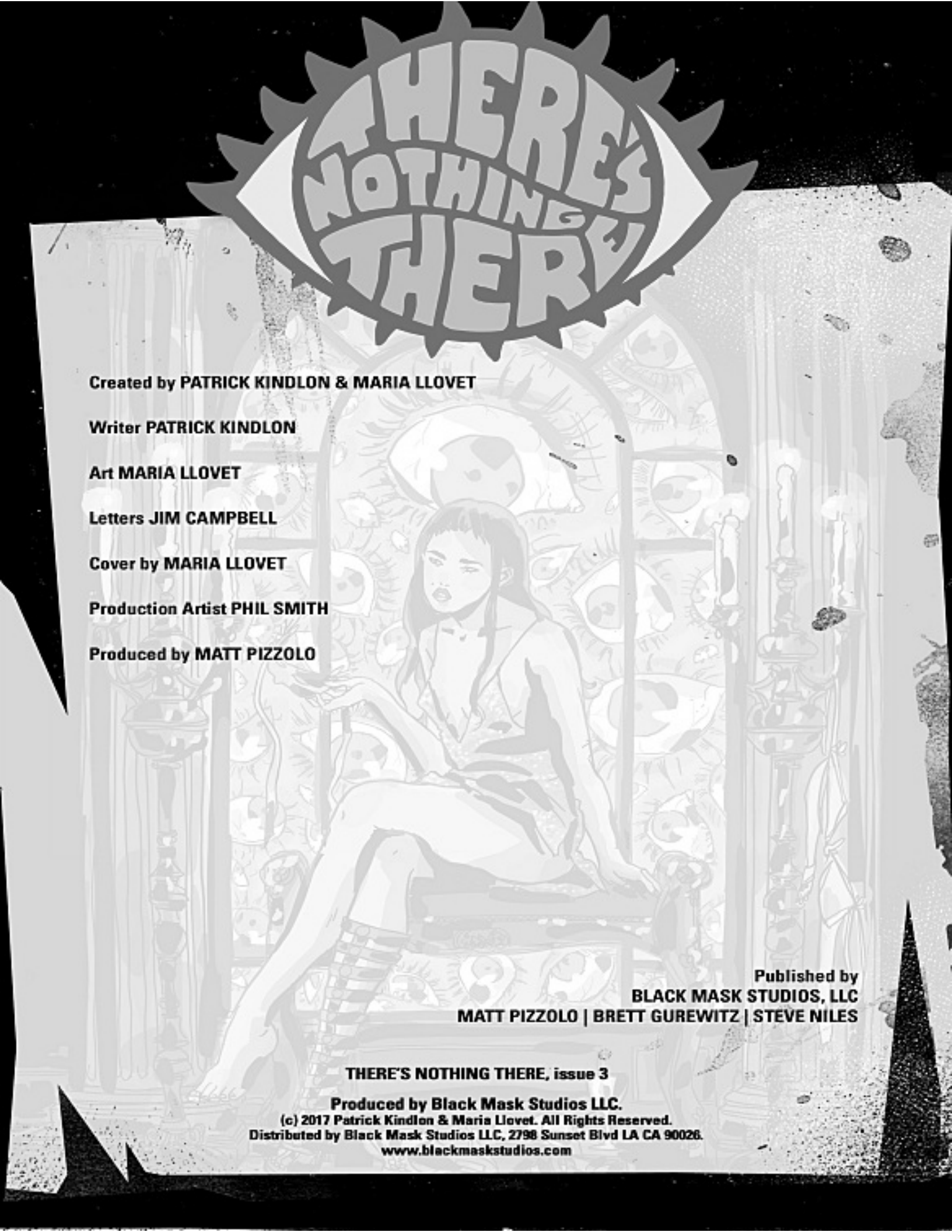

BLACK MASK
#3
THERE'S NOTHING THERE
PATRICK KINDLON
MARIA LLOVET



Created by PATRICK KINDLON & MARIA LLOVET

Writer PATRICK KINDLON

Art MARIA LLOVET

Letters JIM CAMPBELL

Cover by MARIA LLOVET

Production Artist PHIL SMITH

Produced by MATT PIZZOLO

Published by
BLACK MASK STUDIOS, LLC
MATT PIZZOLO | BRETT GUREWITZ | STEVE NILES

THERE'S NOTHING THERE, issue 3

Produced by Black Mask Studios LLC.
(c) 2017 Patrick Kindlon & Maria Llovet. All Rights Reserved.
Distributed by Black Mask Studios LLC, 2798 Sunset Blvd LA CA 90026.
www.blackmaskstudios.com


