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The Nightie Seller

No—nonsense ones
in which women can walk into balcony
and answer the door.
untransparent to be exact.
the nighties they sell.
I don't make eye contact with salesmen
especially those that sell women's inner wear.
Must be something from the past.
I've been coming here for
more years than I can remember
for these lovely white cotton nighties
with little flowers – not chintz, not calico.
A garden, a spray of mauve, blue, pink or orange.
Loud colours keep me awake.
Big prints want to eat me at night.
They know, the sellers.

But who is this that picks
each by its ears?
I see young hands that bring one by one
from the pile
not holding, but barely touching
as if afraid
it may offend me.
He lines the counter with delicate flowers
cotton smooth as a peaceful dream.
If I take the mauve flowers home
will the sea green hurt?
but the green is too like the green bedspread
won't I get lost?
or they?
the green in green?
so in the morning I wouldn't know how to tear away?
and may take some of the bedspread's green with me.
depleting it every day...
I'm thinking when the call comes
the azaan from the mosque
across the road
his hands become restless
as I linger over sprigs
then he lifts his cap to his head
and I look up into
slate eyes
so dense the colour.
Slate. Nah.
Warm.
Cool.
Crystal clear, opaque but.
How do they see?
they hold
as me now by my skin...soul.
I've made my selection.
He hurries away
adjusting his crochet cap.
The gray will not blend into the green.
nor bleed into it
like an impatient watercolor.

♣♣♣END♣♣♣

