

Incognegro: A Graphic Mystery (New Edition)

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This tenth anniversary edition of the acclaimed and fearless graphic novel features enhanced toned art, an afterword by Mat Johnson, character sketches, and other additional material.

In the early 20th Century, when lynchings were commonplace throughout the American South, a few courageous reporters from the North risked their lives to expose these atrocities. They were African-American men who, due to their light skin color, could "pass" among the white folks. They called this dangerous assignment going "incognegro."

Zane Pinchback, a reporter for the New York-based New Holland Herald, is sent to investigate the arrest of his own brother, charged with the brutal murder of a white woman in Mississippi. With a lynch mob already swarming, Zane must stay "incognegro" long enough to uncover the truth behind the murder in order to save his brother -- and himself. Suspenseful, unsettling and relevant, Incognegro is a tense graphic novel of shifting identities, forbidden passions, and secrets that run far deeper than skin color.

Mat Johnson is the author of the novels Loving Day, Pym, Drop, and Hunting in Harlem, the nonfiction novella The Great Negro Plot, and the graphic novels, Incognegro and Dark Rain. He is a recipient of the United States Artist James Baldwin Fellowship, The Hurston/Wright Legacy Award, a Barnes & Noble Discover Great New Writers selection, the John Dos Passos Prize for Literature, and is a Regular Contributor on NPR's Fresh Air. Mat Johnson is a Professor at the University of Houston Creative Writing Program.

Warren Pleece is a comic book artist mostly known for his work on DC Comics Vertigo imprint for titles such as Deadenders, Hellblazer and Incognegro. As well as having worked for the magazine 2000AD, Titan comics Doctor Who series and for numerous publishers including Jonathan Cape, Macmillan and Simon and Shuster, he is also co-creator of comic magazine, Velocity, the graphic novels The Great Unwashed, Montague Terrace and the web series, Alby Figgs. The brows are furrowed and teeth mightily clenched in Pleece's noirish artwork for Johnson's pulpy tale of a black journalist who goes undercover in the 1930s South to investigate a possible trumped-up murder charge against his brother—a charge that could lead to a lynching. Zane Pinchback, who is so light-skinned he can pass for white with a little cosmetic help, writes the Incognegro column for a Harlem newspaper, and his beat (like that of many a brave black journalist at the time) is the bloody circus of lynchings still claiming lives in horrendous numbers. Johnson's tale is a smart and fast-paced one, particularly when dealing with Pinchback's reluctance to return to Mississippi (wisely preferring his comparatively sheltered Harlem life). Once he's back down South, the twists and turns of the story come fast and thick, goosed by the not particularly trustworthy explanations being given by Zane's moonshine-distilling brother, and the attention-drawing antics of Zane's playboy friend Carl, who invited himself along on a lark. Johnson and Pleece have done a mostly commendable job, though the plot gets too knotted for its own good long before the conclusion, but they give a cracking Chester Himes kick to what could have been a sub-Walter Mosley imitation. (Feb.)

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