

Chapter Twenty

In Chapter Twenty of "If These Wings Could Fly," the excitement of a crowded football stadium envelops the characters, specifically focusing on Leighton, Juniper, and their parents. Arriving late, the family parks along the road due to the packed lot and makes their way to the game. Juniper eagerly begs for funnel cakes, and after Mom grants her wish for just one treat, they find a spot to watch the game from the sidelines.

Sofia, a cheerleader, notices Leighton and rushes over, excited to see her. They exchange pleasantries, and Sofia asks Leighton for help tracking player number thirty-six, Liam McNamara, whom she is particularly interested in. Leighton agrees but is inwardly annoyed at being roped into covering the game. As the game progresses, Leighton encounters Campell, who joins her to help track Liam.

Following a few moments together, they part as Leighton makes her way up into the stands. From there, she spots Amelia, who warmly welcomes her to join. The two share the experience of watching the game, with Amelia cheerfully rooting for Liam. Leighton finds herself caught up in the thrill, feeling a rush when Liam scores a touchdown. Around them, the McNamara family cheers for Liam, highlighting the importance of familial support.

Suddenly, the atmosphere changes when Leighton notices her parents engaged in a tense conversation with Mr. Dillard, which hints at underlying family issues, particularly concerning her father's struggles with his construction business and past regrets about football. The dynamic proves uncomfortable, especially as comments about her father's knee injury surface.

Just as the tension becomes palpable, Bill DiMarco, an acquaintance of the family, arrives to break the ice. His presence temporarily alleviates the strain, but the discomfort remains largely unaddressed. Mom's efforts to steer the family away from the conversation only trigger further anxiety in Leighton. The chapter ultimately captures the contrast between public celebration and private turmoil, as the family navigates the complexities of their relationships against the backdrop of a lively football game.