RENO.
RENO.
YOU NAME THE PROBLEM, WE'LL GET YOU IN A PROGRAM. I'VE GOT THEM ALL ON SPEED DIAL.
YOUR SISTER IS BORDERLINE PERSONALITY, WOULD ONLY EAT BEET JUICE, AND HAD A HYDROCODONE ADDICTION OF THE HIGHEST ORDER.
NOW LOOK AT HER. TOTALLY CLEAN. ENGAGED. HAS TWO DOGS.
THESE PROGRAMS WORK. YOU JUST HAVE TO BE HONEST. WHAT'RE YOU STRUGGLING WITH?
MOM?
YES, BABY?


STOP TALKING AND HAND ME A TOWEL, PLEASE.


THERE'S
SOMETHING
THERE


I'M JUST TRYING TO HELP, RENO. PROVIDE OPTIONS.
OPTIONS, HUH?
IT'S PEOPLE, PLACES, THINGS, SWEETIE. IF YOU'RE IN AN UNHEALTHY ATMOSPHERE, AN UNHEALTHY LIFE, WE CAN CHANGE THAT.
I WORKED HARD TO GIVE YOU GIRLS MULTIPLE CHANCES IN LIFE. THE LATITUDE TO MAKE MISTAKES.
MOM, YOU WERE BORN RICH, THEN MARRIED DAD WHO WAS ALSO BORN RICH.
STAYING RICH IS A FULL-TIME JOB, RENO.
YOU KNOW, IT'S YEARS DOWN THE LINE, BUT SHOULD YOU EVER WANT A BREAST LIFT, DR. UMAR DID AMAZING THINGS FOR YOUR SISTER.
THIS HAS BEEN A REALLY NICE MOMENT, MOM.


MOM, I'M HAUNTED.
IS THIS MORE ABOUT WALKING IN ON YOUR FATHER AND I?
RENO, HOW MANY YEARS OF THERAPY HAVE I ALREADY PAID FOR OVER THIS? MOM AND DAD HAVE SEX, SO WHAT!
NO, MOM. IT'S NOT ABOUT THAT. AT ALL. BUT, IN POINT OF FACT, I WALKED IN ON YOU, DAD, AND SAMANTHA, MY OBOE TEACHER. IT'S DIFFERENT.
YOU TRY BEING MARRIED FOR TWENTY-SIX YEARS. SEE IF IT DOESN'T COMPEL YOU TO... EXPLORE.
SHE WAS A FANTASTIC OBOE TEACHER, LET'S NOT FORGE--
HAUNTED, MOM. ACTUALLY, REALLY, HAUNTED. GHOSTS. DEAD PEOPLE. BOO. THE WHOLE THING. FOR REAL.


I DON'T KNOW WHO THEY ARE. I DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY WANT. BUT THEY SPEAK TO ME.
AND THEY ARE DEAD. ONE-HUNDRED PERCENT, FULLY... DEAD.
DEAD.
GHOSTS.
CELIA SAW ONE. JUDY SAW. THEY ARE COMING TO ME FOR SOME REASON.
GHOSTS.
I KNOW. I KNOW HOW IT SOUNDS.
BUT THIS IS REAL. AND... AND I NEED HELP.
I KNOW JUST WHO TO CALL. WE'LL HAVE THIS SORTED IN NO TIME.


