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THE RAMP, THE WRECK, AND THE REDHEAD ~ RAVNEET CHHOKER

I remember my bike wreck like it was just 11 years ago. It was a warm, humid Houston day in the suburbs. I had just gotten done with homework, and like usual, I hopped in my crocks and bolted out the door. It was an everyday thing on our street to be playing outside after getting released by our parental guardians. As soon as I stepped out, my ginger-headed friend Dustin was already setting up his homemade wood bike ramp. One thing about Dustin was that he was a risk taker, always trying ridiculous things like lighting gasoline on his own driveway. Once I grabbed my bike, Dustin looked up from his ill-made ramp and asked, "Hey, you got any extra nails?" While I answered no, the question definitely alarmed me. "Is the ramp even ready?" I asked myself, but I ignored my instinct because the glory of flying through the air was irresistible, and instead I took a slow start and jumped the ramp. When my bike tire connected, I felt the weak wood and terrible craftsmanship bend underneath my puny weight. Even though it was flimsy, it worked, so for the next few hours we were propping the ramp against sidewalks, driveways and anywhere else we could attempt some "crazy stuff." Even though we had a few falls, we were still pushing ourselves and the ramp to the limit.

It was around 8 o'clock and we were starting to wrap it up. I was about to head inside, exhausted from the riding, when Dustin yelled excitedly, "Ravi, try this out!" Without care, he had moved the ramp seven yards away from the curb and challenged me to jump to the other side. My first thought was "This red head is trying to kill me," but while I was pretty hesitant, I've never been known as a pansy. While weighing my options, I inspected the distance. It was farther than anything I've ever attempted, but it was do-able. So without wasting another minute, I decided to do it.

With sweaty palms, I backed up about thirty yards for space to build up speed, and without a moment to spare from daylight ending I headed out. I remember asking myself if I had checked the ramp's integrity, but I decided to ignore my doubts. With my legs pumping, the bike started to build up some real velocity. As I approached the ramp, I put my head down and got ready to fly off. I felt myself lifting off the earth at a shallow angle, after that I don't really remember anything. The only thing I remember is lying on the pavement holding my head wondering what went wrong. I then reached for the top of my head and felt warm blood running across my fingertips. I had just started trying to get up when my mom ran outside yelling at Dustin, somehow thinking he had something to do with it. After I groggily explained to my mom it wasn't his fault, she carried my injured self into the house so she could assess the damage. Luckily I didn't need stitches, but I did end up scarring up my knees pretty badly, which I guess is my lesson for acting like a fugitive with nothing to lose. Needless to say, I never tried to jump another ramp after that experience.

