

## Standing Beside Love

*“Standing beside love is always justice.” Martin Luther King, Jr*

Atlanta, Georgia, October 12, 1958

During the fifth hour of what was to be an all-night conversation, Mitzi Wiesner and Romulus Freeman heard the explosion, its power rolling in waves across the city to where they sat on the outskirts of the parking lot at Terminal Station.

“What was that?” Mitzi asked, sitting upright, frightened by what she thought was a bomb, for she had heard her father, a soldier on the Eastern Front in the first World War, describe the way the very ground beneath one’s feet would seem to buckle. Even in the car, she felt the earth’s unfolding, its undoing of the natural order of things.

“It’s all right,” Romulus said, looking around the parking lot in alarm, hoping no one had noticed them, he behind the steering wheel of his 1958 Buick Roadmaster, Mitzi in the passenger seat suddenly visible as she rose, alarmed, from her deliberate slouch beside him. Her own older sedan was parked one spot over, its door unlocked, key in the ignition, if she had to flee. “It must have been a gas tank; what else could it be?”

Romulus extended his right arm as if he were stretching after having fallen asleep, and she contracted back below the dashboard sightline, so that any passerby, however unlikely in the middle of the night, would see only a Negro man sitting alone in the front seat of his car at the train station, perhaps having fallen asleep after a long rail journey, or catching a bit of rest before an early morning departure.