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Last night, which is really to say
this morning, not long after midnight,
Angie and I woke startled by the unexpected
dark—so much darker than usual—and a loud
beeping sound emitting from a fuse box in the closet. We staggered
around looking for flashlights, gazing out the windows toward a sudden void.
In other apartments, we could seem them, our neighbor-strangers, stumbling around with
flashlights, those telltale orbs of light. | When I called the front desk of our building, a pre-
recorded message screeched: *The number you have called has been disconnected or is no longer in service.*
It was only later we realized that the phones in the building aren't true "land lines."
They're digital just like everything else, reliant on the same electricity that fuels
our lights and internet service. | No streetlights. No traffic lights. No
lights on the Intracoastal Waterway, that pretty row of perimeter
lights to keep boats from crashing into the bulkhead.
No lights in the parking garage up the road, and no cars
passing with their headlights turned on—no cars passing at all. In
the distance, I looked for the giant guitar, a recently completed landmark
for the Hard Rock Casino and Hotel. Every night, all night, it changes colors,
bodacious shades and patterns—fuchsia, fire-engine red, cerulean stripes, strobes of
Barbie pink and silver glitter. Angie thinks it's tacky, and maybe it is, but I like it—not a
beacon of hope exactly, but a beacon of presence. People are there, or people *were* there,
gathered together for concerts and meals, and for gambling of course, which can also be solitary.
The guitar is an "architectural duck," something my friends Monica and Elijah—who fell in love in
graduate school just like Angie and I did—both wrote and talked a lot about. The first "duck" was a
building actually constructed in the shape of a duck, which lent its name to subsequent examples of
this phenomenon. A mortar-and-pestle-shaped pharmacy in Lexington, KY, springs readily to mind.
"Duck." Your very first poem, written about a balloon, arranged to look like a balloon, might even
be called a "literary duck," if you were so inclined! | But last night/early this morning, the big dark
had swallowed the giant (tacky) guitar, and I stood there in the living room with our cats snaking
between my legs, staring at the empty space where it should have been. I missed that guitar, its
implicit promise of music and revelry. When the power surged back on a few minutes later,
the guitar seemed to erupt into the sky like fireworks, green and gold as spring or St.
Patrick's Day or the first healing signs of a bruise. Such relief! Almost elation! I could
sleep again, knowing the huge (tacky) nightlight was aglow. | Later, when we woke,
this message in our inbox from Florida Power and Light: *We've completed the
necessary repairs to restore service at your address. Our investigation shows that the
outage was caused by an animal damaging FPL equipment. We apologize
for any inconvenience this power interruption may have caused.*

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On March 3 my sister and her husband arrived for a visit, and we went out that night to the Hard Rock. We had made plans to do so since you and I were supposed to leave the morning of March 4 for San Antonio, which, as of today, is practicing shelter-in-place. My sister and Marc wanted to see the lightshow on the guitar hotel. We decided to go early and have dinner first. I kept telling my sister to bring a sweater because of the AC, but she was so excited to be warm that she said she wouldn't need one. We were talking about the virus but only in abstract terms then—we felt no danger going inside a casino, making it through the smoky areas where people sat at slot machines blasting and pinging. The casino, run by the Seminole Tribe of Florida, finally closed on March 20. But that day we felt no danger eating at Hard Rock Café. I ordered a cobb salad, beautiful strips of chicken, avocado, and egg. And the next day, March 4, after you and I read through the MFA applications, we went to Gulfstream to eat at the Yard House, and you introduced my sister and me to avocado toast. *Were we concerned?* I know I was worried about Bernie winning Florida, but I don't remember panicking yet over the virus. | After dinner at the Hard Rock Café, Michele and I wandered through the shops and stopped at Constant Grind, which had a display of beautiful chocolates in the window. We each ordered a fancy truffle—mine apple caramel and hers dark chocolate. As we were leaving, we saw a decorated piece of cheesecake. Michele said that Marc had had been craving cheesecake, so we bought a slice. Marc was kind enough to share it with us, so we plucked the white chocolate dice from his cake with our bare hands. We even made a few lame covid-19 jokes, which aren't funny anymore. I keep thinking of the joke Bob told me he heard on Twitter—*Stay in for two months and watch TV? Sign me up to be a patriot.* Or the joke before West Virginia report its first case—*I guess Meth is as good as a vaccine.* I'm already cringing. Tragedy plus time equals comedy, but what about the jokes of the past? | The Hard Rock light show was a letdown. The J. Lo song snippets from the Super Bowl halftime show weren't loud enough. The AC did indeed make Michele cold and, because she was unprepared, she bought an over-priced sweatshirt she'll probably never wear again.