

Everlasting Friendships

“Chris, do you want to play some golf?” I slowly opened my eyes and lazily raised myself upright. Max and Kevin stood over me not knowing what I would be up for. I’ve known these guys since I was six; I need to get some fresh air and have some fun. “Sure” I muttered. “I’ll be down in a sec.” I slipped into a fresh pair of pressed khakis and threw on a polo sweater and was ready to go. I hadn’t been in school or left my house for weeks. I moped around my house all day filled with frustration, confusion, and denial. It was almost as if I were living everyday in a dream; nothing felt real to me.

The crisp autumn air of a late September day felt so soothing to inhale. I’ve been cooped up in my house for way too long. Neither Max nor Kevin mentioned anything about what had gone on over the past couple of weeks. While being trapped in my house like a rat, I was always forced to think about it and it was beginning to take a toll on my patience.

Playing golf with my friends was more than just playing golf. It was a chance for me to get my mind off of everything and bond; it felt like it had been years since I’ve done this. Our round was filled with continuous laughter and memories. They threw in different anecdotes that I had missed out on while being out of school. Even though we only played five holes, it seemed like we had been playing all day. I didn’t want the day to end. Eventually we had to say our goodbyes, and I thanked them for dragging me out of my house. More importantly, I let them know how much a simple round of golf meant to me. Before I knew it I was on my way home, but it wasn’t the warm, comforting home

that it once was. I wasn't looking forward to go back into my cage and think about that horrifying day.

“Good morning Saxe Middle School, we have received word that a plane has crashed into one of the World Trade Towers in New York City.” Confusion spread across the classroom like an epidemic. Was this a freak accident? Had some man had a heart attack while piloting his plane? How serious was this? Most importantly, was my brother alright? So many different thoughts raced through my mind at once. I didn't know what to do or what to even think. The only thing I could do was follow the crowd and see for myself. My class shuffled from the workshop room to a small art classroom around the corner. Everyone crowded around in a semicircle, their eyes glued to the television in awe. I walked in and glanced at the television. The North Tower had a gaping hole in one of its sides and smoke as black as night flowed out of the hole and up towards the royal blue sky. Moments later a second plane flew in from the side of the TV screen and penetrated the South Tower with an explosion that shook the world. Something was seriously wrong, and I had to call my mom, dad, Brad, anyone to get some answers to find out if he was alright. I sprinted down the hallway and into the front office crying with fear. After a long struggle to reach anyone, I finally got in touch with my mom, and she picked me up from school. “Who the hell did this?” I asked. “Terrorists.” My mom replied. We didn't say anything else on the way home, and when we finally got there I raced upstairs and turned on the television. They showed the clips of the South Tower collapsing and the North Tower barely standing upright. I turned the TV off and went up to my room. I got into bed and wanted to wake up to find out this terrifying experience had been a nightmare.

For the next couple of weeks hundreds and hundreds of people paid their dues to come visit my family at our house. Everyone let me know how sorry they were and some conversations got very personal, too personal at times.

After a couple of days straight of waking up to the same routine of listening to people tell me how sorry they were, I got sick of it. I wanted to get away from it all, but I couldn't. I couldn't hide, and I couldn't be rude to the people who took time out of their day to let my family know that they were thinking of us. Family friends, my friends, my family, people that Brad knew, and people whom we didn't even know were all there. They all cared.

This brutal experience showed me how important it is to value the friendships that you've made in life. Without the different friendships that my family has made over the years and all the lives that Brad touched throughout his short-lived life, we would never have been able to get through such a tragic loss. All the little things that people did for us; showing up at our house, sending presents, sending cards, sponsoring masses, you name it, all add up to something big. Even though it may have annoyed me at the time, I look back and think to myself, where would I be right now without my friends? The answer is nowhere. For all I know I'd still be moping around my house frustrated, confused, and in denial.

As horrible of an experience this was, there's something good that had to come out of it. I realized how privileged I am to have the amount of friends that care about me and did whatever they could to cheer me up through hard times. If such an experience were to ever happen to one of my friends in the future, I'll be right by their side because I know what it feels like. I've been in their shoes.