

Annette L. Murrell

I wanna be a bad woman

*I've stayed in the front yard all my life.
I want a peek at the back
Where it's rough and untended and hungry weeds grow.
A girl gets sick of a rose.*

*Gwendolyn Brooks,
"A Street in Brownsville"*

I wanna be a bad woman:
the kind of woman my grandmother, Georgia Mae King,
rolled her eyes at and hissed *tsk tsk*
with her sanctified tongue,
pronouncing as we passed,
That hussy's on the road to perdition!

I wanna be a bad woman:
loud, loose, hard drinking and hot for sex,
the kind of woman who spends her afternoons
drinking Colt 45 on her front porch,
legs parted wide like the Red Sea,
cussing out anyone foolish enough
to suggest they be crossed.

I wanna be a bad woman:
whose men must pay her rent, car note, and utilities
before they climb into her bed;
the kind of woman who
looks grocery clerks dead in the eyeball
as she counts out her food stamps,
and who speaks only Black English,
referring to President Clinton as
that horny peckerwood.

I wanna be a bad woman:
like Miss Ethel who stood in her front yard
every morning
toothless and with no brassiere,
sipping a water glass of Beef Eaters
while waving at me and
slurring, *Keep smiling baby!*
as I passed her house on the way to school,
trembling with fear and envy.