

April 23, 2026

Let me tell you about one of the most beautiful people I've ever met.

Safwaan Sayeed Mir was born on April 23rd, 1996, in Akron, Ohio. When I first met him, he told me he was 28 and that he didn't have a middle name. Months later, when I took his passport out of its bright orange cover, the one with the tennis court still-life printed on it, I discovered he did in fact have a middle name and was one year older than he thought he was. He doesn't care much about his birthday, and he didn't realize he technically had his father's first name as his middle one. Also, he has since lost this passport.

Safwaan is Kashmiri and grew up visiting his family in Kashmir for extended periods of time. He's fiercely proud of where he comes from, and it's one of my favorite things about him. When he was younger, he would organize and speak on behalf of different Kashmiri organizations. I know it's important to him that if he has children, they will learn the language just as he did. He once taught me how to count to ten in Kashmiri in the back of an Uber. I loved it. Side note: Safwaan is a huge Uberer.

Through Safwaan, I have learned that New York has no true Kashmiri food, that Kashmir 9 is a misnomer and total disgrace of a restaurant, that the maple emoji in his Instagram bio represents the Chinar leaf, and I have absorbed layers of cultural nuance between Pakistani Americans, Indian Muslims, and Kashmiris. One day, I'd love to try his mom's *yakbni*, a dish I've only heard about, but know I'd enjoy because of my affinity for yogurt-based curries and sauces.

Safwaan is exceptionally handsome, and he knows it too. He has beautiful coffee brown eyes, rich black curls, and a boyish smile. We love to point out that our skin tones are the exact same shade of sandy beige. He sometimes laments the way life has given him a smattering of grey hairs and has deepened a few lines in his face, but I think this makes him look wonderfully seasoned, which he is. If I could change one thing about Safwaan, I would have him critique himself less.

Safwaan grew up with his nuclear family (his parents Sayeed and Nighat, younger sister Sabriyah, and him) in Saginaw, MI, but it's equally as important to his story to understand his extended family. His aunt and uncle on his dad's side are more like grandparents to him, and their children, his cousins, are like his older siblings. Anjum, Aimen, and Adnan have helped shape him into the man he is today, and in turn, Safwaan is the best mentor to and protector of their children, especially Mae and Noa, who live in Los Angeles.

If I'm being honest, I couldn't tell you with certainty where Safwaan has lived, in which order, and for how long he spent in each place, but I can give you the shortlist. It goes: Akron – Detroit – Saginaw – Hong Kong – Fargo, North Dakota – Sarasota, Florida – Saginaw again – Detroit again for college – Bloomfield Hills – Ann Arbor – New York City – Los Angeles, and now he's somewhere between NYC, LA, and San Francisco. What's next? Maybe Dubai? We don't know.

I met Safwaan in the months before he turned 30, so my understanding of what he was like in his childhood, teens, and 20s comes to me in the form of discrete vignettes. Here are a few things that I know about his life before I met him:

He was a *very* cute kid. So cute he used to be effectively kidnapped by his neighbors in Michigan because they wanted to play with him and return him to his parents by night.

He grew up playing soccer (position: left wing; jersey: #11, then #20) and is markedly athletic. In the 2019 MCWS Cup, he was the Finals MVP, the Golden Boot, and the Top Passer. When he was at Michigan, he walked onto the team for the year he was there. Chill on us!

He speaks fondly of his COVID-era self. I know from the pictures that he was rocking long hair at the time, and I know from a quick Google search that he once delivered a reflection talk at the masjid during Ramadan that you can watch on YouTube.

He's very close with his group of friends from Michigan. I think as far as support systems go, they're the best he's had. He's particularly close with Mohamed Sulaiman, and this is the group of friends whose studies have brought Safwaan to Yemen to learn from Habib 'Umar.

He studied physics at Wayne State and was on an elite pre-med track. He was, unsurprisingly, the highest MCAT-scorer and would have received a full ride if he decided to go to medical school there. But, thankfully, he decided to change course after three years and transferred to Michigan, where he finished college and did his master's. Thank God, because I don't think Safwaan was destined to be a doctor.

The Safwaan I met at La Cabra on November 2nd, 2025 was who I'd describe as quintessential New York Safwaan. He neglected to tell me he was bringing his friend Mirna to our first meeting (a fact, which, now that I know him much better, doesn't surprise me at all). He is ever the connector of people, and although he will pretend to be bothered by two of his individual friends becoming close, he secretly loves it.

The first time we met, I felt an immediate sense of familiarity with Safwaan. Maybe it was our shared Midwest-turned-New York vibe, maybe it was the way we both love to laugh, or the fact that we both described ourselves as 'woo-woo' and started comparing our supplement stacks and health regimens (mine is no match for his, unfortunately). Here's our text exchange after La Cabra:

Me:

Thanks for the ride home
It was nice to meet you and Mirna
Lmk when you're in town and we'll have our peptide mtg

Safwaan:

Of course
I'm here all week actually
So if you're free
We can reconvene

Me:

I am free
Here and there
I have to remain mysterious

Safwaan:

Ahh yess
Keep aura farming
Valid

Me:

How was my aura tho
Was it up

Safwaan:

You walked in and stole my friend
Peak aura farming

Me:

Okay amazing that's peak

Safwaan:

Yes you're a very likeable person smallah

Me:

Likewise

Instant chemistry, no? Six months later, I've been lucky enough to know Safwaan on a much deeper level after countless hours spent on the phone and several days in person where we pretended to be doing work as a thinly-veiled excuse for our codependency.

