



[Announcer: Dananjaya Hettiarachchi, "I See Something". "I See Something, "Dananjaya Hettiarachchi.]

[Dananjaya Hettiarachchi enters from stage left and shakes the announcer's hand, then turns and walks toward the crowd, a rose in the (left) breast pocket of his suit, which is matched by the shades of his diagonally striped tie, the stripes of which point towards and run into and parallel to the hypotenuse of the shiny red silk handkerchief tucked into the pocket behind the rose, a right angle triangle of it sticking up and opening to the left as you face him.

Hettiarachchi looks out at the audience, smiling, then stops and looks at the rose as he pulls it from his pocket to smell it. He begins speaking.]

You and I are not very different from this flower. Just like this flower is unique, you are unique. All of us have something special that makes us as beautiful *[as this flower]*. Do you know what makes you special?

Now the answer to that can be a little difficult to find, because sometimes life has a cruel way of picking out your petals, breaking you in two, and throwing you into the trash. Now, when you're broken, it's very difficult to feel special.

Mr. Contest Chair, my fellow flowers. I can remember the first time I broke. I was 17 years old. I had already flunked high school and managed to get myself arrested. Now, I wasn't afraid of the cops, but there was one person I was very afraid of, and that was my mama. Raise your hand if you have an emotional mother. Let me see. Put them all

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together, you get my mama. [If you put them all together, you get my mama. / Put them all together, and you get my mama.] I can hear her scream outside the police station; even the cops were afraid. She came up to me, held the iron bars, looked into my eyes, and I saw a tear coming down her face.

Now I've seen my mama cry before, but mothers cry three **types of** tears: **tears of** joy, **tears of** sorrow, and **tears of** shame. And when a son sees a mother cry **tears of** shame, that's a life changing moment. She looked at me and said, "Son, I want you to be a better man." That night, when I drove home, my dad was waiting for me at home.

Now, my dad is a cool dad. Raise your hand if you have a cool dad. Put them all together you get my dad. My dad came up to me and said, "Son, it's OK. You flunked your exams. You already got arrested. That's fine. You **get** that **from your mother's side**. I want you to start working immediately." And I said, "OK."

So, my dad took me to meet one of his friends called Sam. Now, Sam was an accountant who had an accounting firm and had generously decided to make me his personal assistant. And there he was: He looked like a teddy bear, but this man was special. I looked at him, and he looked at me, and then he said the most amazing thing: He said, "Son, I see something in you, but I don't know what it is. If you decide to work with me, I can help you find that something." And I was like, "Whoa! That's the first time in my whole life somebody has ever told [me] (that)they see something in me. And I started working for Sam.

And **every day** after work, he used to tell me stories **about** the world, **about** history, **about** culture, **about** philosophy, and **it** was much more interesting than **what I learned in school**. And I discovered I can dream, and I started dreaming, ladies and gentlemen. After one year, I went back into [to] high school, completed my exams, and went into college.

After successfully completing college, I found a great girl, but not a job. I didn't know what I wanted to do with my life. Have you ever had that problem? And when you're lost, it's difficult to feel special. So, I went back to my cool dad, and I said, "Dad, I feel lost".

He said, "You are like your mother."

So, my dad introduced me to this strange club that had a strange name, with strange people, talking.

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On the first meeting, they told me to do something called a table topic. I aced it. But while I was speaking, I see a strange man seated in the back row, humble, simple, the unfailing quality of kindness in his eyes. As soon as I finished, he walked up to me, looked me dead straight in the eye and said, "**Son, I see something in you, but I don't know what it is.** If you come here twice a month, maybe we can find that something."

And ladies and gentlemen, I discovered I could speak, and I love speaking, and that led me to become a teacher. I know what it's like to not have enough money in your bank account. I know what it's like to worry when the bills start coming in. And sometimes in the middle of the night, I wake up my beautiful wife and ask her, "Honey, why did you marry me?"

She says, "**I saw something in you, but I still I don't know what it is.**"

Ladies and gentlemen, today I'm a dreamer, I'm a speaker and I learned the unfailing quality of unconditional love from my wife.

I was broken, and I've been broken, lost, and broke many times in my life, but the people in my life were able to reach into the trashcan [*reaching into the trashcan and taking out a whole rose*] and make me whole again. If it was up to me, I would have never been able to do that. And this is why if you have great people in your life, no matter how broke, how lost, or how broken you become, they can piece you back together.

Ladies and gentlemen, when I look at you, **I see something in you, but I don't know what it is.**

Over to you. [*signaling to the Contest Master then turning and smelling the rose, then throwing it into the audience*]

*The transcript is being developed with annotations.
Please come back to see this transcript developed.*