

Ever since Kitty Pryde appeared in *Uncanny X-Men* #129, if not before, the modern X-Men have had a special relationship with teenaged superheroes. While the original incarnation lost some bite as the concept of Teenagers evolved and the *Uncanny* incarnation focused on older heroes, the adolescent activation of mutant powers has made the X-Men a powerful symbol to teenagers of all experiences. Particularly in the 1980s and early 2000s, we've been introduced to a slew of young mutants who have become fan favorites, characters that speak to specific readers in important ways. So when I heard that James Tynion would be writing a one-shot story about Anole I was psyched. Over his somewhat short tenure on mainstream comics, James Tynion IV has distinguished himself as one of the strongest voices of young characters working in comics today, as seen in titles like *Batman: Eternal* and *The Woods*. While I don't know that I can say that he blew anything out of the water or strongly challenged preconceived notions, Tynion once again instills the struggles of adolescents with gravity and honesty. While it's a little hard to believe that Anole was able to go completely unnoticed by a cafe of strangers and his date, the choice of being unable to fit in or completely invisible is a resonant one. Anole's fears are somewhat simple but remain potent, thanks to the sheer honesty of Tynion's dialogue. The feeling of constant denial is palpable in Victor's thoughts and there's a familiar but fairly unique experience of being gay that I, at least, found refreshingly new in cape comics. I also have to mention that Victor's phone call with Rockslide is spot on. I don't think there's a single kind sentiment (sediment?) exchanged between the two of them, but Tynion manages to fill the conversation with a crucial warmth that makes it instantly apparent that these are old friends. Of course, while Anole is in the spotlight, he's hardly the only major character of the piece. Tynion also writes hit-and-miss renditions of Nightcrawler and Northstar. Nightcrawler comes to life in the last half of the issue, but his newfound officiousness feels undersupported. Likewise, Northstar's "French Class" is a little too silly for my tastes. I will say that it's nice to see the JGS teachers reminded of their responsibilities, a fitting follow up to another Anole spotlight, Skottie Young's "Blend In". The plot reads somewhat like professional quality fanfiction, but, really, at this point that's what most Big Two comics are. A lampshade isn't quite enough to ignore the pointlessness of our villain's scheme, but this issue provides a fantastic chance for Tynion to cut straight to the hearts of his characters. Their nightmares shift with believable dream logic and fascinating tells about their characters. I honestly wish that Tynion had spent an entire run teasing out the complexities of Nightcrawler and Northstar's discomfort with each other, rather than condensing the struggle into a brief, though excellent, beat in this story. The one thing that did irk me about the story is the degree to which it seems to treat Anole's issues as literally being Nightcrawler's issues + Northstar's issues. It's a personal peeve, but I cannot tell you how tired I am of worldviews that sort suffering into hierarchies. I don't for a minute think that James Tynion was trying to advance that ideology, but at times it denies the uniqueness of the three character's experiences. I also think that Northstar gets a rather bad go of it, repeatedly told to check his privilege when Nightcrawler gets more or less a free pass. It's nothing offensive, which is a wonderful thing for an issue clearly seeking to make a place for marginalized groups, but I can't help but think that the limitations of Tynion's page count held the story back some. Jorge Jimenez's artwork is almost too slick. I mean, Noam is one of the most incredibly fashionable teenagers I've ever seen and, maybe I'm not going to the right parts of Chelsea, but the setting sometimes feels more like the cultural conception of Lower New York than the reality. Nevertheless, it's certainly pleasing on the eye. Jimenez's greatest strength and greatest weakness seems to be the sheer energy he brings to the page. At times the shifting, often extreme, angles are a bit too much to handle, but they seemingly come from the same place as

the glamorous close-ups and dramatic poses, poses that translate into a shared visual language of our modern pop culture. As long as you can handle the excesses of the style you should enjoy the issue. Honestly, the biggest problem with Jimenez's work is that he has trouble pulling off moments that depend on Anole's camouflage abilities and that might confuse readers. The post *Amazing X-Men #13* appeared first on *Weekly Comic Book Review*.

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