

Cheap Fate

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Inspired by the Love Story of Esther and Paul Grachan

As Heard on This American Life

ESTHER, 45, a beautiful mother of 3 daughters. Tall with radiant green eyes and perfectly blown out brown hair.

On the floor with her 3 daughters, Esther gets up.

ESTHER

Alright girls, its time for bed.

DAISY, 12 years old, brown long hair, green eyes, skinny and tall; in her pajama set that matches her sisters.

DAISY

It's so early mom, please!

HALE and REBECCA, ages 10 and 8, both have brown hair, blue eyes, skinny, tall, like their older sister.

HALE

Yea mom, pleaseeee!

All 3 of the girls are whining in a cute way to procrastinate their bed time.

REBECCA

Please mom tell us a story.

ESTHER

A story?

All three of the young girls jump into their mother's large king-sized bed, as Esther sits on the edge of the bed.

ESTHER

Well what kind of story?

DAISY

A loveeeee story!

REBECCA

Yes! Oh please a love story!!

Esther leans in.

ESTHER

Well sweet pea's, I have just the story for you.

All three girls giggle to each other.

ESTHER
Are you girls ready?

The girls tuck themselves under the covers and get comfortable.

FADE TO:

2

(FLASHBACK) INT. RESTURANT - DAY

2

ROSE, A young brunette teenage girl, wearing a skirt and white short sleeve shirt, she is the definition of pretty.

JOHN, a teenage boy, brown hair brushed back, with his letterman jacket on, he exudes confidence.

ESTHER V/O
It was 1989, and a young 17 year old girl, uhm, Rose, yes Rose, was out to dinner with her high school boyfriend.

Rose sits in anger with her arms crossed as John leans forward towards her at the table they're sitting at in the restaurant.

ROSE
Just say it Johnny. You know your going to just say it.

JOHN
Please Rose, stop getting upset.

ROSE
Just say it!

JOHN
I want to break up Rose.

ROSE
Because of Megan Smith right?

JOHN
No Rose, I just- I

Rose begins to get up from the table.

ROSE
Oh Shut up Johnny, you're so full of it.

(CONTINUED)

ESTHER V/O

She ran out of the restaurant as fast as she could. She was heartbroken. She drove home, and told herself that some day she was going to find her soulmate. In her bedroom that night, she went through her wallet to take out the pictures of her and Johnny, there was only one dollar in the wallet. She took a pencil, and wrote the name "Rose B." on it. That night, she told herself that whoever gets this dollar, is going to be her soulmate and the man she marries.

CUT TO:

3 INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

3

STEVE, 17, average height, shaggy brown hair, dressed in a button up and blue jeans, stands outside a locker with yellow sunflowers in his hand.

ESTHER V/O

Just a few states away, there was a boy named ... Steve. Steve was waiting outside his crush's locker hoping to ask her to formal.

Steve standing there anxiously, the bell goes off, and the hallways fill quickly. In the distance he see's a beautiful blonde haired girl.

NANCY, 17, blonde, innocent, and beautiful. Carrying books in her hand.

Nancy walks down the hall, toward the locker where Steve is standing. Moments before she makes it to the locker she is stopped by another boy.

Steve starts to panic. Nancy leaves the conversation with the boy and runs to Steve.

NANCY

Steve! You're never going to guess who just asked me to the spring formal.

Steve's mood drops 5 notches.

(CONTINUED)

STEVE
Uhm, who Nancy?

NANCY
Noah Rider!! How crazy, he just
came up to me and asked.

Nancy putting her books in her locker.

NANCY
Pretty flowers, what are they for?
Steve is in a daze and doesn't respond.

NANCY
Steve!
Steve snaps out of it.

STEVE
Thats great Nancy, thats really
great.
Steve walks away head bowed, leaving Nancy confused.

END FLASHBACK.

4 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT (PRESENT)

4

HALE
So, Steve never told her that he
loved her?

REBECCA
And Rose, what happened to Rose?!

DAISY
Yea mom, this doesn't seem like a
love story.

REBECCA
Yea.

HALE
Yea.

ESTHER
Just listen girls.

FADE TO:

5

(FLASHBACK)-INT. COFFEE SHOP DAY- NYC 1997

5

ESTHER V/O

Fast forward 8 years ... girls you keeping up? Steve was with his friend, Debby, at a New York City coffee shop waiting in line.

DEBBY, 25, short, red hair, very loud, in a black women's pant suit.

DEBBY

Steve, what are you doing tonight?

STEVE

No plans, why Deb.

DEBBY

I'm setting you up.

Steve turns to the counter at the coffee shop to order. He orders and then responds to Debby.

STEVE

No.

DEBBY

Yes, I am Steve, you can't be a loser who's secretly a catch your whole life! It's time.

STEVE

I'm not a loser.

Debby smirks at Steve.

DEBBY

You have loser tendencies.

STEVE

Deb, thank you but I promise you I'm okay.

Debby shoves a picture in Steve's face.

DEBBY

On the left. Her name is Rose and your taking her out tonight, and your gonna fall in love and you can thank me at the wedding okay?

Steve grabs the picture and smiles in awe of Rose's beauty.

(CONTINUED)

STEVE

On the left? She's single?

DEBBY

Yes! She's my friend from college,
and she just broke up with her jerk
ass boyfriend and needs a nice
amazing guy. Okay. Say okay Steve!
Say okay!

The barista interrupts.

