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A Colorful Hullabaloo

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A

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When the travel agency for my annual spring excursion informed me that this year's tour had to be canceled, I convinced myself it would be best to stay at home and enjoy points of interest that are not far away.

In fact, staying at home seemed the common-sense thing to do. The money I planned to spend for an expensive long-distance tour would serve its small part in bolstering our area's faltering economy—a wise move during these declining times, I thought.

Being a typical female, my first excursion near home was, of course, to my favorite fashion center. As I entered the store, I imagined myself surrounded by a Caribbean island garden filled with fragrant bougainvillea blossoms, sugar-white beaches, and sapphire seas.

Longtime friends greeted me as I joined them amid tropical brilliance and coral outcroppings that contrasted with touches of muted beauty usually found in succulent rain forests. Soft music floated through the serene atmosphere, and a steaming cup of black coffee materialized instantly to relax my travel-weary bones.

I let hospitality engulf me while enjoying the country folk chatter about local happenings and the all-important weather. Everyone seemed to deliberately avoid mentioning catastrophic events that are ejected constantly from modern communication devices.

For years the store has been a placid retreat from outside calamities. The place is indeed a sanctuary that overflows with warmth and security. Our lively conversation gradually turned to the purpose of my expedition—namely spring fashions.

According to the knowledgeable, this is the year for the palest pales, the pinkest pinks, the brightest brights, and

the softest stripes. Designers must have anticipated hundreds of stay-at-homes who would discover that this spring's color palette is an exquisite substitute for faraway tropical allure.

What delighted me most of all was the fashion experts' apt slogan, "Collectible Components in the Clearest Gelati Hues Imaginable." Being more or less an amateur linguist, the word *gelati* intrigued me. I had never heard the term. It sounded foreign, perhaps of Latin origin. I promised myself to consult with dependable Old Webster when I got home.

For the moment, I felt content with "Collectible Components". . . I have always been an avid collector. The genre I collect has never mattered. Collectible components in the fashion world sounded like a fun way to create a dashing spring and summer wardrobe that would enhance my future excursions.

The friendly guides of that tropical paradise started our sightseeing tour among the blues that have always been my favorites. I turned on my mental tape recorder so I would not miss a thing.

This season's blues are known by every name except blue. For the birdwatchers there is peacock. A lover of flowers could choose periwinkle. The outdoor woman can anticipate herself in cerulean and lagoon. A sophisticate would be charming in fashions of Bahama and French bleu.

Throughout the shoppe, yellow apparel blazed in every conceivable tropical rendition. Saffron is nothing new; it has always been a tradition and an old standby. Anyone who enjoys delectable salads and the South Sea Islands can visualize herself wearing mango, banana, and coconut. Nature lovers would naturally be lured toward cane and mimosa.

by Donita Lucas Shields

Being the outdoor type of female, I continued my fashion expedition exploring among the greens. My imagination ran wild. I went rockhounding through the malachites; I galloped across the prairie, breathing sweet sagebrush. I climbed mountains wearing Alpine and the most delicate shades of moss. I relived my tours of the Deep South dressed in frothy creme de menthe and mint julep.

Next came the rainbow of reds. Paprika made me think of picnics, potato salad, and deviled eggs. Raspberry, strawberry, and cherry took my thoughts to a favorite ice cream store. With sandstone came memories of freshly plowed fields and steep canyon bluffs. I imagined myself draped in filmy Chianti or Burgundy. I laughed at the idea of painting the town persimmon and poppy.

To me, purple has always been the royal color of kings and queens. Evidently fashion colorists have never attempted to play word games with this particular color. It is still labeled with ordinary grape, plum, mulberry, eggplant, violet, orchid, and lilac. The nearest purple comes to regality is found in a soft shade of amethyst, one of the many delightful newcomers this season.

I could have spent hours among the brown tones. One new shade most confusing to me was tagged with "Malt." I expected malt to be my old favorite, a conservative beige. The color turned out to be a dark brown. Specialists inventing malt must have been referring to the outside of a malted milk ball instead of the inner part.

As I continued browsing through the browns, I associated everything with edibles: toast, caramel, cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, chocolate, and cocoa. In addition to all these taste-tingling flavors were quaint hues of adobe, hickory, and khaki. Last of all, I

discovered exotic shades of suede, mink, and sable. Colorists must have designated these hues for the suavest of fashions because prestigious names do sell merchandise.

Color consultants have created 1,100 shades, and I must have savored at least half of them. When my fashion excursion came to an end, I realized it was decision-making time. Choosing a few take-home souvenirs from the myriad of colors seemed an impossible dream.

I admitted my confusion to the faithful guides. Of course they emphasized and sympathized. Finally I made selections which seemed in keeping with the new spring slogan.

"What could be more collectible than ordinary black and white?" I asked as I selected a simple white suit and a few black components.

Bidding farewell to everyone in that tropical paradise, I promised to return soon. Before returning, though, I planned to know the meaning of that foreign word *gelati* as well as other colorful expressions such as *Anjou pear*, *shredded wheat*, and *mist*.

I also intended to do a bit of detective work concerning the label attached to my beautiful white suit. Not even those expert guides could think of a reasonable explanation as to why white-white would carry the spring color label of "Winter Wheat."

Using our farmspun logic, we conjured that the suit must have been christened on a cold, frosty morning. Stranger things than this are happening in the fashionable color world. Who knows but what the favorite color this fall will be "Hulla Blue" or even "Color Ba-Loo"?