



The Russia Shift

Antony Johnston , Justin Greenwood (Illustrations)

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Working homicide on an orbiting energy platform, in a five-mile-long, jury-rigged steel city stuffed with a half-million people, and no help from your so-called colleagues back on Earth, is more than tough... it's murder! Cynical, foul-mouthed veteran Antony Johnston (Umbral, Wasteland) gets partnered with fresh-faced idealist Justin Greenwood (Wasteland, Resurrection) for a new crime series with serious attitude!

The Russia Shift Details

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From Reader Review The Russia Shift for online ebook

Jarrah says

The Fuse is a gritty murder mystery set on an orbiting energy platform, more of a detective story that happens to be in space than something that feels really sci-fi. The protagonists are detectives Klem Ristovych, the oldest cop in Midway City; and her brand new partner from Germany, Ralph Dietrich, who seems to be hiding something.

I really enjoyed this unusual detective pairing of a tough-as-nails, older, white woman alongside a young, black man. I'm also a fan of Justin Greenwood's art from *Stumptown*. Although it took some getting used to, I grew to appreciate how Greenwood's characters are not "pretty" - they often feature very angular noses and extended, hard jaw lines. In particular, Dex in *Stumptown* and Klem in *The Fuse* tend towards an androgynous look, which is something I like - not all women in comics should have hourglass figures.

The central mystery in "The Russia Shift" feels a little contrived, but the writing and art got me into the characters and the universe enough that I'm curious to see what happens next for Klem and Ralph.

Jan Philipzig says

Sci-fi police procedural set aboard a massive space station: sounds like fun to me, especially when one of the two cop protagonists is a cynical, foul-mouthed, frequently offensive old lady. Like many other Image titles I have come across in recent months, however, *The Fuse* fails to deliver. First of all, the artwork is barely functional. In some cases one and the same character miraculously changes appearance from one panel to the next, in others two different characters would be indistinguishable if it wasn't for their clothes. Secondly, the case our heroes investigate is generic at best – apart from sub-par storytelling, there is virtually nothing to distinguish it from your typical procedural drama. Which brings me to my third point - isn't this supposed to be a futuristic space station? How come people still use cash, corded telephones, books, and folders? I mean, the story might as well be set in 1970s Hoboken, not that there would be anything wrong with that...

Fantasy Literature says

The Fuse: The Russia Shift is Volume One in the collection of this comics science fiction police procedural series, set on a space station orbiting earth. The Russia Shift introduces us to our two cops; Ralph Dietrich, just arrived from Earth, and his more experienced partner Klem Ristovych. This book was released in 2014 by Image Comics.

The Fuse: The Russia Shift is written by Antony Johnston and drawn by Justin Greenwood, with color done by Shari Chankhamma and lettering by Ed Brisson. Word and image meld to create a believable city on a space-station, a city with a homeless population it doesn't acknowledge, festering wounds from decades of racial tension that have been papered over rather than addressed, and an under-staffed police force. Read more: <http://www.fantasyliterature.com/revi...>

Anne says

Middle of the road police drama...set in space.

The story itself wasn't all that special, but it was functional.

The art, however, was absolutely hideous. I've been trying to get over my hatred of *ugly art* this year. In fact, I've made it a personal goal to try and overlook styles that don't fit into the mold I have in my mind. Branch out, if you will.

But *this*?

I'm sorry, but it was everything I personally loathe. Distorted faces with gross features, and characters that are indistinguishable from one another.

Don't believe me? Check this panel out...

In case you can't read the text, she makes a crack about his name being feminine & assuming he was going to be a woman, and he says *"I assumed you would not be old enough to retire."*. To which she replies, *"And I'd assumed you'd be too old for high school."*

Ok. Can you tell **any** difference in their ages by looking at them?

I'm going to go ahead and answer for you. *No*.

No, you cannot tell that she is an older woman, any more than you can tell that he is supposed to be a fresh-faced young man.

The both look like recovering stroke victims!

Alrighty, enough bitching.

The gist is that this young cop volunteers (for reasons yet unknown) to come work homicide on this shithole of a space station. He's partnered up with the crusty old chick who knows how to do her job, and doesn't want to take on the young pup. They do the cutsie cop thing where they bump heads, and grumble about being assigned to each other. As police officers do...

