

UNREQUITED

A Ten-Minute Dramatic Duet

by
David-Matthew Barnes



Brooklyn Publishers, LLC

Toll-Free 888-473-8521

Fax 319-368-8011

Web www.brookpub.com

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CHARACTERS:

MERCURY JONES - 15. Quirky. Eccentric. Somewhat introverted. She has a unique style that is all her own. She dresses outrageously and her hair is often streaked with a variety of colors.

TRAVIS EMERSON - 16. Good looking. Athletic. Emotionally scarred. He is deeply plagued by his dysfunctional family and their issues.

PLACE: The supply room of Abraham Lincoln High School, in a rural town in Arizona.

TIME: The night of a senior prom. Spring. Present year.

MUSIC: A suggested song for productions of this play is Unwanted as recorded by Avril Lavigne.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: Unrequited received a world premiere at The Creative Place Theatre in New York. The play opened on February 24, 2003. The show was produced by Love Creek Productions and directed by Josh Adler. This production was nominated for the Samuel French Festival 2003. The original cast was as follows:

MERCURY JONES, Dawn Merin

TRAVIS EMERSON, Michael Schreiber

DEDICATION: For Stephanie Kuehnert. Just for being herself.

(When the play begins, we are inside of the dingy and dusty supply room of Abraham Lincoln High School, a small school that is located in a rural section of Arizona.

It is the night of the senior prom and music can be heard, faintly drifting into the room, creating a dream-like quality.

The room is small and cramped and resembles a modern-day dungeon. Cobwebs hang from the high corners of the room. Metal shelves are stacked with dated school supplies. Cleaning supplies such as mops, buckets, rakes, shovels, and trashcans are all cluttered around in a permanent state of disarray. This room has not been used on a regular basis for at least fifteen years.

The room is very claustrophobic and even somewhat eerie.

There is a single window, small and nearly at the edge of the ceiling, through which cool blue moonlight pours inside in thick and sharp strips.

A few seconds pass before the door creeps open and MERCURY peers inside. The volume of the music increases and fills the room like a swell. MERCURY is dressed in a stunning white prom dress, which is starkly contrasted by a pair of black combat boots. A rhinestone necklace, matching earrings and barrettes shimmer as SHE steps further into the room and into the beams of moonlight. The doors slam shut behind her. MERCURY quickly checks to make sure that SHE isn't locked in by opening the door and letting it close again. The volume of the music decreases and returns to almost a murmur. MERCURY moves deeper into the room, colliding with a metal trashcan.

(MERCURY remains still, almost frozen, for a moment.)

MERCURY: (to an imagined person beside her) My name is Mercury Jones. I know I've gone to school with you for nine years now, but you only know me as that weird girl who sits behind you in history class. (there is an imagined response, to which SHE laughs) Oh Travis, you say the funniest things sometimes. Really, you do. (another laugh, but softer and more innocent) Normally, I wouldn't be caught dead at a zombie fiesta like this airhead prom, but I'm here because of you, Travis. Because even though you represent everything I have decided to loathe and hate and you have chosen to surround yourself with shallow, vapid, insecure, over-privileged hedgehogs, I still love you. I know you're different from them. You just don't have the guts to prove it. But I believe in you. I know if you were given the

chance to be yourself, to be who you really are - I have been in love with you since you smacked me in the face with that red rubber dodge ball and knocked my tooth out in the fourth grade and I bled all over the place until they rushed me to the emergency room in an ambulance and I lost my shoe. It's love, Travis – that is what has brought me here. Unfortunately, when I look at you, my eyes start to cross and when I talk with you, I end up spitting all over myself. But tonight, I am here to tell you that I am, without a doubt, one hundred percent, totally and completely, insanely and madly...

(SHE stops as she hears someone laughing outside the door. MERCURY ducks behind the metal shelves, out of view. The door bursts open and TRAVIS enters in a rage. The music lifts and dies down as the door opens and then closes behind him. HE pounds a fist against one of the walls and kicks one of the trashcans. HE is wearing a white tuxedo shirt, unbuttoned a little and untucked, black dress pants and black patent leather shoes. From a front pocket HE pulls out a flask. HE winces a little from the aftertaste and wipes his mouth clean with the back of his right hand. MERCURY emerges from her dark hiding spot. TRAVIS does not see her at first. SHE clears her throat and TRAVIS nearly jumps out of his skin.)

TRAVIS: What are you doing in here?

MERCURY: Hiding. Did I scare you?

TRAVIS: Yeah, you scared me. You shouldn't sneak up on people like that.

MERCURY: Sorry.

TRAVIS: You should be.

MERCURY: I said I was sorry.

TRAVIS: I didn't know anyone was in here.

MERCURY: We're locked in.

TRAVIS: What are you talking about?

MERCURY: The door – it locks automatically.

TRAVIS: How come you didn't – You could have said something. No one will ever find me in here.

MERCURY: I know. That's why I'm here.

TRAVIS: You locked yourself in?

MERCURY: Not on purpose.

TRAVIS: You're weird.

MERCURY: **(boldly)** That's right, Travis Emerson. I'm the weird girl who sits behind you in history class.