BARISTA

That'll be 5 dollars, please.

Steve hands over the money, while responding to Debby.

STEVE

Okay, Okay, Okay. Yea, I'll go out
with her.

Debby throws her hands up in accomplishment, and screams.

DEBBY

Yesssss!

Steve gets embarrassed.

STEVE

Shhhhh, Deb.

The barista hands back Steve his change.

DEBBY

Im sorry, I'm just excited. Okay
perfect. I'll have her meet you at
the Smith at 8:00.

STEVE

Alright Deb.

Steve looks down at the money he was just given, on a dollar
bill was the name written in pencil "Rose B." He, in
confusion, smiles and puts the dollar bill in his pocket.

END FLASHBACK:

6 INT. BEDROOM- NIGHT (PRESENT)

6

REBECCA

Oh my gosh.

HALE

What?! What?

DAISY

What!

REBECCA

It's Roses' dollar! It's the dollar
Rose wrote on when she was a
teenager!

All the girls gasp!

HALE

Is it mom?! Is it?

ESTHER

Just listen you silly impatient
girls!

FADE TO:

7 (FLASHBACK)-INT. THE SMITH NIGHT- (1997)

7

Steve is sitting at a two person table in the restaurant,
yellow sunflowers in hand.

ESTHER V/O

So, Steve is sitting there, it's
around 8:05 at this point, and he
is starting to sweat a little bit.
And then all of a sudden, the door
opens and his eyes open real, real
wide. He starts to blush and ...
its Rose!

Rose walks into the restaurant, glowing. She goes up to the
hostess, and is pointed to Steve.

Steve cannot stop smiling. Rose, also blushing starts to
walk over to the table, as Steve gets up.

STEVE

Rose?

ROSE

Steve?

(CONTINUED)

Steve, still smiling walks over to her chair and pulls out her seat.

STEVE
Hi, wow, uhm ... hi.

Rose sits in the chair he holds for her.

ROSE
Thank you, hi yourself. How are you?

Steve is in awe. He falls in love at first sight.

STEVE
I'm, I'm doing amazing. How about yourself.

ROSE
I'm doing very well

She smiles.

ROSE
I'm not gonna lie, Debby wont stop talking about you, saying "I've got to meet the great Steve."

Steve blushes.

STEVE
You look beautiful.

Rose blushes.

ROSE
Oh no, but thank you.

Steve cannot stop staring at Rose.

ROSE
Steve?

STEVE
I brought you something.

ROSE
Oh my, you really didn't have to.

STEVE
Don't get your hopes up. It's not that great.

They both laugh.

Steve pulls out his wallet and takes out a dollar bill.

STEVE

I found this dollar bill in my wallet today, and it says your name on it, and I just thought it was kinda cool, since I was planning on meeting you today and everything.

Rose's jaw drops to the floor.

Steve is confused. Rose has yet to reply for a few seconds.

STEVE

You know, it was a kinda stupid thing to show you anyways, never mind. So tell me-

Rose interrupts him.

ROSE

Can I see that please?

STEVE

The dollar?

Rose nods, Steve hands her the dollar as she holds it close to her face, studying it.

STEVE

Everything okay?

Rose grows the biggest smile on her face.

ROSE

Yes, Yes!

She laughs.

ROSE

It's just. It's just.

ESTHER V/O

And in that moment Rose knew that she was going to marry Steve. She knew he was her soulmate, and fell head over heels for him in seconds.

STEVE

It's...

ROSE
Remind me to tell you something
another time, okay?

STEVE
Yea, for sure.

ROSE
Can I keep the dollar, do you mind?

STEVE
No not at all, it's yours to keep.

END FLASHBACK.

8 INT. BEDROOM- NIGHT (PRESENT)

8

ESTHER
And they did get married, have been
for many years to this day, they
started a family with three
beautiful young girls.

The door opens to the bedroom and a man walks in.

PAUL, 45, tall, brown hair, skinny and handsome in a suit,
briefcase in hand.

PAUL
Hello my girls! What are you all
doing in my bed?!

HALE
Daddy!!!

All the girls jump out of bed and jump their Dad.

ESTHER
Hi sweetheart.

Paul gives Esther a big kiss.

PAUL
What are you crazy girls doing up,
its past your bedtime!

REBECCA
Mom was telling us a story!

DAISY
A loveeeee story!!

(CONTINUED)

PAUL

Ohhhh, a love story! What about?!

DAISY

It's about a dollar and this girl named Rose wrote on it when she was super young hoping to find her true love, and this boy Steve found it and it was her love!

Paul smirks at Esther, who smiles back.

PAUL

Hmmm... a dollar you say?

REBECCA

Yes!

PAUL

And she wrote on it when she was young, and a boy named Steve found it? Interesting ...

All the girls are nodding, listening to their father.

Paul walks over to a picture frame on their TV stand, grabs it and turns around back to the girls on the bed.

PAUL

Kind of like this dollar?!

The girls grab the picture-framed dollar, as Paul walks over to his wife, and hugs her.

DAISY

Yes! Just like this one!!

HALE

YES!

REBECCA

Mom! Are you Rose?! And daddy, you're Steve.

Both Esther and Paul smile, and kiss again.

ESTHER

I don't know girls ...

Esther winks.

Written on the framed dollar bill in the hands of the daughters of Esther and Paul, in pencil "Esther B"...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

12.

As we...

FADE OUT:

END.