



Unrequited Love

Terry-Jo Thorne

CHARACTERS:

NARRATOR:	Person telling the story	LOYISA:	Schoolboy, Raymond's friend
RAYMOND:	Main character, schoolboy	PORTIA:	Schoolgirl who Raymond likes
ASHRAF:	Schoolboy, Raymond's friend		

SCENE 1

School grounds. Raymond, Ashraf and Loyisa are relaxing during their lunch break. Raymond is sitting on a raised platform/fence, while his friends are on the ground. Raymond tugs on Ashraf's sweater.

NARRATOR: Being in love is never easy. Meet our lovesick Raymond, for whom Portia can do no wrong. All he wants is her attention, but to get it he has to overcome a few obstacles first. Luckily for him, his best friends, Loyisa and Ashraf, are close by to give him guidance.

RAYMOND: There she is, Ashraf, there she is! Check.

Ashraf half-heartedly turns to look at the girl Raymond is pointing at. He rolls his eyes and turns back to Raymond.

ASHRAF: Don't ruk my sweater so, especially if it's for this again. Raymond, you can stop now with this Portia business. You go on and on about her and nothing happens. Except holes in my jersey. Look! Now look here, this is from you, I know it. Get off, man!

Raymond waves Ashraf's complaints away, still staring at the girl in the distance.

RAYMOND: What if I just went to talk to her now? I mean, what if she feels the same way about me?

Loyisa sniggers aloud and Raymond looks at him aghast. Ashraf is still fussing and mumbling about his jersey.

RAYMOND: Now what are you laughing so for?

LOYISA: Raymond, look at you. You got no chance with Portia. Don't even waste your time. You want her to laugh you right off the school grounds. No, brother, she might even call SAPS on you for a criminal offence.

RAYMOND: What offence?

LOYISA: Of blinding her with your ugliness.

Ashraf and Loyisa laugh while Raymond pretends to kick Loyisa.

RAYMOND: The mirrors at your house must be broken then because I wouldn't be talking like that if I'd seen myself this morning.

ASHRAF: He's not wrong, Loyisa. I wouldn't talk if I were you.

Loyisa sucks his teeth and flicks his hand at them in pretend irritation.

LOYISA: And you? I see the ladies lined up for you, is it? Hey, girls! (*shouts*) Get away, can't you see he's busy?

Two girls walking past them assume that Loyisa is talking to them and throw something at him in annoyance, telling him to get lost. Loyisa and Ashraf pretend to fight for a while, but Raymond hushes them.

RAYMOND: It's you – that's the problem. You two are killing my chances. You're too childish. Sit up, won't you? Stop acting like idiots. I have to get some better friends. Better-looking, also.

LOYISA: But that would make you look even uglier then.

RAYMOND: (*thoughtfully*) You're right. OK, then just shut up for a while and make me look good. I think she's coming in our direction.

Raymond sighs, still watching Portia in the distance.

RAYMOND: But you are right still ... She won't go for me. You know why?

Both Ashraf and Loyisa open their mouths to say something but are stopped by Raymond's raised hand.

RAYMOND: Shut up. I don't know why I asked. Here, I'll tell you – it's money, guys. I don't have any.

ASHRAF: So? Everyone here is struggling. You're not the only one.

RAYMOND: Not like me. I mean, there's poor and there's poor.

LOYISA: It's true, I've been to your house. You're poorer than Samuel Mgoduso, and nobody in his family is working. Nobody.

RAYMOND: Hey, I work, so I'm not poorer than Samuel. But they have that new RDP house, isn't it? OK, but still, I work, so me and Mama aren't that bad off.

ASHRAF: Doesn't your mommy work? How much money do you make at that butcher?

RAYMOND: She does what she can. Her gout is bad, though. Bad. And I won't tell you what I make at the butcher – it's no business of yours. But now tell me, what can I do if Portia won't look at me because I'm so poor?

Loyisa sits up.

LOYISA: You must make her think you're not poor.
ASHRAF: Ja, but even if she thinks you're not poor, how do you make her think you're not ugly?

Loyisa laughs and Raymond throws a stone lightly at Ashraf.

RAYMOND: OK, how?

Loyisa looks Raymond up and down with distaste. Raymond ignores him. He hops off his platform and does a little twirl for his friend, his antics goofy and exaggerated. He sticks his foot out to show broken shoes, sticks his finger in a hole in his trousers and then does a little dance to show off his worn sweater and school shirt beneath.

Loyisa lies back down again.

LOYISA: Nope, forget it. It's hopeless. No way. Give up. Why don't you try someone else in your league. What about that crazy old woman who swears at all the boys when they play soccer on Fridays? She might give you a chance.

Raymond gently kicks Loyisa and his friend grabs his leg as he does so, almost causing him to fall.

ASHRAF: Stop! It's Portia!

Suddenly, Portia walks into the scene, quite near them, and the boys immediately freeze, Raymond mid-fall. He grins at her as she goes past and gives her a little salute and a nod. She gives a small, polite wave and looks away quickly, talking to her small group of friends. After they leave, Raymond groans and grabs his face with his hands, kicking Loyisa off him.

LOYISA: What was that? Yoh, did you salute her? Is she a soldier, man? What's wrong with you, brother?

Raymond returns to his platform, despondent.

RAYMOND: I don't know, I panicked. Was it that bad?

Ashraf and Loysia both nod and laugh. Raymond rallies quickly.

RAYMOND: Never mind. Now help me, I need a way to convince her I'm not poor. Or at least not that poor. Come!

Raymond claps his hands and the three of them talk inaudibly as the scene closes.

SCENE 2

NARRATOR: Raymond has been working hard at his part-time job at Mr Salim's butchery all week. At the end of the week, when he is paid, he makes a plan to appear wealthier than he is to win Portia's affection. He provides for his mother, but he also keeps a small amount of money aside, whatever he can.

In class Raymond, Loyisa and Ashraf are sitting at their desks, catching up on the weekend's activities. Around them the students are chatting and joking around, throwing things at each other. They are animated and talkative. Portia sits with her group of friends at the opposite side of the classroom.

RAYMOND: OK, guys, I did something this weekend.

LOYISA: What, prayed to the Lord and Saviour for a new face? Because that one looks like a punishment for whatever your parents did wrong.

ASHRAF: Sins of the father, you know.

RAYMOND: Listen! I bought her something. To show I have money. Look, I know what I look like – torn clothes, borrowed books, whatever. But if I can afford to buy her something nice, then she might not think I'm so poor, right?

ASHRAF: *(shaking his head thoughtfully)* I don't know, does it really cancel it out? Mustn't you also look good, because girls care about that stuff. More, even, than the stuff you buy them. I think you wasted your money, brother; you should've spent it on new pants. That one looks like it belonged to your oupa's oupa. Did it? Is that where you got it?

LOYISA: Huh-uh, I think it belonged to his oupa's ouma – look how much space there is in the hips. Those are some big-boned lady pants. Come here, what does it look like without the belt?

RAYMOND: *(ignoring both of them)* It's too late, I already bought her something. Now I must just find a time to give it to her. I don't want everyone else around in case she's embarrassed, you know? Not everybody likes to get presents in front of other people. Especially if they don't like what they get, then they have to act like they're happy and whatnot. I must find my moment, boys ...

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