THIS LIFE
IS DIRTY
FOUL ONES
ARE REWARDED
AND THE RIGHTEOUS
LIVE IN THEIR SHADOW


WHO COULD SHE POSSIBLY CALL ABOUT THIS?
THE POPE?
YES
Almond Milk
Cereal
EXACTLY. GHOSTS, DEMONS, HOBGOBLINS, EVERYTHING. THE FULL ENGLISH OF HAUNTINGS.
RENO, DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING I CAN WEA--
JESUS. WHERE DID YOU COME FROM?
AND WHY ARE YOU STILL DRESSED LIKE BEYONCE?
THAT'S WHAT I'M SAYING. THERE'S BOUND TO BE SOME PAPARAZZI OUTSIDE.
I NEED SOMETHING TO WEAR. SWEATS, MAYBE?
CLOSEST I COME IS YOGA PANTS.
THEY'RE GAINING POPULARITY WITH MEN.
YOU DON'T HAVE ANY MEN'S CLOTHES HERE?
JUDY PURGES ANYTHING LEFT ON THE FLOOR.
I NEED A JUDY IN MY LIFE. I'VE STILL GOT A LOVER'S SWEATSHIRT FROM FRESHMAN YEAR OF COLLEGE.
YOU GIRLS CALLIN' ME?
LORD. WHY'S HE DRESSED LIKE JANET JACKSON?
THAT'S WHAT I WAS THINKING. JANET JACKSON. NOT BEYONCE.
RHYTHM NATION ERA. GOOD CALL.
Cereal
FUUUUCK. JUST OCCURRED TO ME, HE'S GETTING PHOTOGRAPHED LEAVING MY HOUSE IN THE MORNING.
THEY'RE GONNA SAY YOU BONED.
I COULD CUT HOLES IN A PILLOWCASE. MAKE'M A MASK.


GOOD MORNING, SIR!
DON'T TAKE ANOTHER FUCKIN' STEP.
DOES RENO SELLETI LIVE HERE?
DON'T KNOW 'ER.
YEAH, SHE DOES.
THAT CAMERA'S SAVIN' YOUR LIFE, MY DUDE. IF NOT FOR GETTIN' CAUGHT ON VIDEO, I'D WHOOP YOUR ASS UP AND DOWN THIS STREET, YOU HEAR?
YOU GET THAT?
GOT IT.
MOTH. ER. FUCK. ERS.
ARE YOU ALL THIS FUCKIN' DUMB, FOR REAL?
THIS IS A 'NO SHADY PARASITES' ZONE. THIS BARS YOU AND ANYONE WHO LOOKS LIKE YOU, PROLLY YOUR MAMAS AS WELL. GET LOST.


I CAN'T THANK YOU ENOUGH. YES, FOR SURE SHE'LL BE THERE. OK. THANK YOU AGAIN. BYE.
I'M NERVOUS.
I'M EXCITED.
SOLVED.
MOMMY TO THE RESCUE.
GO ON.
I'VE TOLD YOU, YOU DON'T DO THE CHARITY BALL CIRCUIT FOR THE CHARITIES.
AH. HOT.
YOU DO IT FOR THE CONTACTS! THE PEOPLE YOU MEET! THE NETWORKING!
OK. ARE YOU GONNA TELL US WHO THIS CONTACT IS, OR...
I'M TEASING IT OUT. BIG REVEAL COMING.
ACK. WHAT AM I EATING?
IT'S A VEGAN SAUSAGE LINK. I THINK IT'S SEITAN.
UGK. NO WONDER. GET THIS AWAY FROM MY MOUTH.
MOM, THE SOLUTION YOU SUPPOSEDLY CREATED? CAN WE GET TO IT?
BAYLOR KENT.
THE DICKHEAD FROM TV?


"HE'S NOT A DICKHEAD. I'VE MET HIM A NUMBER OF TIMES AND HE'S DELIGHTFUL."
"MOM. HE SCAMS OLD LADIES WHO WANNA TALK TO THEIR DEAD HUSBANDS."
"HE'S LEGITIMATE! AND, THOSE OLD LADIES GET FLOWN OUT TO NEW YORK AND PUT IN A HOTEL."
kailee_kush
"OK. WHAT'S HE GONNA DO FOR ME?"
MISS. MISS.
YO, WHAT THE FUCK.
"PUT YOU IN CONTACT WITH THESE RESTLESS SPIRITS HAUNTING YOU!"
"YOU KNOW, FORCE A CONFRONTATION!"


