



Codename Baboushka: The Conclave of Death

Antony Johnston , Shari Chankhamma (Illustrator)

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"What if the sexy Russian femme fatale was actually the main character?"

Mysterious young heiress Contessa Annika Malikova has been part of Manhattan high society for several years... but if they knew the truth, her dinner companions would faint! The white-haired Contessa is in fact the notorious criminal "BABOUSHKA" -- a former Moscow gang leader, now living in exile!

But Baboushka's retirement is about to be shattered, as the US government has somehow discovered her true identity, and blackmails her into working for them! Now she must infiltrate a secret conclave of global crime lords, on a cruise liner, to retrieve information for the Americans. But nobody reckoned on the boat being hijacked by pirates...

Suitable for teens and up, CODENAME BABOUSHKA is an action-packed modern pulp spy thriller from writer ANTONY JOHNSTON (THE FUSE, THE COLDEST CITY, ALEX RIDER) and artist SHARI CHANKHAMMA (THE FUSE, SHELTERED, KILL SHAKESPEARE), filled with glamour, guns, exotic locations, guns, explosions, high-kicks, and did we mention guns?

"An ass-kicking spy heroine who will appeal to fans of Marvel's Black Widow."

- The AV Club

"There are literally six different amazing comics all within this one series"

- Comics Alliance

"Codename Baboushka takes a more female-positive look at the James Bond-esque role. Fun, fast-paced action. Female assassin done right!"

- Dark Side Comics

"Johnston's exiled Russian heiress, former organized crime lord and deadly agent bursts out of the page and grabs the reader with both hands in a deadly grip of hot action and cold-hearted kills."

- Jersey Journal

THE CONCLAVE OF DEATH collects Baboushka's first 5-issue mission -- watch out for her next assignment, GHOST STATION ZERO, in 2016! "Antony Johnston is an award-winning, New York Times bestselling author of graphic novels, video games, and books. His graphic novel THE COLDEST CITY is being adapted into a film starring Charlize Theron. His epic series WASTELAND is one of only a handful of such longform comic stories in the medium. His first video game, DEAD SPACE, redefined the survival horror genre.

Codename Baboushka: The Conclave of Death Details

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Shari Chankhamma (Illustrator)**

From Reader Review Codename Baboushka: The Conclave of Death for online ebook

Mark says

hoopla

Namor says

White haired former Russian mafia boss, assassin, spy, Russian royalty. This has all the spy action thriller goodies.

Theediscerning says

To have a really successful thriller you need both it and the lead character to show smarts. Unfortunately neither really does here. The book itself tries its best, and it has some qualities to how it looks, and the plot etc isn't too bad. But the character of Baboushka is too empty – being press-ganged by the Yanks to do covert ops or lose her privacy and secrecy, she's good at fighting and running and all the rest but is merely the drone of a random ex-KGB genius, tracking her and all the baddies and knowing everything she needs to know. He has it far too easy from the remove of his base, getting every piece of data he needs with no problem, leaving her just a play-thing of everyone good and bad, and with not enough of her own agency to make us care enough. Yes, Modesty Blaise had her Willie, but at least she was in an equal partnership with him. Here the reputation that all the baddies give Baboushka is a smoke-screen to hide how average this drama and she herself is.

Phillip says

Disclaimer: I received a free ecopy of this book via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

I previously read the first issue and enjoyed it a lot. The rest of the book follows a similar pattern to that first issue, but it left me feeling somewhat indifferent to the story as a whole.

The star of the book is a Russian countess that operated as the head of a crime organization. She fled to the U.S. After several years, she is contacted by a secret government agency that wants her to take on missions that their normal operatives cannot. Her choice is to comply or be deported. In this first mission, she needs to gain access to a closed meeting in which a well known weapons dealer is selling all of his networks, contacts, and merchandise to the highest bidder.

Baboushka herself is pretty cool. We see a few of the different tricks that she has employed over the years, and they are effective. As the plot goes on, we see why she earned her reputation. There is a bit of stereotyping with the characters though, and that put me off a bit. The creators freely admit that they use James Bond as an inspiration, and I feel like that shows through.

I would have liked for the book to get into the characters a bit more. Instead it felt more like a showcase of spy movie tropes. High marks for the character, but not so much for the plot. I am interested to see how things develop down the line.

Robert Bussie says

I will not bother with a review, because I do not want to reveal any spoilers. Instead, I will compare this wonderful story to an amazing movie: Die Hard. Replace John McLane with a former Russian Mafia Princess (Baboushka) and the Nakatomi Plaza with a Yacht. Add in lots of action and plot twists and this is a great graphic novel.

The art is well done with slight changes in color for shadows. This is a good mixture of comic book drawings with cartoon coloring.

Highly recommended for action and adventure fans.

LPL Reads says

adventurous

Wayne McCoy says

'Codename Baboushka, Volume 1: The Conclave of Death' by Antony Johnston with art by Shari Chankhamma is a spy comic about a very capable female Russian spy who now lives in the US. The similarities to another more famous female Russian spy in the comics can't be helped.

Contessa Annika Malikova lives in Manhattan and runs in a rich crowd, but she hides a secret. She used to be a gang leader in Moscow known as Baboushka. She's been in retirement, but there's really only one way that old spies can retire. She is coerced into joining a group of spies on board a cruise ship, but that ship is about to be taken over by pirates.

