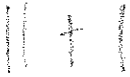


Little Wing (2008)

By Taylor Mason



INT CORI'S ROOM-NIGHT

CORI lays on her bedroom floor, nodding her head to a Joni Mitchell CD playing on her iPod doc. Her closed bedroom door only muffles shouts, screams and slamming doors throughout the house, but she remains entranced as she scrawls into a composition book, pausing only quickly to gather thoughts.

ENTER RENEE

Cori's mother opens the door without knocking, steps over Cori and collapses onto the bed. Cori follows her with her eyes, emotionless except for a slight glare of irritation.

RENEE

I hate neighbors. Music so damn loud I can't even sleep in my own room.

Renee rolls over in the bed, turning off the music. SAMANTHA and ERIC, Cori's younger siblings, call for Renee to make them dinner.

RENEE

Honey, can you make the kids some macaroni please? I have to go in a few hours and I'm beat.

Cori slams the notebook shut, grabs her iPod and gets up to make the food for her siblings. She cooks them dinner, puts them to bed and cleans the kitchen before starting her homework.

INT SCHOOL HALLWAY - MORNING

LAINNA slams her locker shut, revealing an exhausted-looking Cori leaning against the wall with a depressed look on her face.

LAINNA [sarcastically]

Morning, sunshine! What happened to you last night?

CORI

Playing house with the sibs as usual. Didn't help that I had to wake up at the BUTT crack o' dawn to finish that calc homework.

Lainna rubs Cori's shoulder compassionately as Jordan and Skyy trudge down the hallway, a basketball in Skyy's hand, a guitar case slung over Jordan's shoulder.

LAINNA

Hey! Where are the other two?

SKYY

Hey, Alex said Mickey picked her up late, but they're on their way.

JORDAN

Hey, Cori what happened to you last night? I thought you were coming to the show.

CORI

Ugh, can we not talk about it? Same as usual. How was the show, though?

SKYY

It was sooo tite! The whole crowd liked it! Hell, I'm not even into rock and I had to stand up.

JORDAN [turns his head to the side modestly]

Yeah, it was alright. I think they want us back for another show next month.

CORI & LAINNA

REALY?!

JORDAN

Yeah, I know right? Mr. V. said he really liked it so he would keep us posted on any new openings for us. But that's a month away. Your birthday is in what? Five days?

SKYY

Oh yeahhh. What are we gonna do?

CORI [winces]

Do?

LAINNA

Hey didn't you wanna go to that Def Poetry Festival on Saturday?

Cori stays silent, looking down at the floor for a moment. She mutters under her breath, looking frustrated.

SKYY

Wait, Oh *hell*—no uh uh don't tell me you planned on staying home taking care of Samantha and Eric again.

CORI

I didn't plan it, man. I don't have a choice. Mom's working a double shift and you know how she is about babysitters and stuff she just doesn't trust them.

LAINNA

What about Angela?

Cori rolls her eyes and groans. The bell rings. Mickey and Alex emerge from the crowd of students holding hands and talking. Lainna waves them down and they join their group of friends in the hallway.

ALEX [takes turns hugging everyone]

Hey

SKYY [as Alex hugs her]

Finally

MICKEY

What's up? Why does everyone look so pissed?

LAINNA

Please tell Cori that she needs to do something for her birthday. She's been sittin' there, waiting months for the Def Poetry Festival to come around, whining about how badly she wanted to go and how she wanted to read her stuff somewhere, and NOW she's tryna stay home and play Hot Wheels with her little brother.

ALEX

Wait, I remember you sayin something about that show. It's at the Poetry Lounge right? Cori, you seriously don't wanna go anymore?

CORI

Look, ok? I'm not *trying* to do *anything*. This is just how it worked out and that's it. I gotta stay home.

MICKEY

Yeah, but Cor this is *always* how it works out. You're always either stuck working or covering for your mom.