TRAVIS: Why are you looking at me like that?

MERCURY: Like what?

TRAVIS: You have this weird look on your face.

MERCURY: I do?

TRAVIS: Yeah, you looked at me and your eyes crossed a little. It's scary.

MERCURY: Would you prefer that I not look at you?

TRAVIS: Just don't stare at me.

MERCURY: I'll try.

TRAVIS: What are you doing here? You don't seem like the type of girl who goes to the prom.

MERCURY: What's that supposed to mean?

TRAVIS: Do you have a date?

MERCURY: I brought my cousin.

TRAVIS: Do I know him?

MERCURY: No. He's in college. He lives in Miami.

TRAVIS: You brought your *cousin* to the prom?

MERCURY: Yeah, but he's stoned out of his mind.

TRAVIS: Pot?

MERCURY: Ecstasy. He loves the stuff.

TRAVIS: Never tried it.

MERCURY: Me either.

TRAVIS: Gimme a break. You're a total druggie.

MERCURY: No, I'm not.

TRAVIS: I don't believe you.

MERCURY: Why would I lie to you?

TRAVIS: Because you're a freak.

MERCURY: I don't do drugs. I'm not a loser, Travis.

TRAVIS: How do you know my name?

MERCURY: Doesn't everybody know your name?

TRAVIS: I guess. It's a small town.

MERCURY: I'll bet you ten bucks that you don't know my name.

TRAVIS: *(after a moment of thought)* Jupiter.

MERCURY: Close. It's Mercury.

TRAVIS: Your mom named you after a planet?

MERCURY: No, I was born in Mercury, Nevada. It's hot there.

TRAVIS: It's hot in here.

MERCURY: *(hopeful)* Really?

TRAVIS: Mercury, Nevada – isn't that the place where they test nuclear stuff?

MERCURY: There's probably radiation in my veins.

TRAVIS: Man, I knew you were weird.

MERCURY: Can I have a drink?

TRAVIS: I don't have – *(SHE points to his front pocket. Reluctantly HE pulls out the flask and hands it to her.)* All right, you can have a sip, but that's it. This stuff has to last me all night.

MERCURY: *(SHE uncaps the flask but doesn't drink yet)* Your father's whiskey?

TRAVIS: Yeah, so? Wait – how did you know that?

MERCURY: He keeps it hidden in the bottom drawer of his desk at home. Every once in a while, he drinks himself into oblivion and you're the one who has to put him to bed. Sometimes he even vomits on himself. He has a favorite chair. The brown recliner with the rip on the right arm and some of the stuffing is spilling out. He sits there for hours, drinking, saying mean things to your mother, telling your sister that she's a slut and calling you a big disappointment. Sometimes, he doesn't even make it to dinner. He's already passed out by then. You pick him up out of the chair and you carry him to his room, with one arm around his neck, like you think about strangling him. His feet drag across the floor and sometimes, he's so heavy that you stumble and knock things over, like pictures or one of those teacups that your Mom collects. And none of you say it to each other, but you all silently agree that things – that *life* – would be so much simpler if he would just die. But he won't. Because he's filled with rage and angry people always outlive the happy ones. Because they're stronger.

TRAVIS: Who told you that?

MERCURY: And your mom...she locks herself in the bathroom, sometimes for hours. She counts pills and contemplates. Usually, she tweezes her eyebrows – so much that they bleed.

TRAVIS: How do you know all of this?

MERCURY: Relax. Don't freak out. I used to be friends with your sister.

TRAVIS: You did? When?

MERCURY: I was twelve. She hasn't spoken to me in three years. Since she became a cheerleader, I've become invisible.

TRAVIS: You were in my house?

MERCURY: Almost every weekend for an entire summer. *(SHE hands him back the flask)* I've already had your father's whiskey before. I don't like it. It's the cheap stuff.

TRAVIS: I don't even know you.

MERCURY: Yes, you do. Remember, I'm the weird girl who sits behind you in –

TRAVIS: In science class. Yeah, yeah. You already said that.

MERCURY: Actually, I'm in your history class.

TRAVIS: I've never seen you in that class.

MERCURY: Maybe you should turn around and look at what's behind you once in awhile.

TRAVIS: Maybe you should mind your own business. *(takes a swig from the flask)* This is crazy.

MERCURY: You better take it easy on that stuff. We might be stuck in here all night – maybe even all weekend.

TRAVIS: No, someone will come looking for me.

MERCURY: Like who?

TRAVIS: You don't seem very anxious to leave.

MERCURY: Are you?

TRAVIS: Why wouldn't I be? This place gives me the creeps.

MERCURY: I kind of like it.

TRAVIS: Well, you would. Girls like you who dress strange, you're all into death and witchcraft and worshipping the devil and stuff like that.

MERCURY: You've got it all wrong. Girls like me are into poetry and foreign films and postcards from Paris. We're quiet. We keep to ourselves because if we opened our mouths, no one would listen to us.

TRAVIS: I think it's all a front.

MERCURY: Prove me wrong.

END OF FREE PREVIEW