

White

by Dorothee Lang

“White,” he says.

“Black,” I answer. Then I correct myself: “Snow.”

He doesn't look up, just keeps filling my answers into little printed boxes.

“Street,” he says.

“Sign,” I answer.

He takes his time.

My mind keeps playing his game while I wait for the next task.
House Mouse. Trap Escape. Door Window...

“Now pick a color,” he says.

He places 6 cards in front of me. Blue Yellow Red. Green Orange
Violet.

“White,” I say.

He doesn't get the joke. Or maybe it's part of the rules: no humor.

“Pick a color”, he says.

“Orange,” I answer.

He takes the card, takes another note.

We repeat the color game until there is only green left.

“Hope goes last,” I comment. I can't help it.

“They are complementary,” he informs me. “If you add all of them,
you arrive at white.”

I hadn't known that. Or maybe I had, a long time ago. I lean back,
waiting for the next stupid telling question, but we are done. He
hands me a cheque.

On the way home, I buy a box of water colors. I make sure that all
six colors are included, blue yellow red, green orange violet. I paint
them on a boxless page, one after the other. I try. I try again. White,

I say. White Sky. Street Crossing. I try and try. But the only places I arrive at are brown, gray, nameless.