BOMP
GETYOUR FUCKINGHANDSOFF MEYOUSMALLMONEY MOTHERFUCKERI'M GONNASTOMPTHIS SHITBIRD'SBABY COCKINTOTHE MARBLE!
PUT IT IN A LETTER, NUTJOB.
COCKSUCKERFUCK HEADYOUDON'TDISRE SPECTMEWHOTHE FUCKDOYOUTHINK YOUARE?
KYLE LAGGENSWORTH? CAN I GET A WORD?
KYLEYOU SNAKEFUCK HEADYOU'RE GONNAPAY!


MOM. I APPRECIATE YOU. YOU TRIED. BUT BAYLOR KENT IS A SCAM.
I'M JUST CURIOUS WHY HIS FIRST AND LAST NAME ARE COLLEGES.
Almond Milk
Cereal
SO, TELL ME IF I'M RIGHT. YOU'RE SCHLUPPIN' RENO, AND LIL FREAKOUT OVER HERE IS THE JEALOUS GIRLFRIEND?
CALM THE FUCK DOWN!
KILL YOU ALL AND PISS ON YOUR GRAVES!
YOU WANTED HELP. I HELPED. YOU'RE MEETING HIM AT 4PM, BEFORE HE TAPES TODAY'S EPISODE.
THIS IS A FAVOR TO ME, SO PRETEND YOU HAVE MANNERS.


YOU DONE?
WHZZE
HEEZEE
I NEED
MY INHALER.
WINK ONCE IF YOU'RE RENO'S BOYFRIEND. WINK TWICE IF YOU'RE JUST BANGIN' HER.
C'MON, MAN.
ARE WE ACTUALLY GOING TO THE TV PSYCHIC?
YEAH. ACTUALLY GOING TO THE TV PSYCHIC.
ARE WE ACTUALLY SMOKING WEED IN THE BATHROOM SO YOUR MOM DOESN'T YELL AT US?
YEP. ACTUALLY SMOKING WEED IN THE BATHROOM SO MY MOM DOESN'T YELL AT US.
AIN'T NOTHIN' EASY.
HHHT
GET OVER HERE.
AYE!


KYLE, YOU--
;WHEEZH;
SCUMFUCK!
ZZZT
SO MUCH
I'M OFF! FOUR O'CLOCK. DO NOT BE A MINUTE LATE.
BY BIRTH
NO WORK
REMEMBER, FAVORS ARE TRADED, NOT GIVEN AWAY. CIAO.
NO TOIL
UNDESERVED
DING


YOU WERE DOWNSTAIRS, RIGHT? YOU WERE. WHAT'RE YOU DOING HERE?
NO
BUMP
I SAID, WHAT'RE YOU DOING HERE? GIVE ME AN ANSWER OR I'M CALLI--
NO!
OH, KYLE. YOU AND YOUR FRIEND HELP ME WITH THIS LUGGAGE, WOULD YOU?
AAYYAHH!
SLURK
RENO! YOUR BOYFRIEND IS GETTING STABBED OUT HERE.


HE'S NOT MY BOYFRIE--
DID SHE SAY STABBED?
I HEARD STABBED.
WE'RE GOING TO JUST NOT THINK ABOUT HOW EXPENSIVE THIS SCARF IS AS WE USE IT TO BANDAGE YOUR HAND. OK? IT'S NOT EVEN A THOUGHT IN MY MIND.
"MOM? WHAT THE FUCK HAPPENED?"
MIGHT BE A LOVE TRIANGLE. ARE YOU SEEING A SQUIRRELY WEIRDO ON THE SIDE?
E'RYONE STEP AWAY. I'M GONNA SAVE THE YACHTBOY'S LIFE.


COCKSUC KERDICK HEADS!
PUSH ON! GO!
WHAT?
FUCK.
KYLE.
AND.
FUCK.
YOU.
ANYONE CATCH HER NAME?
VRUUUUM
AHHHH!
SHHH!
RENO, WHERE'D YOU FIND THIS WEAK LIL MAN?
EXCUSE ME, MISS?