CORI

Okay, yeah, but there aren't many options here so all I can think of is just have you guys over and that's nothing special.

LAINNA

Well, I gave you my suggestion..

CORI

What, Angela? Hail no.

LAINNA

Why not?

CORI

That is the ultimate last resort. My mom would kick my ass if she found out I left the kids with my cousin.

JORDAN

Well, you runnin outta resorts sooo..

CORI

Guys, uh-uh. Maybe next time.

[CUT TO - SATURDAY NIGHT]

Cori finished the dishes and looks at the clock. It's 8:00 PM on her birthday, and there is nothing around the house to show for it. She goes in her room and sits down to write, but can't focus. She receives a text message from Lainna.

LAINNA [show message]

Happy Birthday, again. Are we coming to get you or driving past your house?

Cori dials the phone. She leaves her bedroom and looks into Samantha and Eric's room to find them sleeping.

CORI

I don't know.

LAINNA [phone]

UGHH. Come on. You need this.

CORI

But-

LAINNA

Cori, I know we're bothering you with this, but if you can answer one question I will never ask you to compromise with me or any of us again, okay?

CORI [inhales and exhales frustrated]

What?

LAINNA

What did your mom say to you today?

Cori looks down at the phone and stares at the empty house for a minute. She looks as though she could start crying any second, squeezes her mouth shut as she gives it one last thought, and raises the phone back to her ear.

CORI

Give me ten minutes.

EXT SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Cori is shown in various clips choosing an outfit, putting her hair up and carrying her younger siblings down the block. She arrives at a small house, walks up the steps and knocks on the door.

CORI

Angela! It's me!

The door opens and Cori's cousin Angela is shown smoking a cigarette. Tattooed arms stick out from a black wife beater, as Angela reaches for the children.

ANGELA

ONE! No later and I mean it. I got shit to do, too.

[smirks]

And Happy Birthday, by the way.

EXT DEF POETRY LOUNGE - NIGHT

Cori, Lainna, Mickey and Alex meet at the Poetry Lounge with Jordan and Skyy close behind. The line for the show wraps around the corner, and all of the other guests look a lot older than the kids.

MICKEY

Ohhh shit.

CORI

Is this the right place?

ALEX [looking around]

Yeah, it's the same lounge as last year. It's a big show, don't worry.

JORDAN

Yeah we'll get in. Just hold on a little. Dang, I'm surprised we're here at all. Your mom decided to take over?

CORI [smiles]

Nope. I let Angela babysit. I know my mom'll be mad, but she's not that bad. Just a little..

SKYY

Crazy [Cori looks like she's having second thoughts]

MICKEY [laughing]

Hell, yeah-

LAINNA

The point is, Cori is here now and we are gonna give you the best birthday ever. So stop sayin' stuff to scare her off, sheeze.

SKYY

Yeah, well, we're happy you're here, too. [wraps an arm around Cori]
Now, Mr. Musician [looking to Jordan] get us in here.

LAINNA

There's a security guard [waving down a man in all black]. Let me see how long the wait is.

SECURITY GUARD [looking annoyed, eyeing the boys]

Is there a problem here?

JORDAN

No, we just wanted to know when the doors opened. The show was supposed to start at 9:30, right?

SECURITY GUARD

Oh, no. The pre-show started at 9:30. These people are waiting for the Def Festival at 11:00.

The entire crowd eyes Jordan angrily.

CORI

Jordan, what the—I thought you said the show started at nine thirty.

JORDAN

Hey, I—that's what I thought it said.

MICKEY

Yeah, man. It's getting' cold out here. I know it's Cori's birthday n all but I could think of better stuff to spend my ten bucks on right now and not wait out here for an hour.

SECURITY GUARD

Ten? Whoa Whoa Whoa. You guys really didn't do enough research on tonight. The tickets are thirty dollars.

KIDS [in unison]

Thirty?!

JORDAN [defensively]

Hold on, wait, the flyer said ten. The show's always ten.