I like the character, but the comparisons to Black Widow have to be made. I like her ops guy Gyorgy. His scarred face tells me there is more to his story. Baboushka herself is capable, running about in elegant clothes and tossing around exploding matryoshka dolls. I just wish the art were better. It's cartoony at times and this story should have more realistic art. The figures can sometimes change dimensions and when a group of people get beat up, they all appear to have gotten a black eye on the same side of their face.

I received a review copy of this graphic novel from Image Comics, Diamond Book Distributors, and NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. Thank you for allowing me to review this graphic novel.

John Wheeles says

While I'm not really into graphic comics, I am a retired Russian linguist. So, figured reading this would be a little nostalgic type romp. Imagine my surprise when I discovered an interesting and coherent tale of deception and espionage. Give it a read even if, like myself, you are not really interested in graphic novels.

J.T. says

Literally all that stands out about Baboushka is her snow-white hair.
[review forthcoming.]

Amber says

The art's pretty and this is a pretty solid entertaining action comic. One thing that makes me mad though is that she rips her ankle tendon but like...she's wearing heels...of course that's gonna happen lol please change her shoes!

Albert says

Codename Baboushka, Volume 1: The Conclave of Death is another of those small titles that will win critical acclaim but unfortunately not many readers. A terrifically written and intriguing series with a main character that doesn't fit the normal mold of comic book characters. Baboushka may miss its mark in much the same way that the Black Widow of Marvel fame often does.

The heiress Contessa Annika Malikova has been a staple of Manhattan high society for years, but beneath her facade is a secret that would shock all of her affluent friends. The heiress is actually the international criminal known as "Baboushka". At one time the leader of a vicious Russian gang, she now lives in anonymity, behind the lie that is Contessa Annika Malikova.

But that all ends as a faction of the US Government has uncovered her identity and Baboushka is given a choice. Work for the government or be handed over to her enemies! The mission is simple, infiltrate a secret conclave of global crime lords and retrieve their secret information. Only the conclave is meeting on a cruise liner and to make matters even more interesting, the ship is about to fall into the hands of pirates!

Baboushka is a fun and exciting tale of criminals and spies and betrayal. There is no honor among thieves and even less when you are dealing with the government. The character is terrific, a cross between Lara Croft and James Bond, but there is no loyalty to king and country here; Baboushka is looking out for herself.

The sexy Russian spy has been used quite a bit lately, Red One and of course, Natasha Romanoff, the Black Widow. Baboushka is different as there are no super powers here or gadgets. This Russian spy gets by on her killer instincts and her cleverness. Which makes this book very entertaining. The artwork is very good and surprisingly they do not go out of their way to show off the man characters sexuality as is the normal selling

point in most female driven comics. No in Baboushka they dare to actually make her beautiful and smart.

A good tale worth following.

Joe Jungers says

She's a Femme Fatale with a twist - she's the hero.

Kyle says

I picked up the first two books in this series because Paste Magazine had good things to say about the 2nd storyline. It's got that James Bond-y vibe of the unkillable hero who always has just the right gadget.

Alex Sarll says

I've been reading Antony Johnston's comics on and off for a long time, since we vaguely knew each other through being on the same forum back in the early noughties, and they're a Hell of a mixed bag. Sometimes he'll come out with something powerful and unique, like the post-apocalyptic epic *Wasteland*; other times, the stories feel like they slot a little too neatly into their genres. This, alas, is one of the latter. Image already have a series, *Velvet*, which is essentially James Bond if Moneypenny turned out to have been the real badass all along. Similarly, this is the story told with the Russian femme fatale as the lead, and a Bond analogue to play the unreliable kiss kiss bang bang second fiddle. Although it could equally have been the beginning of a *Black Widow* run at Marvel, with a little tweaking. And it's fine, in a quipping action movie sort of way - certainly better than recent Bond films, since they lost the quips and gadgets - but it's not really anything new. I'm not convinced Shari Chankhamma is the best choice on art, either. Not that her work's bad, not remotely - it's somewhere between Chynna Clugston and Simon Gane, and that's a good place to be. But neither the cuteness of the former nor the scruffy realism of the latter seems a natural match for this sort of classic espionage story (compare and contrast the striking, minimal design work on the frontispiece, chapter breaks &c, which strike just the right note). Obviously, as with a lot of recent Image first volumes, there are hints that something stranger may be down the line a way - and I think I have a good idea of what. But taken in itself, this didn't quite do it for me.

(Netgalley ARC)

Paul Franco says

Rather than the usual “artist, writer,” credits to start, here it’s “Mission briefings, hidden cameras, and transcripts.”

This starts off with a gangster assassinated by a maid, but of course it’s never that simple. Baboushka is an ex-mafia leader who got bested and ended up getting asylum in the US 3 years ago, but now she’s being pulled back in for one last job. After that exposition the story returns to her escape after killing the gangster,

ending up in her underwear, showing that despite the white hair she's still quite young. More importantly, she wasn't lying about having dynamite earrings.

From there the story shifts to a luxury cruise liner with a bunch of crime lords, lamenting that when she was still in that line of work there'd never had meetings in places like these. But before she can get the info she needs, pirates take over.

She tries one-liners, but most of the time they're not funny. Despite the white hair and blue eyes, she's not all that pretty either, though her body is drawn just a step below Lara Croft. She's not particularly smart either, should have known better than to trust that guy; couldn't have been more obvious, really. And I surely didn't need the close-up of her injured ankle.

Small stroke of genius to use the matryoshka dolls as grenades.

Bonus of alternate covers.