"I FEEL SORTA BAD FOR NOT GOING WITH KYLE TO THE HOSPITAL."
BEST STARS ☆ BEST PROGRAMS
BEST NETWORK
OH, C'MON. HE'S FINE, AND WE BOTH KNOW THIS'LL BE A STORY HE DROPS INTO CONVERSATIONS TO SOUND TOUGH, FOREVER.
COOL OF THE AMBULANCE PEOPLE TO GIVE US A RIDE, THOUGH.
FOR SURE. THEY WERE REALLY NICE.
SO, DOES HE HAVE AN OFFICE? OR DO WE HANG IN THE STUDIO, OR...?
FILMING
BEYOND
GOT ME. I'M NOT PLUGGED INTO THE TELEVISION GHOST-TALKER SCENE.
DAMN.
YEAH. WHO KNEW PRETENDING TO TALK TO GHOSTS WAS THIS BIG A PRODUCTION?
I PREFER THE PATERNITY TEST SHOWS.
I SAW ONE WHERE THE SAME GIRL BROUGHT PATERNITY TESTS AGAINST ELEVEN DUDES.
CRISTAL FROM CLEVELAND. SHE'S AN ICON.
HELLO?
MR KENT?
THUMDP


YOU! I CAN'T WATCH THIS HAPPEN ANYMORE! DO IT DIFFERENT! ESCAPE!>
JUST CONFIRMING, A POLISH GHOST IS YELLING AT US, CORRECT?
WHERE'S BAYLOR KENT WHEN WE NEED HIM?
<DON'T BE DENSE! STAY VISIBLE! HE DOESN'T GO IN THE LIGHT! HE CAN'T--->
SZILVESZTER, ENOUGH! YER JUST SCARING'M.
TAKE IT DOWN A NOTCH, HOMBRE. THEY DON'T SPEAK HUNGARIAN OR CRAZY.
UH, HI. CAN I GET A WORD BEFORE YOU DISAPPEAR?
MIND THE DOOR, SZILVESZTER. I NEED TO TALK TO THE GIRLS.
BEFORE I DISAPPEAR, YA SAY. BEFORE WE BOTH DISAPPEAR, MAYBE! I'M OSCAR ZETA ACOSTA, ESQ. IT'S A BLESSIN' TO MEET YA!
HI, OSCAR.
YES


LET ME RECAP. YOU'RE A GHOST JUST LIKE THE OTHER GHOSTS. THEY WERE WARNING ME. BUT THEY'RE BAD AT IT, BECAUSE I'M JUST CONFUSED.
SOMETHING ABOUT A BAD DUDE NAMED ASBEEL, AND I'M SUPPOSED TO STAY VISIBLE.
IS THERE ANYTHING I'M MISSING?
HAVE YOU SEEN A DIZZY MILLENNIAL WANDER THROUGH HERE? MY FOUR O'CLOCK IS LATE. OR LOST.
ARE YA MISSING ANYTHING?! WHERE TO START!
GHOSTS? SOME WOULD ARGUE IT, BUT, CLOSE ENOUGH.
LITTLE GIRL WAS JOAN CROFT, WEIRD MAN WAS BOSTON CORBETT, THAT VIVACIOUS SOMETHING WITH THE BOUNTIFUL HAIR WAS JUANITA NIELSEN.
AND THE DERANGED EURO OVER THERE IS SZILVESZTER MAGUKA. ANY OF THESE NAMES MEAN ANYTHING TO YA?
STUDIO 1 →
NO?
SORRY.


OK. THOSE PEOPLE HAVE NOT ONE EARTHLY THING IN COMMON. NOT A SINGLE THREAD TO LINK'M.
EXCEPT, THEY'RE MISSING.
THE HELL?
PUNTD
MISSING FROM WHERE?
LIFE. EARTH. THE MATERIAL FUCKIN' PLANE. REALITY.
"WOOSH" GONE.
AND HE DID IT.
SECURITY! THE FUCK IS GOING ON HERE?
ASBEEL.
OLD GREEK LADIES CALL HIM THE GOD OF MISSING CHILDREN. BUT HE DOESN'T DISCRIMINATE ON AGE.
"PUDNT
<TIME TO GO!>
BRUUMM


