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Alexandra Palmer

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# Leaving Alabama in 1987

by Alexandra Palmer

I am driving Northeast, old jazz wafting  
from my car radio—humid, and leather-toned.  
Duke Ellington's tune drizzles  
*She's a different lady with a different style,*  
and I glance down at my green skirt on  
gray thighs. My dimpled confidence collides  
with sax and piano riffs, and I feel self-conscious  
of the bleach in my skin. My cheeks flush  
darker. I feel self-conscious for gray bark  
wearing green leaves and blush blossoms.

I cannot help but wonder if New York  
will swallow the non-standard on my tongue.  
To Alabama, it still tastes unsavory,  
like roquefort—tang potent and grassy,  
pocketed with mold. I am cream, flecked  
with dark veins.