ROBIN CHRISTINE SAMSOE

Smiling, beautiful face donning small studded earrings, you rode your friend’s bike to your first job never to return. Only minutes before you and your friend turned cartwheels in the sand…free, breathing ocean air. A shadow appeared. He wanted to take your picture. Feelings of hesitation stirred as mama taught you to never talk to strangers but you were with your friend so things felt safe in spite of the foreboding in your belly. The grown man with wild hair stood a little too close, rough finger quickly caressing your leg…suddenly you’re saved! Your friend’s neighbor witnesses what is happening and intervenes, sending the stranger scampering away like a cockroach to light.

Suddenly you remember, you are to answer phones at the ballet school, to help pay for your classes. It’s your first job and If you don’t leave now you will be late!

“Here, take my bike and DON’T STOP!” said your friend.

To your twelve year old minds you will get there faster but more importantly, you’ll be able to outrun the creepy guy with the camera if he chases after you. The roads of hell are paved with good intentions. Some where between the beach 14th Street and the studio he caught you. Your face graced news casts, newspapers, missing posters. Eventually the bike and your body were found as were the small studded earrings you wore. They were later found in your killer’s stash of souvenirs.

Years later, I have a niece your age who attends the same Dwyer School you did, loves the same exact beach has your same beautiful smile, shining spirit, does cartwheels on the same exact spot. However, it is now a different world. My sister doesn’t let her out of her sight. Too much traffic prevents her from riding a bike to dance class. Because of your murder we are smarter. She and other twelve year old girls will get to grow up and do the things you never did. Rodney Alcala made sure of that. Your devoted mother Marianne Connelly spoke of her plan to assassinate him in court stopped only by the sweet smell of your shampoo and your silent, intuitive plea you sent to her to please not. She would go on to stand with other victims, survivors of crime in your memory, sealing it in the form of a plaque at the Huntington Beach Pier, the place you so loved.

Why you? Maybe because others like myself wouldn’t have had the grace to listen to angelic guidance like yours if too wrapped up in grief and vengeance?

Because of your short life and tragic murder others now live. Thank you, dear Robin. Thank you, Marianne. Bless you both.