For example, his last name is Dietrich so she calls him Marlene.

If you get that joke you're probably at *least* as old as I am, or you're one of those young ~~weirdo~~ drama geeks. *Put your cardboard pitchfork down, nerd. My son is taking a theater class next year in high school, so I just need to get a few shots in. You know, before I have to start supporting his acting career.*

You don't think joining drama is going to gay him up, do you?*

Shit! You liberals are awful touchy today!

Where was I? Oh, right.

So they do the meet-cute, work their case, and eventually come to respect each other.

The case starts out with the rather unsurprising discovery of a dead homeless person (or the space station equivalent of a homeless person), but they quickly begin to uncover secrets that lead them to believe the death is connected to a high-level politician.

~~Who has apparently had a stroke, as well.~~

The mystery isn't all that bad *or* all that good. It just *is*. I don't have any real complaints about anything (other than the art), so if you're a fan of police procedurals, you might really like this one.

This was gifted to me by my Shallow Reading buddy, Mike. Thank you!

***That was written in sarcasm font, in case you're an IDIOT upset.**

No need send the PC Squad after me.

Konstantinos Georgokitsos says

This is more a police procedural than a science fiction comic. As that it is actually good. Interesting plot, fast pace and wonderful drawings. The SF here is rather light (a still working clam shell mobile phone in a 100 years? Really?), but I still liked the book enough to continue.

I should add that I really like the art. Edgy, and reminds me of Lemire's minimal and scrawny humans.

Ross Mcleod says

This was a really great read !

Leo says

I can't resist a good police story, which is what this is, but set in an orbital space station. We have the new partner that just came to space, the old partners who thinks the other is too green, which is nothing new, but I liked the dynamic between the two. The case had a bunch of twists going around, it definitely keep me interested. There's nothing particularly newfangled about this comic (the space setting could be used more, I hope they will do that in future issues) but I really liked it.

Re-read: 5/10/2015

Marla Haasz says

DNF not even half way through..

I've been trying to pick this up month after month with no luck, nothing was motivating me, not the story nor the characters. I don't want to waste anymore time on something I'm not enjoying. I'll probably end up giving this to my brother or a local second hand book shop. That'll teach me to blindly buy a comic book without reading any ratings or reviews beforehand.

Ashley says

This is a story where the blurb on the back doesn't do it justice for covering the interesting nuances and implications of this story, and just how real it feels. Although the story is set on a space station known as the Fuse, it felt very much like Chicago, with cultural and racial tensions like a bass line in the background. The story opens with a young detective from Munich, Dieter, traveling to the Fuse for the very first time when a homeless woman drops dead in front of him. His partner, Klem, an older woman with a twisted sense of humor, is on the scene immediately and two get off on uneven footing. By the end, although Dieter and Klem aren't ra-ra-hooray for each other, the grudging respect is great in itself.

Dieter and Klem are thrown another loop immediately when a second homeless person dies outside City Hall. Both homeless people are known as "cablers," a moniker for the homeless who live inside the cables and infrastructure of the Fuse. Just like in the real world, the cablers are treated as if they aren't human, and part of Klem and Dieter's job is cracking cabler culture to get at the truth. Finding the killer also involves going straight to the top of Midway City at the Fuse, to Mayor Rocky Swanson's office. As an American, the character of Mayor Rocky, as a black man in power, brought to mind Obama, particularly as the story unfolds and Rocky's progressive ideals from youth are exposed as part of the story.

The story makes attempts to portray a truly post-racial society, where skin color has no bearing on station or culture. However, the most interesting effect was how the Fuse had experienced race riots that are only mentioned in hindsight and how echoes of the riots still exist in the Fuse today. Dieter himself is black, and I loved how that had no bearing on the story. Instead, the fact that he was from Germany was a much bigger deal, and there are little sneaky asides in the dialogue that betray his German heritage (like the classic, "I am thinking..."). But it still matters. Ethnicity is as important as race in this story, and yet we get as close to a fair portrayal as I have ever seen in comics.

Some of the plot felt little wonky when it came to actual police procedure, particularly with forensics. I'm not super picky about those details, but when they become important to the plot, it's important to make sure the procedures aren't portrayed awkwardly. Overall, I was just interested in the mechanics of Klem and Dieter's partnership and how Dieter related to the Fuse. There are still unanswered questions (like Dieter's origins!), so I'm looking forward to future volumes.

