A Special Bond

From CNN's "NEWSNIGHT," Aaron Brown has their incredible story of learning and courage: They are improbable friends united by war and loss. Two years ago, during the American bombing of Baghdad, Ali Abbas lost his entire world. He lost both arms. He lost both parents. He lost 14 close relatives. All gone.

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ALI ABBAS, IRAQI AMPUTEE (through translator): I will never forget the day when I lost my family. I feel the pain of losing them and I miss them terribly. But I can’t just cry over them in front of people, because I’m really crying inside my heart for them.

BROWN: Which brings us to Kenan Malkic.

KENAN MALKIC, BOSNIAN AMPUTEE: I saw him, it was late at night, and I saw him. I said, oh my God, how horrible that is, he lost his whole family and he got hurt with some very bad injuries. I was kind of remembering about my accident and how it could happen and I kind of knew what Ali was going through.

BROWN: Kenan does know what Ali was going through, he’d stepped on a land mine near his Bosnian home, losing both arms and a leg.

MALKIC: I remember that time at the hospital and how depressed I was and how dark everything looked. I mean, I really didn’t see any way out for me. And actually those thoughts is what drew me to make that tape for Ali. I said, you know, let me make him a tape, a video of what I can do around the house and send it to him, at least to give some brightness in his life.

BROWN: The tape has had its desired effect.

ABBAS (through translator): What I saw was how he was using his arms. And I thought well maybe he can train me to do that.

BROWN: This week he got his wish. The aid group that had sponsored Kenan’s treatment arranged for Ali and three other Iraqi children to come to the United States, to come for medical attention, to come and meet a role model.

ELISSA MONTANTI, FOUNDER, GLOBAL RELIEF FUND: Kenan is an inspiration. When the children come, they see Kenan and they see how he manipulates his own limbs and his prosthetics. And they say if he can do it, I can do it.

BROWN: While Elissa Montanti arranges surgeries, artificial limbs, rehabilitation, Kenan works on spirit.

MALKIC: That sense of that you can help yourself, it gives you such freedom. I just feel like, at least if they see me getting myself dressed or eating something, that would get them to do something by themselves.

BROWN: And he has.

MALKIC: I think every tragedy has a reason behind it. And you just have to see that and know that in order for that tragedy to turn into something good. Because I never thought I’d be doing this. Not even in my wildest dreams would I imagine I’d be in the United States, you know, helping kids all the way from Iraq. There is nothing that a living person can’t do. So that’s what I always keep in my head.


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