

## WHAT THE WIRE DID NOT FEEL

Seeds from the Afro Clean Block fall  
from the edges of window sills, the bottoms  
of eyelids, old jars  
of Duke's hair pomade for knotty hair,  
brittle combinations of evenings on porches  
without the marble steps,  
or with the marble,  
the surveillance of what kept safe  
the ways of being held back, the ways things grew  
in the grand plan of old hands that knew  
they were growing and did not just spring up  
in a flower pot held captive.

### "Death of a Wino, #1"

It comes to love, I done had it being this way,  
all dried up, but no way shriveled, no ways forgot  
except by what wants to hurt me, because  
I decided, the only justice I call "me" decided  
to answer for what I did, and I did what I did  
in the genius of who folk say I am, who they be.

No more wine, only truth.

Seeds from the Afro Clean Block fall  
like Miss Juju's left hand fell in the last line  
of another song about the rugged cross, oh forgetful  
is what we used to call it, not her hand but the way  
white eyes did not see  
black Ace combs and dream books,

secret hands passing money won in pinochle  
games on Rose Street alongside the wall  
to Baltimore cemetery, the secret place gone to the Dead  
the way the Dead go.

Undead, up from middle C to where the pastor  
can't sing unless he is a keeper of the higher Grace  
notes, one of the magnificent ones. "Damn the solo."

*stanza break*

"Pass the offering plate."

“Pee straight or get  
the hell out of the game.”

Later it would all come to be:  
“Handle your business. build The Church!”

“Death of a Wino, #2”

What the hell is handling your business? All the windows  
with broken glass, wind blowing through the way  
ghosts just run up and down inside lost souls, and I sit  
until all the feeling leaves me, and I leave me.

Nothing is left to steal, and the cameras roll on to the next  
place. Even the me, without my feelings, I am full

of a mind that knows some kind  
of kindness, what ain't a taking hand hid behind a hand  
that want to be giving.

We are more than a Care Package left out to rot.

Seeds from the Afro Clean Block fall  
on pages of a newspaper made up  
from the outside of tombs with still winds

that want to blow, want to make  
themselves real inside the nothing  
of what is always taken by hearts that want to give  
but end up getting eaten up by genius—

—on the cutting floor. “What up?”  
says the preacher. It all comes home to who  
anyone thinks they are, where things still live  
in empty lots.

by Afaa M. Weaver 尉雅風  
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