Trike says

I hate to give one star reviews but these kinds of stories just annoy me to no end. The basics: this is a police procedural set on a space station, the titular Fuse, about a century in the future.

Sadly, this is terrible Science Fiction and a terrible Mystery story. **Hashtag rant mode commence.**

It starts off as a new detective ships up from Munich and is immediately embroiled in a murder case.

Seriously, as soon as he steps off the shuttle a person drops dead right in front of him. Boom! We're off to the races.

Ugh. I hate stupid-ass coincidences like that.

This is compounded by two things: the dying person is not just hemorrhaging the red go-juice of life, but also cash. WHY IS THERE PAPER MONEY ON A SPACE STATION?! Back in the 1950s, even up to the early 1970s, I can see someone making this mistake, because everything was paper back then. It was even how we programmed computers. But this book was written sometime in **2013**. Come on.

I just watched *Aliens* again last night, and it's embarrassing that a movie from 1986 is more futuristic than a book published in 2014.

This is underscored by the fact that our new guy, Ralph Dietrich, calls his superiors from a *pay phone*. Seriously, did Johnston write this in 1989 and then simply cross out "New York City" and write in "New Space City" when it came time to make it?

Everywhere they go the place looks like any standard Earth city. Small houses, green lawns, white picket fences, run-down tenements with graffiti... oh fer cry. The doors in the police precinct look like wood. I'll cut them some slack and pretend they're *painted* to look like wood, but who are we kidding? They're fucking wood.

There are books on the shelves. Calendars on the walls, sticky notes and folders. Why? Paper is HEAVY. If transport to high Earth orbit is so cheap that they can waste fuel and space on something so heavy, why is that not reflected in the general economy everywhere else?

See, someone who had actually thought about the world they were creating -- or perhaps had read any science fiction at all -- would have thought of that.

You know how you show that someone is super rich on a space station? Put real books on their shelves. Make it an actual private library. Seriously, that's how unbelievably expensive and wasteful it would be to take a bunch of books into orbit. Paper is also a fire hazard, and fire can turn into a literal Extinction Level Event aboard a space station, unless it's so gigantic that humans barely take up a tenth of it. We see the Fuse from the outside. It ain't that big.

Plus, if you simply spin out current trends towards digital everything, why would someone 100 years from now even use paper? Not just on a space station, but anywhere? The past few years Hollywood has been collectively pissing its pants because people under 30 simply aren't buying hard copies of movies any more. The music industry is in freefall because kids aren't even buying *digital versions* of songs any more, they're streaming everything.

Science fiction is about extrapolation -- extrapolate three generations of people whose mindset is that they can stream anything any time. Those people 100 years from now would look at paper books and video discs the same way we look at papyrus scrolls and anvils: not-very-interesting relics of a bygone era.

I could go on but let's rant about the police procedural portion of this book. It's no better.

This reads like one of the less-interesting episodes of *Law & Order*, the kind of episode that they throw together based on some newspaper headline and because it's season 19 and they're pretty much out of ideas

due to having cranked out more than 400 of these already, so they just plug standard characters into the formula and give them boilerplate dialogue.

The problem with doing a procedural, any kind of procedural, is that this is the single most popular form of story type in our culture, and has been for decades. Fully 50% of all TV shows are procedurals. The other 50% are everything else: sitcoms, reality shows, dramas, news magazines and competitions like *The Voice* and *American Idol*.

Since procedurals are so common, why stick to the formula? At the very least, show us something new based on your milieu. It's a *space station*, so do something with that. That's how you push it into new territory.

But if you're going to do that, then at the very least read the other SF procedurals that are out there. Niven, Varley, Walter Jon Williams -- they all have excellent versions. Ed Naha wrote two terrific books called *The Paradise Plot* and *The Suicide Plague*, and *The Paradise Plot* takes place *on a space station*. In fact, it's one incredibly similar to the *Fuse*.

Now that I think on it, *The Fuse* is actually a lame version of *The Paradise Plot*. You should read that book instead, it's good.

