

The Story of Our Friendship  
By: Aman Khalid

Dear Kethan Iyer,

The first day we meet is still as vivid in my memory as the day of. I tell this story a lot, but basically Mrs. Iyer gave a speech about Kethan's condition and the entire second grade class was in shock. But honestly, I wasn't. It may have been because I felt like he was alienated and it reminded me of the homeless children in Pakistan. It wasn't pity though, it was something different. As a 1st grader it's impossible to imagine how such tiny decisions can define the rest of your life. If I had never made that move, I wouldn't be the person I am today. I was generally very shy so a move like that was so unlike me. So, I sit back and wonder why I introduced myself to Kethan. There was never a moment of fear or doubt only hope. Maybe God gave me the courage to change my life. I mean it sounds crazy, but that's destiny, right? Being put there in the same room couldn't have been a coincidence.

Our friendship blossomed throughout the first grade. I would sit outside every recess and talk about basketball. He convinced me to come to his house the first time because he told me he had a gamecube. He didn't. Our friendship really blossomed when we were alone. We didn't meet each other as apart of some group. It was me and him. We would literally sit there and talk about basketball as if we were grown men and that continued until the very end. At the end of the year as we were walking out to one of the last recesses we literally made a promise to each other to remain best friends for life. In some sort of weird way, I think we needed each other.

Kethan gave me confidence and he gave me strength. He allowed me to be me. No judgement, all ears. Kethan found a way to constantly reel you in. He was the epitome of charisma and class. Intelligence out the ass, literally. He would have appreciated that rhyme too. A lover of sports, music, and people. That was Kethan. I mean if you want to talk about thoughtful? For my birthday, he was able to conjure up all of my friends in an effort to buy me an Xbox One. He surprised the hell out of me and bought me the biggest birthday present I had ever received from ANYONE. That wasn't even it. He also managed to find me a limited-edition vinyl of my favorite album in which only 200 had been released. Our birthdays were a week apart. This week has been tough. He would have been 24.

One particular memory will always stick out to me more than any other. An indoor dunk contest: Aman versus Maya. Kethan couldn't dunk so he turned into our judge. I had been practicing for months, constantly getting wows from the now residing judge. Maya, who didn't even particularly like basketball, was just learning how to dunk. I had this in the bag. Surely enough, Kethan, being as thoughtful as he could be, let his sister win. Although here dunks were pretty terrible, she was younger than us. I mean it was just a stupid dunk contest. But when he kept saying I lost, I actually lost it. I was upset because Kethan had betrayed my trust. I think he used to tell that story because he realized that day that I needed him to be my anchor.

In all honesty, I think he knew. I don't mean to say that to offend anyone, just something that sticks with me. The last time I saw him was his birthday. It was different. There was this energy that's almost indescribable. As if he knew that it was the last time. He could hardly talk and I just remember how silent we both were. When we were together it didn't feel different, just as I was leaving I could feel palpable tension. He messaged me apologizing for the lack of communication as it was a struggle for him. I could care less, I just wanted him to get better.

I need an ending to this story but luckily, I'll never have one. Kethan was just a different human being. He managed to cope with his struggles and preserved despite all of it. He's inspired a generation of people to go out and do things in his name. Kethan touched the lives of so many different people that everyone has a different "Kethan" story of their own. Kethan was one of a kind. I always thought of it as a combination of his unique perspective, which gave him genuine happiness, and his caring and affectionate personality. He had a sparkle in his eye that I'll never forget and a beautiful laugh that I'll miss forever. I'll see you again, my friend, we have a lot to discuss.

Love,  
Aman Khalid