SECURITY GUARD

Sir, you must've gotten the pre-show flyer. It starts at ten and those tickets are ten bucks.

SKYY

Wow, so this plan is basically shot to hell.

ALEX

Pretty much.

The kids all file past Jordan mumbling under their breath, while getting out of line. Cori hangs behind, looking at the ground. Jordan waves off the others, but goes up to Cori.

JORDAN

Man, Cori I'm sorry.

CORI

It's cool. You guys were right, I don't really trust Angela with the kids anyways, so I'll just go home.

MICKEY

Nah, man. Come on you already put in all the effort to get out of the house for once, just stay out and we'll find something.

CORI

But—

JORDAN

Cori— We didn't go out tonight to see the show. We're out tonight to celebrate your birthday so we're gonna do that and *then*, if you still don't have fun we will take you home. Hell, I'll walk you home. Now what was the other part of that stuff you were telling Lai?

CORI

What stuff?

JORDAN

She said you were whining about how much you wanted to go to the show and see other poets perform and stuff, right? What else did you wanna do?

CORI

Ohhh...read? It was nothing, I was gonna read my stuff but I wouldn't have been able to do that even if we did get in tonight, it's just a show for the professionals.

JORDAN

Well, we aren't going to the show tonight anymore. I know somewhere you might like a little better, anyways.

Cori looks at Jordan confused, and looks back at their friends standing near the parking lot. She looks down at her phone and smiles.

CORI

We have an hour and a half of my birthday left.

EXT LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

The kids are shown riding in Mickey's car, Jordan in the passenger seat motioning directions and arguing with Mickey as the others goof around and sing Happy Birthday to Cori. Cori looks out of the window as the city scenery flashes by. They stop by tourist attractions of LA, taking pictures and running around, stopping at a dimly lit building with a sign that says "Agape'" on the front. Jordan opens the door and they enter.

LAINNA

J Where are we?

The small theater is half full and the walls are decorated with pictures of jazz and rock musicians, saxophones and surrealist paintings. A young singer sings into the microphone and the group looks around while Jordan finds them seats.

CORI

I like this place.

MICKEY

Yeah, it's waayy different from the lounge. Jordan how'd you hear about this place?

JORDAN

My uncle used to own a part of it. I would come here to hang out up until a year ago when he sold it. It's still kinda the same, though.

After the first few acts, the kids really begin to enjoy themselves, and the emcee calls for the next act to come to the stage.

JORDAN

Still wanna go home?

CORI

Jordan this place is crazy, I love it!

JORDAN

Really?

Cori [nods]

It's midnight, though. It old Angela I'd be back to pick up Sam and E by one.

JORDAN

Well there's only one more thing for you to do.

Cori looks at Jordan, and he carefully takes her bag from her lap. He pulls out the notebook that Cori always carries around with her, and puts it in her hands. The others see what Jordan is doing, and turn their attention to him and Cori.

ALEX

Cori, you're gonna read?

CORI

Uhhhhmmmm.

JORDAN [whispers]

Come on. At least get one thing that you wanted.

Cori smirks and goes up to the stage. She speaks a few unknown words to the emcee, who nods and then waits for the current act to finish strumming their guitar before going on to announce Cori.

EMCEE

And next we have a newcomer. Cori Denalane.

The audience claps and Cori's friends shout a few random cheers of support as she climbs onto the stage.

CORI

This is called, Smile.

I want someone to smile for me.

Evaporate tears into Sunkist bright clouds

That don't hang over our heads,

But instead bring pure weightless highlights

To the infinite blue mass above.

I'm not asking for specifics, but I want love.

You could be my amnesia

Every word you speak

Motion you make,

Leaving my body where it is

Because you don't want that

Brings me out of a world filled

With angst. Into a place you built

Just for me. Not physically,

But mentally.

Filled with buckets of black sand

And turquoise oceans. Waves and

Your fingers massage the pain away.

