

The beautiful soft light created by the lamp posts along the river's waterfront walkways, the glistening of the city lights reflected by the waters, and the colorful lights of the Hawthorne Bridge just to the south, gave no light to the darkness within me as I walked. I was alone and nothing about the evening meant anything to me. I simply wanted my friends to be unharmed and safe. I silently asked Love to be with them.

As I walked south along the promenade, passing lamp post after lamp post, not one of them helped shine a light on the darkness within me. Walking at a slow pace for about ten minutes, I reached the Morrison Bridge, still completely distraught, considering whether I should head home to check on things. But anxiety gripped me each time I approached that thought. I paused for nearly an hour under the bridge, standing next to a pillar, feeling very alone and very anxious.

It wasn't long before I realized it was getting even colder. I needed to start moving to warm myself. I continued south toward the Hawthorne Bridge, where the promenade ends at a turnaround and where the grassy slopes and path along the Willamette River led to the South Waterfront area of downtown. This would normally be a beautiful walk with the view of

Mt. Hood and the Willamette to the east; the water sparkling, reflecting light from the bridge and city lights in the evenings. Lamp posts amidst the trees lined the walkway on the right. The tall buildings were aglow with lights towering above the trees. The landscape near Salmon Street Fountain and the promenade turnaround is beautiful, with a palm tree or two among the other tropical plants and colorful flowers.

My walk continued on to where the promenade and the grassy slope meet. Here, it is about a thirty-foot drop from the promenade railing straight down to the water. I decided to walk to where the railing ended and the grass began. I took the four concrete steps down to the pathway with a little apprehension. Here, behind the railing, I found myself under some trees looking out across the river. But I also found it to be much darker than I expected.

Stepping onto the grass, I could barely make out the slope that went down to the river's edge. It was steep. Boulders monopolized the area, making a trek down to the water after nightfall very dangerous indeed. Deciding that venturing down to the water was not a good idea, I turned back

to the pathway where, to my surprise, I discovered a park bench nestled under a tree in the dark. The thought of a park bench here by the water's edge under the trees prompted the thought that this could be a safe place where I might refocus and calm myself.

I knew I wouldn't be any warmer if I sat again, but I hoped the calming of my nerves in a somewhat secluded spot would help me to feel safe. Or so I thought...until moments later. Standing next to the bench, I was startled back into the depths of anxiety and fear as I heard a mysterious voice piercing the silence, crystal clear, and coming directly from the darkness behind me.

“Revolver or pistol?” were the simple yet frightening words spoken from out of the darkness.

Instantly, I froze. Still in somewhat of a state of trauma, my first thought was, “This person is going to kill me. They want me to choose the weapon? Holy crap! What do I do now?”

Afraid to move, I quickly yet nervously answered with a tone of despair, “I would prefer neither.”