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Black Enough

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Calabash: A Journal of Caribbean Arts and Letters is an international literary journal dedicated to publishing works encompassing, but not limited to, the Anglophone, Francophone, Hispanophone and Dutch-speaking Caribbean. The Journal is especially dedicated to presenting the arts and letters of those communities that have long been under-represented within the creative discourse of the region, among them: Aruba and the Netherlands Antilles, Maroon societies, and the Asian and Amerindian societies of the region. Calabash has a strong visual arts component.

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Phebus Etienne

BLACK ENOUGH

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I traveled to Paris and the pork free,
lactose intolerant sorority sister questioned
how could I walk the decadent grounds of Versailles
when I had not traced my Dahomey roots.

Even Dessalines danced the minuet.
Europeans swim in my blood, surfacing in Victors
who walked ahead of me, signifying beauty
with *cafe-au-lait* or mulatto skin, straight noses and silken plaits.
They left or were driven from
milkweed forests and sugar cane acres,
after learning the simplicity of dried cod tossed in vinegar
and served over cornmeal at midday.
Luxury was siesta, open air baths at dusk, lemon leaves scenting a tin basin.

Parisian men praised my pronunciation
while their women appraised my brown shell. Some secured
purse straps, pulled husbands closer
as we shared bridges arcing above the Seine.

Two centuries since we raised a flag,
rice farmers and professors sail wooden ships
through another middle passage.

I know the taste of *Bordeaux*, *crème brulee*,
the sweetness of standing over Napoleon's tomb.