

On Weather: White

written by Guest Contributor | July 17, 2016



I was sitting in a parked minivan reading *House of Mirth* and sipping Seagram's gin out of a flimsy, plastic motel cup. The wide Kansas prairie stretched out in front of me, all dusty and dry, the grass bleached white from a beating sun. My acting partner was inside our joint motel room, stretched out on the synthetically smooth comforter cover that caught on my hangnails, watching reruns of *The Simpsons*. We were on a grand tour of America, performing badly written, sometimes racist, renditions of American history for schoolchildren. I hated my acting partner. So I drank in the minivan.

The sky was white and gaping, the white-hot sun slowly setting behind the bank of white clouds. As I refocused on the page, the words ran from my grasp. I blinked. I tried again to lose myself in the Golden Age of New York, lose myself in Lily Bart's loneliness so I could forget my own, but my vision became grainier, the words hidden behind an insistently pulsing light. Bewildered, I raised my head from the book and looked out the window. Flat whiteness stared back, and the white, dancing blur in my head winked at the sky. I picked up my cell phone.

When I told my mother I was concerned something was wrong with my eyes, she listened to my symptoms, and said, "You're having a migraine." Oh. She told me to buy some Excedrin and lay down in the dark, and I'd be fine. I was. Lost, but fine.

I was temping at the Museum of Modern Art, biding time until my life began. I typed numbers and addresses into a computer at a desk surrounded by other desks, all of us encased in the white sky, which reached us through the cold, glass windows. The office was filled with light, modern and bright and purified white.

When the aura appeared, I quickly told my supervisor I was feeling ill, and stumbled down the street, squinting past the rushing people, tumbling down the subway steps, hands shielding my face. I choked back my nausea, and collapsed into bed, drawing the blinds upon the hazy whiteness, closing my eyes on the unyielding heat of a white, summer day. Life would have to wait a

little longer.

I was taking care of my son in February on a cold, cloudless, white day. Buried in two feet of New Hampshire snow, I washed dishes in front of the kitchen window, averting my eyes from the blinding glare of the sun shining whitely on the snow. My son bellowed for more cheerios, unsubtle and direct. Motherhood did not allow for solitary introspection. Motherhood was all now, all black and all white.

The murky green of the pine trees outside failed to deflect the relentless white. The brilliant blue sky failed to soften the lightning white blankness that filled my windows, while I scrubbed away solidified cheese from the lasagna pan.

When the aura came, it burned alongside the day, forcing me closer to the sharp white that was everywhere, marching time past my eyes, one ticking second at a time. Pregnant and frightened of drugs, I put on sunglasses and turned on Sesame Street at its lowest decibel. I huddled miserably on the couch, wrapping my head with a sweater, occasionally peeping through the wool to look at my son. I told him that mummy felt a little sick. The white weather beat into me until gentle night brought soft, velvety relief.



Sara Petersen's essays have been published in *Neutrons Protons*, *Brain*, *Child*, *The Furious Gazelle*, *Bustle*, *Scary Mommy*, *Bust*, and elsewhere. She blogs about children, pretty wallpaper, feminism, and IPA [here](#). Sara lives on the New Hampshire seacoast.

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