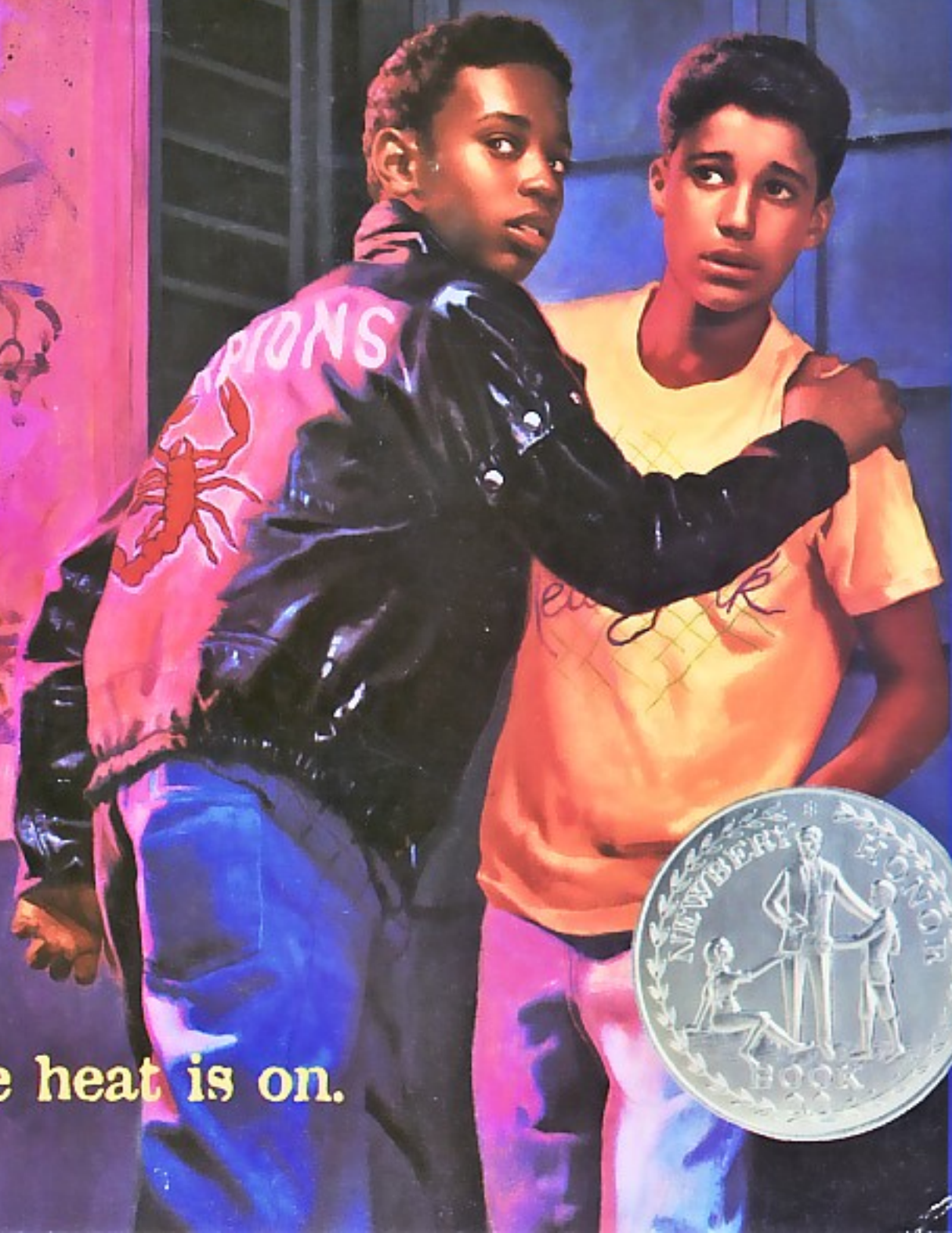




T R O P H Y N E W B E R Y

WALTER DEAN MYERS

# SCORPIONS



The heat is on.



## CHAPTER ONE

"You see anything?"

"No."

"Why don't you go down to the subway?"

"Suppose she come on the bus or take a taxi?"

"She ain't got the money for no taxi."

"She could still take the bus."

Jamal sat in the window and looked down the street. It had rained earlier, and he wondered if his mother had taken an umbrella.

"I'm hungry," Sassy said.

"You ate." Jamal answered his little sister without looking at her.

"You want to watch television?"

"You the one who always want to watch it," Jamal said.

"I just asked," Sassy said. "You worried?"

"Ain't nothing to be worried about."

"Then how come you sitting at the window ever since six o'clock?"

"How come you ask so many questions?"

"I'm gonna tell Mama you being nasty to me."

"Tell her."

"I'm gonna tell her you said that, too."

"I don't care."

"I'm putting the television on," Sassy said.

Jamal glanced at the clock on the wall. It was almost ten thirty. He started to ask Sassy if she had finished her homework, then changed his mind. He looked down into the street again.

At the corner a thin man leaned against the light pole. Jamal watched as the man leaned slowly toward the ground, then straightened up. Jamal knew that the addict would repeat his nodding until he fell asleep. He looked away.

Sassy was watching some stupid program. The television was okay, even if the programs were stupid. When he got a job, he was going to buy one of those recording machines. Then he and Mama could go and get movies and watch them instead of all the stupid stuff they had on regular television.

He thought about how he would tell Mama he had the money for the recording machine. Maybe he wouldn't even tell her—just go out and buy it for her and bring it on in the house.

Sassy fell asleep on the couch at eleven o'clock.

He moved away from the window and sat next to his sister. Mama would say that he should wake her and tell her to go to bed, but he didn't want to sit by himself.

Somebody had a radio on. Probably Snookie. Snookie always played his radio too loud. Jamal had told Snookie about his loud playing, and he asked Jamal what he needed a radio for if he had



to play it so soft he couldn't hear it. Jamal figured a dead person could hear it the way Snookie played it.

Jamal was a little hungry. He had made some potatoes and chicken, but there wasn't too much of it. Sassy had eaten one piece of chicken, and he had had one piece. Sassy said she wanted two pieces because she wasn't going to eat any potatoes, but she knew better. They had to save something for Mama. If he had got the rice from Mr. Evans, he could have made the chicken and rice Mama liked a lot.

It was almost twelve o'clock when Mama got home. Jamal was in the bathroom when he heard the key in the door. He came out as quickly as he could. He saw that Mama had awakened Sassy and taken her into the bedroom.

"How come you didn't tell Sassy to go to bed?" Mama said.

"She wanted to watch television."

"She eat?"

"Uh-huh."

"What she eat?"

"That chicken from Sunday and some potatoes. We saved you some."

Mama went into the kitchen and looked at the food on the stove. She saw that Jamal had cut the potatoes into small squares and put some snap beans in with them.

"Where you get them snap beans?"





## "YOU GOT TO TAKE WHAT THE STREET PUT DOWN."

**T**hese days, everyone seems to be getting on Jamal's case. The kids at school keep bugging him, his teachers won't leave him alone, and the principal's always giving him a hard time. Even his mama yells at him, upset because Jamal's brother is in the slammer. The only one he can count on anymore is his best friend Tito.

Now Crazy Mack wants Jamal to take over as leader of the Scorpions and run crack. Jamal doesn't want anything to do with the gang, but he doesn't have a choice—it's the only way to get the money for Randy's appeal. And as long as he's got Tito on his side, Jamal knows everything will be okay...

"A realistic, spare, and almost unbearably sad story."

—*Publishers Weekly*

"Myers constructs a scene and plot which are very believable and frightening to contemplate."

—*The Horn Book*

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