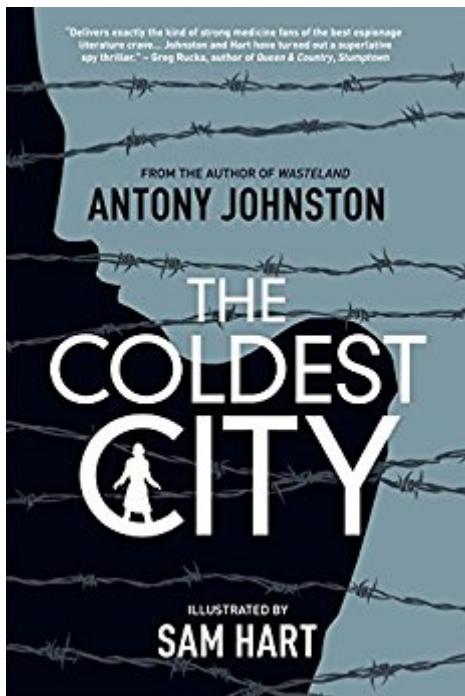


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The Coldest City



Synopsis

178 pages! November 1989. Communism is collapsing, and soon the Berlin Wall will come down with it. But before that happens there is one last bit of cloak & dagger to attend to. Two weeks ago, an undercover MI6 officer was killed in Berlin. He was carrying information from a source in the East - a list that allegedly contains the name of every espionage agent working in Berlin, on all sides. No list was found on his body. Now Lorraine Broughton, an experienced spy with no pre-existing ties to Berlin, has been sent into this powderkeg of social unrest, counter-espionage, defections gone bad and secret assassinations to bring back the list and save the lives of the British agents whose identities reside on it.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

It lives up to its name.

Great movie and book

I love the artwork, the plot twist and the sparciness of the story. I felt like I was there, in Berlin at that time.

Set in Cold War-era Berlin, THE COLDEST CITY is an atmospheric graphic novel. The black & white illustrations make clever use of negative space and shadow in a similar way to film noir, but in a way only the medium of comics can do. If you like spy thrillers with a twist and comic books, this would be a good choice. I've been to Berlin several times & it's evocative of the city without being reliant on every setting being the one Berlin landmark nearly everyone knows... the Brandenburg Gate can't be the focus of *everything*. I enjoyed this graphic novel immensely!

Copy received via Netgalley. There is an idea that spy stories are male stories. True, you have stories about spies that concern women, but those usually have a good dose of "romance" in them. Even excellent ones like Wish Me Luck have a good, strong dosing of romance. The women in such spy movie tend to be helpless, evil until they met the good guy and then they either repent or get dumb, or to be in charge like M in James Bond. There are exceptions, Wish Me Luck had tough women in it, but overall you have to wonder how the woman got into the spy business to begin with if she was going to break so quickly. This is why it is nice to read this graphic novel. This is very much like Tinker, Tailor, Soldier Spy, but with more twists, excellent well done twists. If you are looking for a James Bond spy story, this isn't for you. But if you are looking for a cerebral story set in the waning days of the Cold War, this fits the prescription. The central character is Lorraine, a woman sent to Berlin to discover what has happened to a missing list. You know those list that if it gets into the wrong hands, everyone dies. It's true that this plot device is so overused it is almost funny. The great thing is that it works well in this graphic novel because Johnston brings freshness to it. Even in graphic novel format, the characters are well shaded and far from flat. Lorraine is an interesting, a tough as nails woman (she is not a girl), very much like the spies that tend to show up in the British drama. Supporting characters are also very believable. This is a nicely done and thrilling mystery in terms of plot. At first, I wasn't overly impressed with the artwork of Sam Hart. It is very abrupt, brutal; minimalistic which isn't a type of style that I normally like. At first, I got frustrated at the panels where the faces are blank ovals (such panels are not the majority, but there are enough to notice), then I realized that the style, especially the blank faces really suits a spy story. It's a question of being two-faced, which is a question Lorraine has to answer, but of which face one actually has, of whom one actually is. The artwork, therefore, re-enforces the theme of the graphic novel as well as being a representation of the action. This is very cool. I must say that this is not the

type of work I would've normally read, but it was being offered via Netgalley as "read this now", so I decided to give it a try. I'm glad I did. Even though the story is based in the real world, in some ways it reminded me of *Watchmen* in terms of theme. This is a graphic novel worth reading.

Reason for Reading: I love cold war spy thrillers. An enjoyable spy thriller that takes place during the weeks that lead up to and follow the breaking of the Berlin Wall. Told from a British point of view, this has all the makings for a good espionage tale. MI6, CIA, KGB and East German agents all play a part. The story is told backwards through a debriefing of a female agent who was sent to Berlin on a mission where she meets up with an old-timer misogynist agent who is none too happy to have her arrive. Twists and turns move the plot to an unknown destination as the agents look for missing vital documents, we meet up with possible double agents, assassins and a shroud of doubt surrounding everything. A final surprise twist ending brings a satisfying conclusion and fans of the genre will have a gripping read. I'm on the fence about the artwork. I appreciate that it is done in black and white as it suits the atmosphere and story well. The large panels are well executed but I find I'm just not a fan of the artist's style which is very shadowy and indistinct. Incredibly so, for the regular size panels, at times I had no idea what I was looking at. This, of course, is a reflection on my taste in art, ymmv. Though not to my tastes I do grant that it worked with the story it told.

The Coldest City from Antony Johnston is first and foremost an espionage thriller which happens to be in the form of a graphic novel. I enjoy graphic novels but am far from well-versed in the form so I am probably not as concerned with the artwork as many will be. Unless, of course, it just really moves the story along for me or it really bogs the story down. That said...I liked the artwork here though at times I found it to be more difficult than I would have liked to follow the characters and whether we were still in a flashback. These were not major issues and usually I reoriented myself within a frame or two. I would have liked to have seen a bit more emotion in the drawings but I think that is largely a personal preference. The story itself was quite good and the various twists and turns of the story were plausible for this genre. The end was particularly rewarding (or irritating if you hate these kinds of things) for being both foreshadowed but not overly so. I would recommend this to fans of both spy thrillers and graphic novels, though readers who are resistant to "comics as literature" should probably skip it since this is indeed a novel, told with pictures and text, and thus is literature, so you'll only make yourself upset when you get caught up in the story when you dislike the idea of a graphic novel. Reviewed from a copy made available by the publisher via Edelweiss.

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