

that nobody wants to buy crack in front of three men dressed as superheroes. While Phoenix and his crew stand here, the dealers are losing all their business.

Phoenix points to two packets of cigarettes under the windshield wiper of a nearby car.

"Those are indications that you can buy here," he says. "So I'm going to take them off and annoy the crap out of them."

He scrunches the packets up and throws them onto the sidewalk.

At this, one of the gang steps forward. If you were watching from across the road it would seem as if he just wanders past us. But in fact he whispers something as he does: "You keep staying on our block we gonna have to show you what the burner do."

"Thank you, it's great meeting you," says Phoenix.

"What's a burner?" I whisper.

"A gun," Phoenix whispers back.

The man loops and rejoins the others.

The streets are deserted. It's just the dealers and us. But then, miraculously, a taxi passes. I flag it. The superheroes all have bulletproof vests. I have nothing. I have a cardigan. I want to see how the drama plays out but I don't want to be killed. "I'll give you twenty bucks to just *stay here*," I say to the driver.

He looks around, taking in the scene in an instant. "No," he says.

"Thirty?" I say.

And then, suddenly, the whole gang, all nine of them, some with their hands down their trousers, as if they're holding guns just under their waistlines, walk toward us. I can't see much of Phoenix's face under his mask but I can see by the way his hands are involuntarily shaking that he is terrified.

"My shift is over," calls the taxi driver. "I need to go home now."

"Forty!" I yell. "Just stay there!"

"I don't care about the money!" the driver yells. But he doesn't move.

The nine men get closer.

"Are we leaving or are we standing?" says Phoenix.

"We're standing," says Ghost.

"We're standing," says Pitch Black.

"You're willing to *die* for this shit?" one of the men is yelling.