

My best friend's name is Samantha, Sam for short.

We've known each other since kindergarten, and now we're — well, I am — in 6th grade!

Sam and I are both 11, but Sam doesn't go to school anymore. In 4th grade, Sam got diagnosed with cancer.

Sam's parents decided that it was too dangerous for Sam to go to school because they were worried that she'd catch a lot of sicknesses, so they home school her now. It's a bummer because now I don't get to see her that often. The only place we can meet up is at a park between our houses, because Sam lives on the other side of town.

Last time I saw her, she was on chemotherapy, and she was wearing a wig.

"Hey, Hannah!" she had called. It was my first time seeing her with a wig on. It wasn't her natural hair color, so it took me a while to recognize her. Finally I did.

"Oh! Hi Sam!" I had called back. We hugged and I got a whiff of her red wig. It didn't smell like her either. She told me that she didn't like it, but her parents couldn't afford to buy her a better one.

I asked her how her chemotherapy was going, and she was totally optimistic about it. That's another thing about my best friend. She has a great attitude. We had chatted and played on the playground like we did when we were little.

Anyway, I haven't seen Sam since then, which was 2 weeks ago. So, of course, I wanted to see her ASAP.

I texted her today, and she said she was going to have surgery and had to have a week recovery so she wouldn't be able to see me for another 2 weeks.

Sam is basically my only friend, so I was pretty lonely. I totally didn't want to hang with my mom. Just, no. I sat in my room and played on my phone for a while.

Finally I took a break from screen time and decided that I would buy Sam a present. I mean we *are* best friends.

Reluctantly, I told my mom about my idea, and just as expected, here was her reaction: “Oh! That’s a nice idea, but I think Samantha would appreciate it if it was more heartfelt. Make her a present!”

Honestly, that’s what parents always say, but when are they gonna learn that it’s just not true! Obviously, since she wasn’t going to give me any money, I decided to take her up on her suggestion. I made a list of things I could make Sam.

- cookies
- paper hat
- ~~-wig made out of my horse’s hair~~
- duct tape craft
- a story
- snowman at our park

My mom came in to look at my list. She laughed at my horsehair idea, but her eyes widened when she came across the snowman thing. “Hannah, this is perfect!”

She had that mom look on her face, like, “It was my last choice, and I had to support her in something.”

Falling for it, like I always do, I responded, “Ya really think so? I just don’t think it’s that special.”

Not having a comeback, my mom just said, “Well then you just have to make it special.” She patted my shoulder then walked away like some kind of mysterious person.

Geez I hate when people do that! They think they have my attention but they really don’t. They’re just tossing out kinda good ideas.

Anyway, I still didn’t want to do it, so I thought I’d just think about it in the morning.

I got my PJs on. I wonder if Sam slept with her wig on? Then I brushed my hair and teeth, and slid in bed. I stared at my list one more time before falling to sleep.

I had a dream about my snowman thought.

In my dream, I built a snowman and named it Samuel— Sam for short— and Samuel didn't have any eyes, hat, or even a carrot nose! He was completely blank. But I let it be. The next "day" in my dream I came back and there was a hat on the snowman. The next day there were eyes. Next day a carrot nose. Each day I came back and I found things on the snowman I had never seen before.

Then I woke up and had a perfect idea. I ran down the stairs, grabbed my coat, gloves, hat, and boots, and ran to the park with a big piece of paper and some markers.

I taped the paper to a tree and wrote on it: SNOWMAN FOR SAM. Then I wrote the story of Sam's cancer, then I put: DONATE 15 DOLLARS FOR THE SNOWMAN TO COME ALIVE, SO THAT SAM CAN FEEL LIKE A REGULAR KID.

I gathered the art supplies and stuffed them in my pockets, and then I got down to business. I rolled 3 balls of snow, each one smaller than the other, and stacked them. That's right— I made a snowman. But just like in my dream, I left it blank. Just three spheres stacked on top of each other.

I ran home before my mom started worrying. And you know moms, always worrying.

"Where were you, Hannah?" she asked when I got home. But I was in too good of a mood to get mad, so I told her my idea. She clapped her hands together.

"That's a wonderful idea, Hannah!" I whipped my hair and winked. But deep inside I worried. Not many people go to the park in the middle of the winter, when there's ice covering the whole place.

The whole day I looked forward to seeing if the snowman had a face, or a scarf, or a carrot nose. I was wiggly and fidgety until after dinner. I *finally* got to go the park.

At first my heart sank because there was no clothing on the snowman, but then it rose up when I saw a 20-dollar bill in the bucket.

Maybe with all the money I got I could buy her a better wig! The next day was great. I found two arms stuck in the side of the snowman, and \$15.

I took the cash home. I got a text from Sam and it took all of my willpower not to tell her! I decided to call her. Here's our convo:

Me: Hey Sam!

Sam: Hey Hannah!

Me: I'm super excited for when we see each other. You wanna know why?

Sam: Why?

Me: Because... I have a surprise for you!

Sam: Cool! What is it?

Me: Ha. Ha. Bye Sam.

Sam: Bye Hannah.

I did my homework and ate dinner.

The next morning was Saturday, so, like any other 6th grader would, I slept until 10. I didn't rush to the park because nobody goes to the park before 10:00.

Anyway, I had brunch and watched some TV. Then I checked the park. Success! Eyes, nose, *and* a hat! I also found 75 dollars in the bucket.

The next day was also great. A scarf and a smile.

The next, 3 buttons down the belly. Then gloves, and finally, a total of \$235!

It was 2 days before I had plans to see Sam, so I bought the wig as soon as I could.

The wig was short-ish brown hair with blonde streaks. I knew she would like it.

Finally, *finally*, the day came. The moment I saw her blue minivan, I ran up to it, and placed the wig on her bare head. She looked up and smiled big. "Hannah! This is fantastic! And just like my old hair too!" She smiled again. I could see her admiring it and feeling it like it was hers.

I laughed. "But that's not the entire surprise!" I grabbed her arm and pulled her behind a tree. I wrapped a blindfold around her and her new wig, and pulled her out from behind the tree in front of the snowman. Then I took off the blindfold and watched her eyes grow big as she observed the whole scene. Then she blinked a couple times, and I could see tears in her eyes.

“This is so creative! The whole neighborhood contributed!” Sam gave me a big hug. We watched as snow started to fall around our snowman.

2 years later, we built another snowman and placed Sam’s wig on it because Sam didn’t need it anymore.

She survived her cancer, and we stayed best friends forever.

The End