

## Neil's Time

HAD Neil's time come?  
His mind raced.  
What to do?  
Rent was due.  
He couldn't pay.  
Creditors' calls piled up.  
Electricity was nearing shut off.  
Problems ABOUNDING.  
Solutions?  
Seemed limited.  
Accept to "end it all."  
Jump a bridge.  
He waited.

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Neil was certain.  
Today (October 24,2020) was THE DAY.  
Place: Spokane's Monroe Street bridge.  
He feared traffic would disrupt the plan.  
The bridge( built in 1911)was known locally as a "suicide bridge."  
Jump?  
Injuries could kill you.  
Also hypothermia and drowning.  
The bridge was one of three built over the decades there.  
Bridge one burned in 1890.  
Number 2 was declared "unsafe" in 1905.  
City engineer John Ralston was accused of stealing the bridge design from Cleveland's Rocky River Bridge.  
He was removed from the project.  
Replaced by an assistant.  
Kirtland Cutter and Karl Malmgren (celebrated architects) were among the designers.  
But the bridge construction details escaped Neil.  
He was too busy.  
Busy PREPARING TO DIE.  
And so it went.  
Neil subtly prepared a "goodbye" list.  
Of friends and relatives dating back to elementary school.  
Followups on the list were exhausted.

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Waking up that day" KNOWING" it was his last felt odd.  
His "last breakfast" was a robust oatmeal and poached eggs.  
Neil parked his car on the river's north bank.

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He left a note.  
Saying the world would be BETTER OFF WITHOUT HIM.  
His steps were slow.  
Agonizing.  
Deliberate.  
He DARED(prodded) himself.  
Neil paused at a bridge shelter.  
He peered over the railing to the 200-foot drop.  
Neil slipped one leg over the railing.  
A mocking voice stopped him STONE COLD.  
"Brave,aren't you?," the unidentified young woman said.  
"Go ahead."  
"Take the easy, GUTLESS way out."  
Neil peered again over the railing.  
Anger was his first emotion.  
Not just anger.  
RAGE.  
"How dare she judge me?," he thought.  
But fresh doubts appeared.  
He remembered how feeling (playing a game) felt.  
That feeling stuck.  
The long drop beckoned.  
But didn't dominate.  
Neil collected his thoughts.  
And (on a bright spring Spokane morning) he backed off.  
He re-swung his leg opposite over the rail.  
GATHERED HIS NERVE.  
And walked back to the car.