

## **Nantucket Book Foundation Young Writers Award 2018 Finalist**

### **“From Friends to Strangers”**

**Waverly Brannigan**

**9th Grade**

A few years ago, I had a best friend whom I thought I knew incredibly well, but as it turned out, I knew nothing about her at all. When I met her, she was the most girly girl I had ever seen, dressing in flamingo pink flowy dresses with her barbie blonde hair falling in perfect waves to her waist. She had more makeup than I had ever seen in my life, and while I was clueless as to what it was all for, she knew exactly how to layer all the powders and glitter to highlight her natural beauty. She spent all her free time skating, perfecting twirls and spins. Most importantly, she always had a dazzling smile painted delicately on her face. We shared a bond equivalent to even sisters, and knew everything about each other. At least, I thought we did.

As we continued to grow closer and closer, we began to learn more about each other. We were there for each other through thick and thin, through pointless drama and over exaggerated boy encounters. Always laughing and smiling. I knew about how her dad had died when she was much younger, and she was there for me as my great grandma passed away. As time passed, the more we talked and the more time we spent together, it became more obvious how much of a mystery she really was to me, beneath the surface. She started to grow distant, she stopped smiling, and stopped laughing. She stopped singing with her carefree lilt, exchanged her all pink wardrobe for drab greys and blacks, and then she cut her hair.

When she cut her hair was when I realized that maybe all was not as I thought. She chopped it off, without warning. All her soft, blonde waves, lopped off to a choppy, short “boy cut.” She began wearing jeans, moody black Doc Martens, and white T-shirts under blue plaid polos. What got to me most was the fact that it seemed she had forgotten to

smile. Her grin that had been so contagious, had become invisible. I tried so hard to reach out to her, but it seemed like I was trying to communicate with a brick wall. She had almost completely shut herself away from the world, which was the absolute polar opposite of the type of person she had been before. Finally, I managed to get her to talk. She told me that she hated who she was, she hated what she did, and she wanted it all to change. She told me she was sad, sadder than sad actually. She was depressed, and life

was not the most desirable thing for her at the time. She didn't want to be a girl anymore, either. She wanted more masculinity, she wanted to be a boy. She told me she crushed on girls, not boys. At first, hearing this broke my heart. Of course, I wanted to support her, and I would, no matter what.

I wanted my best friend back. I didn't care that she wanted to be a boy, or that she liked girls. I would support her through that - through all the people who would make fun of her short hair and boyish outfits, her sexual preferences. I wanted her to be comfortable in her own skin. Once I learned that about her, I offered her every form of support she needed. She just needed me to be there for her while she changed her body, changed her style, and while she adjusted to the way she discovered her true feelings worked. The only thing I couldn't help her with was her invasive, destructive sadness. She didn't want to live anymore, she despised the life she was given as a gift. Maybe the sadness of losing a father so young played a part, maybe she had no control over the hormones invading her previously joyful brain. I wanted my best friend back. The happy, carefree, loving, best friend who treasured each moment she spent on this earth. But, with being young and unaware, I could only sit back and watch as a crippling depression absorbed someone who I thought it impossible to frown.

Then one day, out of the blue, my best friend tried to take her own life. It was unfathomable to me, the way someone who I thought so extraordinarily happy could contain these intense levels of sadness. She attempted to overdose on pills, to allow medication, which was meant to help her, to slowly suck the actual life out of her. Thankfully, she

survived her suicide attempt. She began intensive therapy, struggling to find the will to become, once again, the joyous person I always assumed she was. Shortly after she tried to kill herself, my best friend seemed to literally disappear off the face of the earth. She dropped out of school, and is believed to begin a new life, under a different name, in a new body. I haven't seen her or spoken to her since the last day I saw her walk out of school. I've heard countless rumors about the girl turned boy who used to be my very best friend, but besides that, my best friend seemed to rotate out of orbit. My giggly, girly, content best friend, in the blink of an eye, changed drastically into a whole different person. It was the most unexpected thing, to watch a pink-clad, delicate, lighthearted girl transform before my very eyes into a complete stranger who I was supposed to call my best friend.