender moment occurs as she kisses her mother goodbye.

Upon entering Liam's home, Leighton is greeted warmly by his sister Fiona, who expresses relief at Leighton's visit, shielding herself from Liam's antics. Their friendly rapport is established, lightened by Fiona's comments about Liam's hobbies and teasing. Mrs. McNamara, Liam's mother, enters, bringing warmth and warmth with her. She also shares her experiences of teaching in a small, predominantly white town, voicing her thoughts on the importance of inclusivity in education.

Liam soon arrives, exuding charm and an inviting presence that leaves Leighton wishing this was a legitimate date. They engage in banter while choosing snacks, and Liam's endearing nature starts to break down Leighton's walls. Inside Liam's room, they share a creative space filled with art, graphic novels, and a glimpse into Liam's aspirations. Despite their playful exchanges, a deeper discussion about future aspirations unfolds, revealing their mutual fears and ambitions intertwined with the challenges of small-town life.

While working on art, their close proximity becomes charged, prompting flirty moments and reflections. However, as Fiona intrudes, the lightness of the scene sharpens, highlighting their friendship. Eventually, they step outside to part ways, where Liam expresses a desire to spend more time together beyond school. Despite Leighton's instincts to focus on her responsibilities, she finds herself wanting to embrace this thrilling snippet of teenage life and agrees to a bonfire.

As Leighton returns home, she feels both exhilarated and guilty at the thought of moving beyond her usual routine, a balance of excitement and familial obligations echoing in her mind as she nestles into bed. This chapter captures themes of youthful exploration, family, and the delicate tug-of-war between ambition and enjoyment in life.