BBRRUUMM
WHAT'S HE GOT TO DO WITH ME? WHY ME?
HE'S A HUNTER. A TROPHY COLLECTOR.
YA GOT A MILLION EYES ON YA. CAMERAS FOLLOW YA AROUND. THAT'S THE CHALLENGE! MAKING YA DISAPPEAR IS LIKE POPPIN' A LION. YER THE BIG GAME.
SO, WHAT DO I DO?
WELL, NO ONE HAS BEAT HIM, SO IT'S A BIT A SPECULATION, BUT STA--
SPECULATION? YOU DON'T KNOW?
HE'S ALWAYS GOT AN AVATAR SOME MECHANISM ACTING FOR HIM. COULD BE A STORM, A FIRE, A PERSON.
I THINK YA GOTTA BEAT IT ON ITS TERMS. MATCH IT, SOMEHOW.
<GOTTA GO NOW, AMERICANO>
CHICANO. IT'S A SEPARATE IDENTITY, YA GOULASH-EATING IDIOT.
BRUUUM


CAN'T DISAPPEAR IF EVERYONE'S WATCHIN'. TA STAY VISIBLE.
SURE. I'LL JUST FUCKING SLEEP ON WEBCAM. LIVESTREAM EVERY TIME I PISS.
THIS HACK MOTHERFUCKER SAYS HE TALKS TO GHOSTS. HUH? WELL, LET'S TALK.
BRUUM
JESUS MARYAND JOSEPH!
FUCK.
FUCK.
FUCK.
FUCK.
THAT WOULD'VE MADE GOOD TV.



—End Chapter Three—



Hello again. Welcome back to the space where I alienate myself from the readership.

Today's topic is CAN WE TALK ABOUT SOMETHING ELSE?

Comic readers are diverse. So, obviously, as I take pokes at some of the fools I see out here, understand that I'm not talking about you. Unless I am, in which case, here's your chance to self-reflect.

As I type this, the comics world is locked in a hysteria. It's fixated with Nick Spencer. Comics press is excited, because it needs this sorta shit. Comics Twitter has a reason to exist, because none of these assholes can talk about craft with any clarity, so scandal is all it's got.

This will all probably seem very quaint if you're reading this years from now. But, in this moment, it's all that's going on. All the great work in comics is being stepped over so people can take shots at Spencer. If your book came out this month, don't bother trying to generate a conversation about it. You'll instead be roped into one of the thousand variations on "we don't need this fascism-glorifying story now, when the world is on the brink of authoritarianism... DON'T YOU AGREE?"

For the record, I don't agree. Spencer could've made Hitler into Captain America, and if it was well done I would read and enjoy it. There's no 'responsible' time to create art. The two ideas are so separate, it's a bit like suggesting there's a crucial moment to make pancakes.

The larger point is that we're never talking about comics as a thing that matters in and of itself. Almost like we can't acknowledge genre fiction as the life-changing and life-affirming craft that it is. Almost like we don't care about its history or future. It seems that speculating on a writer's intent is more fulfilling to some than reading. As if art only has value when we admire (our perceived understanding of) its goals. The aesthetics of the thing -which is the literal essence of art as it exists outside of what you pull from artist statements or context clues- don't seem to thrill you fuckers.

I'm from a different school. At the risk of sounding snobby, it may be because I write. I find that people who've never created anything struggle to find context for other people's creations. I ONLY care about the work. The discourse becomes dull for me when it consists of guessing a stranger's motivations. That's akin to telling me your dreams. Noncommittal, vague, and ultimately, not real. We're not lovers and I'm not obliged to listen to that shit.

It's good, in some respects, that a comic can still cause an uproar. Being offended, or titillated, or just curious, are powerful forces in a market that can often feel depleted. But, fuck, man, can we ever just get excited about how good or bad a book is? I know I look like a damn fool advocating merit in a moment when ultra-specific theoretical criticisms are en vogue, but these things tend to swing and I think we may have reached the logical limit of our recent course. Time to head back.

Is it good? Did it make you feel? Do you think about it a day later?

Here's some extreme irony for a column wherein I present my personal views in a familiar and conversational way:

"When I do a job, it's not my personality that I'm offering the readers but my artwork. It's not what I'm like that counts; it's what I did and how well it was done.... I produce a product, a comic art story." - *Steve Ditko*

Help craft the conversation moving forward by emailing patrick.kindlon@gmail.com