

*Grand River Avenue, Detroit Riots, 1967*

Sometimes in a young mind there are rabbits sniffing pine cones and wet grass in the morning. The world is an aural landscape of meditative beauty. In my young mind I'm driving with my father. I'm not sure where in the hell we're going. It is July, 1967, and there is smoke billowing out of roof tops. Army vehicles, which look like big violent bugs, churn forward down the streets. I'm told to duck down in the station wagon. I'm told there could be sniper fire. My young head could be blown apart like milkweed. So I grip the back of the seat with my strong arms like I'm hugging the side of a wall for protection. My stomach, which is full of acid and stones, tightens. My father looks ahead as if sniffing down a long corridor to a doorway, something golden and light. I'm guessing he's looking straight into Heaven, for I am Catholic, and I can't guess ahead to anything else. Nothing but white light. And there are angels, big weeping winged things caressing the burning cars exploded down along the side streets. Some angels genuflect. Some blow saxophones or trumpets and they throw them down on the street loudly. And it sounds like wailing or crying, as if all of Heaven's gate had fallen like glass over us. Then I peek up, see the black men running away. Some of them run into store fronts with no glass remaining. And their faces are terrified ripped pieces of rubber. And the police cars race forward after them. Fire trucks roar down the road and blow hoses full of water all over them. Someone calls them devils but it sure isn't my father, for his heart is as wobbly as a bowl of milk and he loves them. And the angels, which are large insects with beating wings and wailing faces that resemble sun flowers bursting apart, race and swoop down on us. And one of them cradles the window of the car like a blanket, a large bursting mouth of howling. And he yells at me you will be named John one day and you will tell of the apocalypse here. And every story you tell will be true. And bewildering. For you fear all this and it breaks your heart.