



Reduced Circumstances

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I. The Day The Cable Went Out

Called the cable company and asked what was wrong; they didn't know.

Played Boggle.

Began *Moby Dick* (reached page twenty-seven).

Began *Great Expectations* (reached page 143, but it was an abridged Kids Classics edition, and I only read every other page).

Began a novel of my own (gave up on page five).

Looked through the closet for my TV antenna.

Called some friends.

Called my mom.

Called the cable company a second time. A recording told me cable was out.

Watched YouTube.

Went to bed early.

II. During The Blackout

Called the power company on my cell and asked what was wrong; they put me on hold.

Searched through the closet for my batteries and flashlight.

Pulled a stomach muscle doing sit-ups.

Watched Oprah on my iPod.

Ordered a pizza delivery but my card was declined. I suggested the blackout was to blame. They told me I could pay in cash. "I've got three bucks in my pocket," I said. They told me to go to an ATM. I said, "What if the power's off at the bank? I won't be able to get any money from the machine." They told me to go to a teller. "Those lines are pretty long," I said. "That could take all day." The conversation petered out after that.

Walked down the street to see if they had power in the restaurants and bars.

Dug the vacuum out of the hall closet—but then I remembered the power was out.

Turned on all the electronic devices and lights in the house and sat quietly on the dusty carpet, counting backward from a thousand, willing the power to return.

III. The Day There Was No Hot Water

Ran up and down the hall asking my neighbors if they also had no hot water.

Filled every pot and pan with cold water and heated them on the stove.

Fooled around so much with the knobs beneath the sink that for a while I had no water at all.

Called the management company but kept getting connected to some poster shop downtown.

Re-read the story of Noah's Ark, because obsessing about water made me think about the Flood.

Ordered a print of Warhol's Marilyn Monroe from the poster shop downtown.

Cursed and screamed in the shower when the hot water returned full blast.