Not love lasting forever—not unless you want to—

But enough to get us by

On a beautiful high.

The audience claps and Cori's friends go crazy. She smiles as the camera fades out.

INT CAR - NIGHT

Mickey drives everyone home, and the kids all congratulate Cori on her poem excitedly. Cori smiles and laughs, thanking her friends for taking her out. When the car arrives at her house, however, her smile fades as she notices her mom's car in the driveway and the living room lights on.

CORI

Ohhhh FUCK.

LAINNA

Oh man. What happened to her double shift?

Cori buries her head in her hands, suddenly looking exhausted and confused. She looks down at her phone.

CORI

Oh my God, she's been calling me since eleven thirty.

JORDAN

Cor, we-

Cori jumps out of the car as it comes to a stop. She runs to the house, opening the door to find her mother sitting on the couch, staring at the wall in front of her.

INT CORI'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

CORI

Mom-

RENEE

Where the hell have you been?!

CORI

Mom, I-

RENEE [stands and approaches Cori]

Angela's?! You left the kids at *Angela's*?! I don't even wanna hear it!
What in the hell would make you do something so stupid! You didn't
tell me anything, didn't answer my calls! Where were you?!

CORI

Out with Lai and them.

RENEE

Lai and them. Doing what?!

CORI

We went to the poetry lounge for a show and they had me read. It was
nothing, mom.

RENEE

Nothing! *It was nothing, mom.* Leaving my kids with that tramp cousin
of yours isn't *nothing*! What could have happened if I hadn't gotten
off early?

Cori's face starts to redden as her frustration with her mother
builds.

CORI

Did anything happen, mom?

RENEE

That's not the point! You were supposed to be here watching them and
no! You decide to mess around out of nowhere and dump them off on
Angela.

CORI

Because I knew if I asked you you would have said no! And it wasn't
out of nowhere! I always have to watch them and you never seem to care
that I don't have the time!

Five-year-old Samantha appears in the hallway, rubbing her eyes.

SAMANTHA

Cori? Is it still your birthday or is it over when the sun comes up?

RENEE

Sweetie, not now. Another day soon, but not now. Go back to bed.

Cori looks at Samantha, then glares at her mom.

CORI [speaking slowly]

No, Sammy. Mom's right. It's not my birthday now. My birthday ended two hours ago.

Renee's eyes widen and look toward Samantha, confused.

RENEE

What? What are you talking about? Cori's birthday is the twenty-eighth and that's not for-

CORI

Last night.

The tension in Renee's face is released as her mouth drops. She looks around confused, as though looking for a calendar to confirm her misconception. Cori leaves the living room, storms into her room and slams the door. She flops onto the bed and buried her face in the pillow, but does not cry. She feels herself tearing up and grabs for her notebook and begins to write.

INT CORI'S BEDROOM - DAY

Cori wakes up to find that she's fallen asleep on her notebook. A birthday card lies on her nightstand with "I'm sorry, Love Mommy" written inside of it. Cori shakes her head, and looks out the window to see that her mom's car is gone. She looks at her phone to see that she has five new text messages on her phone.

JORDAN

I m soooo sry man. Tell ur mom its my fault.

LAINNA

R u ok?

MICKEY

Hit me back when u get this.

JORDAN

R u up? Go2 beach @ sk8 park if u can. We'll b there @ 6.

JORDAN

We owe u. u mite as well.

Cori reads through the messages and then looks at the clock on her nightstand. It is six o' five in the morning, and the sky is starting to lighten. She crawls out of bed. She still has on the same clothes and shoes from the night before. She pulls on a hoodie and walks out of the room.

EXT VENICE BEACH - DAY

Cori walks a few blocks down to Venice Beach, passing the boardwalk to find her friends sitting near skate park, facing the ocean. She joins them without speaking, settling on a spot on the sand in between Lainna and Jordan. They all look at one another and smirk, then look back to the ocean as the sun rises above it.