Safwaan loves to have fun, and he loves to laugh. He has the best laugh ever. You're lucky if you get to hear it. And although he doesn't think he's funny, I find myself giggling every time I'm with him. He has this wonderful ability to make everything feel lighter. Safwaan and I haven't really gotten into an argument, but I imagine if we did, we might just look at each other and break into laughter.

The way to Safwaan's heart is a freshly steeped cup of black tea (Earl Grey or English Breakfast are preferable), a splash of milk, and two heaping spoonfuls of granulated sugar (alternatively, three of the skinny packets at the Crosby). He'll remark that you should stick your pinky in his tea to sweeten it, and you'll chuckle at his cheesy joke.

Don't be surprised if Safwaan leaves a trail of stray sugar packets wherever he goes. They spawn randomly and will make you smile as you pick them up off your floor days after he's gone.

Safwaan's brain moves very, very quickly. Accordingly, he'd be hard to pin down for a movie or even an episode of TV. He very often stacks forms of distraction (think: having a friend on FaceTime, scrolling TikTok while talking to them, answering Slack messages in the background, and randomly breaking into song in the middle of the conversation). I know he barely watches the TikToks I send him, he surely has never listened to a podcast episode I've suggested, and I don't know if he'll ever pick up the book *Good Morning Monster* I keep recommending. But, Safwaan has read all my Substacks and I know he's going to read this in its entirety, which is proof he can give his full attention to something when he wants to.

Safwaan can't keep track of an item smaller than a standard Macbook to save his life. Okay, maybe that's a bit harsh (and ironically, he has done a good job keeping the Airtag I got him for his keys), but he really does lose stuff all the time. Hence why this is a virtual card and not a handwritten one.

Safwaan is one of the smartest people you will ever meet. I've picked up a lot of passive knowledge by being around him, and his constant desire to innovate and be at the front of every curve is inspiring. Because of him, I use AI more productively and I am aware of the limits of observation and measurement, as they fundamentally alter the matter being observed (is that right, Safwaan?). Through Safwaan, I've also come to understand just how many times an iPhone can die in a single day.

Safwaan responds best to clear logic and will be the first to point out where your argument has holes, so I've been forced to sharpen many of my own beliefs and the way I articulate them. The only drawback to his intellect is that he is very hard to beat in a game of cards. He totally gets in my head.

Safwaan is a master at pattern recognition. When reflecting on himself, he does so by breaking things down into cycles and pulling out the threads. Recently, more than ever, he's been talking to me about breaking and unraveling his own patterns. The fact that he wants to change things in his life and isn't okay settling for the status quo feels like evidence to me that he is deeply loved by God.

Safwaan is a total rule breaker. In his 20s, he developed an outward persona that most people would read as the 'disruptor' type. He's probably the only person at Coinbase who was told they're dressed too casually for the office. He snuck into Mamdani's mayoral race watch party like it was nothing. It's this same quality which allows him to come up with creative ideas like the central Islamic bank he wants to build. I have no doubt he will be a successful founder one day.

Speaking of creativity, Safwaan is a sleeper vocalist. I love hearing him sing, and he sings a lot. I think Safwaan would be my #1 pick to bring on a road trip because of this. It helps that we share a lot of the same taste in music.

Safwaan is a highly social creature. Whether he wants to admit it or not, he deeply desires connection and cares what people think of him (as we all do). He hates arrogance more than anything and his favorite people in the world are the ones he finds humble, understated, yet talented in their respective axes.

Safwaan often feels overwhelmed by all that he has (and wants) to do across every dimension of his life. I see this as a beautiful reflection of his ambition. In addition to being smart and ambitious, one of Safwaan's defining qualities is that he's incredibly capable of getting where he wants to go. I might have a few pointers for him, but today's not the day for advice. He knows where to find me when he wants to hear my thoughts.

Safwaan is one of the strongest people I've ever met. I think he sometimes forgets this, but it's true. He's faced many uphill battles in his life, most of them privately and only really leaning on himself. I've come to understand just a small part of the picture, and the respect I have for him because of what he's been through and continues to carry is insurmountable. I will always hold on to the high opinion I have of Safwaan.

Safwaan is very hard on himself. I know he takes everything I say with a grain of salt because he's written me off as someone whose opinions are colored by the fact that I'm fond of him. But I think it's quite the opposite. I like Safwaan *because* of the things I see, and I think it is my superpower that I can see them.

It's easy to meet Safwaan and be charmed by his charisma, but what's meaningful is sticking around longer than it being a matter of charm. The more I learn about him, the stronger my conviction is that he is one of the most special people God has introduced me to, and I frequently wonder why our paths crossed in the way they did. Nothing in this world is random or unintentional, and I'm very grateful that Allah's plan for me included knowing Safwaan.

In writing this, I'm realizing I could go on for a lot longer. I could write about Safwaan's impeccable oral hygiene and penchant for showering, or I could tell you about his TikTok reposts and the amount of truffle hot sauce I've seen him dump on his food. I haven't yet described his silver hand jewelry and Chrome Hearts chain, or the endearing way he answers the phone. If I've misstated anything, please forgive me, and if I've forgotten anything important, blame it on my Dory brain. While our relationship continues to evolve, one thing I am sure about is that I hope to always know Safwaan. I can't wait to watch him grow and achieve his goals in his 30s, and I will always be cheering him on with full faith in what he can do. Sticky Chinese rice!

Love,
Ayah

MUAH!

