
Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Waiting It Out

Sylvie Drake · Wednesday, March 18th, 2020

Thursday, March 12, 2020, 6:30pm.

It's pitch dark. Still.

The power went out at 3:15pm, so there's no light. The stock market went down another gazillion points again today, so there's no money. The food in the freezer and fridge is spoiling as I write. Soon there may be no food.

The TV's dark. The internet's out. Phone dead. Batteries in my portable radio dead (my bad). The cat died 15 years ago. I miss that little guttersnipe.

The central heating won't go on without power. Darn stupid thermostat. I almost started a fire turning on the burners on the gas range in the kitchen with matches to keep warm — remember matches? Thank goodness for the fireplace in the living room because apparently *nothing's* going to function unless I put a match to it while trying not to burn the house down.

This is Los Angeles. The new Supermetropolis. Miles of it, snaking in every possible direction, including straight up. Except that it has a mayor who's out of favor with the current president, so nothing that once worked still does.

I have a cellphone, a landline, a laptop and an old car, and I can't use any of them to reach anyone. A monopoly called Spectrum controls the first three, and a mysterious company called the Los Angeles Dept. of Water & Power controls Spectrum, as well as my furnace and my garage door.

As I write, my car is held prisoner, because my house is 95 years young and the garage that came with it is also its foundation. It's under my living room, surrounded by dirt and cement on three sides, which is ideal for storing wine at just the right temperature, but there's no access to it other than through the garage door.

That door was electrified some time in the late 1960s (honestly, I can't remember) and when there's no power it's frozen in place. So now I also have no access to the car. Or pantry, because my pantry is in the garage with my car and the wine and a few other important things, such as my passport and the deed to the house.

Yes, *of course*, I have a tiny key that is supposed to open the garage door when there's no electricity, but that's assuming I can find it and can then scare up a Sumo wrestler to lift the

unlocked door.

As you can see, the 21st century presents its particular set of problems. When one thing goes wrong, bingo. It sets off a bunch of repercussions that can drive you crazy.

But let's not suffer the small stuff.

The entire world has been brought to its knees by a tiny virus called Covid-19 that nobody last Fall even knew existed, and that our president, who communicates with an unspecified deity inside his head, is convinced will disappear very soon, maybe the day after tomorrow, "like — it's a miracle," he said in a sentence that wasn't even grammatical.

So I sit and wait. In the gloom.

No power, TV, phone, computer, car, heat, pantry or that food rotting in the fridge with every passing minute. And, as far as I can tell, all the money in the retirement fund of every person over 65 — anyone, that is, who had any money to put in one in the first place — is melting away too. Presto. Gone.

But... all is not lost. We still possess ballpoint pens and yellow pads, and writing helps me while away the time by the light of a dim camping lantern (the one of two that has unexpired batteries) and about 37 tea lights that I never thought I'd find any use for and have now positioned with great care around the house in strategic spots such as, well, bathrooms.

You'd be surprised at the lovely shadows and designs they cast on the walls and ceilings...

Oops. Whaddayaknow? The power just came on.

At last. A miracle!

Photo:  Casey Horner

This entry was posted on Wednesday, March 18th, 2020 at 10:40 am and is filed under [Discourse](#), [Lifestyle](#)

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