

Blue Dresses

by Melanie Neale

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It makes me feel like a dirty old man: adorning Celia,
Making an offering of my blue dresses, adorning Celia.

Her eyes are bluer than my dresses suggest, cotton and rayon
In a straw bag over my shoulder: ornaments for adorning Celia.

My lipstick like hibiscus and oleander, perfume like jasmine,
I carry them through doors of driftwood: adorning Celia.

Nothing, nothing is good enough. When I see her
My eyes go elsewhere: the wall, the window: adorning Celia.

My dresses hang from me like loose dead fronds, dry and
Circling a brown and wind-bent palm. Adorning Celia,

They would be so much better. She rises above the sea of smoke
Like a goddess among women: we worship the air adorning Celia.

She's ridiculous: Florida's sweat on her breasts,
The greased-up deep-fried layer adorning Celia,

Serving cracked conch, there's no salvation, save
Her smile at the things I've brought: adorning Celia.

Too drunk, too sad, to do anything else, the men, and yet—
I, order martinis and toast the waitress: adoring and adorning
Celia.

The palmetto bug, like sap, slides down the wall.
The fire smells of late spring are back, adorning Celia.

The night heron moves closer to the loud restaurants'
Citronella candles, offering feathers for adorning Celia.

The cat that lives off fish scraps sighs into palm scrub
And scratches fur and flesh from its face for adorning Celia.

Who cares if orange trees burn down? I love the smell,
It wraps around replacing the dresses I lost adorning Celia.

She's a doll or a garden, in blue dresses and petals,
As the morning's sunshine spreads, adorning Celia.

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