

Chapter Four

In Chapter Four of **If These Wings Could Fly**, the protagonist, Leighton, finds herself in the unfamiliar territory of the junior hallway after a mix-up with her locker assignment. The narrative opens with her pondering the absence of the senior privileges she longed for, particularly access to the Senior Wall— a social hub for seniors to connect and express themselves. This longing triggers memories of the many things she has missed, often due to her difficult home life, where she had to prioritize stability over typical high school experiences.

As she opens her half-size locker, she is startled by Liam McNamara, a fellow senior known for his charm and status as student council vice president and a football player. He mistakenly confuses her for another student, Lyla, whom he describes as his cheerleader partner. Their ensuing conversation reveals Liam's awkwardness and Leighton's sharp wit, highlighting their contrasting social circles. While he attempts to explain away his inappropriate approach as a misunderstanding, she struggles internally with the residual trauma of her home life, which complicates her interactions with peers.

Their banter flows naturally, touching on topics like the unglamorous nature of football in their town and their shared class, Advanced Placement English. Liam's candid views on literature provide a refreshing perspective for Leighton as they bond over shared classroom experiences. However, as the conversation progresses, Leighton's thoughts veer back to her tumultuous home environment, and she starts to withdraw emotionally. She becomes acutely aware of the emotional turmoil she's carrying and abruptly asks for her book back, realizing too late that the fun of the interaction has turned heavy with her inner conflicts.

Feeling an overwhelming urge to escape, Leighton hastily leaves the scene, captivated by a wave of anxiety that threatens to engulf her. This chapter uniquely encapsulates her struggle to maintain a semblance of normalcy while navigating friendships and the complexities born from her troubled background. The repetition of the word "normal" at the chapter's end emphasizes her internal battle against her emotional scars.