

Dear Reader,

The inspiration for *White Smoke* was threefold:

First, this book was born from a trip to Detroit. As a New Yorker, used to living shoulder to shoulder with millions, it blew my mind to see so many massive vacant houses, zero traffic, and entire blocks completely abandoned. I drove around fascinated yet horrified by what had happened to a city with a population over 80 percent Black. Then, I heard a Devil's Night urban legend that piqued my interest.

Second, like all my other books, the ending was inspired by a 2008 case that had left my mouth hanging open for days.

Lastly, episode 22, season 1 of my all-time favorite TV series, *The Twilight Zone*, is the book's rod iron spine. The closing narration of "The Monsters are Due on Maple Street" depicts the theme flawlessly:

"The tools of conquest do not necessarily come with bombs and explosions and fallout. There are weapons that are simply thoughts, attitudes, prejudices . . . to be found only in the minds of men. For the record, prejudices can kill . . . and suspicion can destroy . . . and a thoughtless, frightened search for a scapegoat has a fallout all of its own—for the children and the children yet unborn. And the pity of it is that these things cannot be confined . . . to the Twilight Zone."

If it feels like I'm being vague, it's because I don't want to spoil a thing! This is my first official venture into horror, a genre I've been in love with since I learned to read, while keeping a toe in the psychological thriller space. I hope you enjoy.

Best,

Tiffany D. Jackson