As I also ponder it, the opening of *The Fuse* tries to mash up the flying-to-orbit scene from *2001: A Space Odyssey* and the pre-credits sequence in *Die Hard*. The difference here is that in 2001 we got to see that Dr. Floyd is a VIP because he's on an otherwise empty shuttle. A lot of people miss that aspect of the film. In *Die Hard*, McClane has an interaction with his seatmate who tells him the best way to calm down after a flight is to take off your shoes and make fists with your toes. Then it's revealed that McClane has a gun, which shocks the other guy. McClane tells him to relax because he's a cop. In *The Fuse* there's a similar exchange where a woman confesses that she's running away from something and then Dietrich reveals that he's a cop, much to her dismay.

The problem is *The Fuse* never does anything with the information we're given in the shuttle ride. When McClane tries the "make fists with your toes" thing, he discovers that it works and it's a funny moment. But then the bad guys show up and he's caught barefoot in the middle of a hostage situation. He's caught literally flat-footed. Get it? A slang word for a cop is "flatfoot." This is why *Die Hard* is so good: it's working on all these other levels besides the main story. And if you've seen the movie, you know that being barefoot in this situation plays into 1) the character arc, 2) the plot and 3) the action scenes. A seemingly throw-away line perpetuates itself throughout the movie.

The Fuse has none of that, yet borrows from its betters.

Dietrich even has a real gun, just like John McClane. On a *space station*. "Oh, don't worry," he assures his boss, "I know better than to discharge a gun in a pressurized cylinder." Then why do you have it? Why was he allowed to keep it? You better be a pretty damn good shot if you're going to start blasting away, potentially poking holes in the hull and killing everyone.

Here's an idea: try a goddamn taser instead.

See? This is what I mean by not taking the unique setting into account. There are limitations and issues that one can't get around inside a space station, yet not a single one of those are addressed. They might as well be in Detroit or Hamburg.

The last issue/chapter was such a cliché, with the cop and bad guy holed up together and they put all the pieces together *for the reader*. It's the worst kind of infodump in a procedural, just absolutely lazy. Let us figure it out, at least.

Remember that coincidence in the opening I talked about? Yeah, there are a few more throughout the story. They're dumb, though, and not worth lengthening this already ridiculously long review for.

The art is okay. The problem is that characters look too much alike.

Dietrich is a black cop and the mayor is likewise black. They look almost exactly the same. And I don't mean that in a racist way, I mean they're drawn to be nearly identical. The only way to tell them apart is that one wears a tie (on a *space station*) and the other wears a jacket. They are the same height, shape, haircut, everything.

Maybe this will come into play in later installments, but I don't care. I won't be reading them. All it does here is cause confusion.

The primary way the characters are differentiated is by color. These people literally never change clothes. The only way you tell them apart is by the color of their shirts. That's another indicator we're playing for the cheap seats here, when everything is like a cartoon.

I just read the superb Manifest Destiny, Vol. 1: Flora & Fauna, where the characters have to wear similar clothing because some of them are soldiers and the rest are given only a limited palette and materials to work with, yet you can immediately tell who's who at a glance.

I started The Fuse before I started Manifest Destiny... or Saga Volume 4, or The Flash or Ms. Marvel or Captain Marvel and I kept putting it off because it was just so clunky and annoying. The book seemed like it was getting heavier each time I went to read it, and I couldn't get through an entire chapter/issue, which is only 22 pages or something. Of a comic book. I finished all of those other books before finishing this one.

The Fuse is a Science Fiction Police Procedural and it's bad at both.

Gavin says

0-2 today...think I'll stop reading.

This had potential, a gigantic space station, inhabited by tons of people, and the Homicide Detectives (one's a foul mouthed old Russian lady, the other is a brand new arrival, young Black German.) This part would be cool, but then the writer decides to just throw every cliché into this BORING Police Procedural...I've seen more exciting episodes of As the Paint Dries.

In the future, there are still homeless people, everyone still uses cash, guns, dress the same, and have telephones that are identical to today. This is supposed to be years in the future...but nothing has progressed.

The mayor is an Obama figure, and when one of the homeless murder victims turns out to be his long-

thought-dead brother, things unravel from there, and everyone just is predictable and does exactly what we think until the reveal at the end which isn't much of a surprise at all.

And of course the fish out of water cop turns out to be all jacked up to help his grizzled veteran partner even though they did nothing bond-worthy the whole time except fight off some hobos, who were actually old friends of the grizzled cop.

Politicians are bad, hiding secrets, the media is scum, and cops will do whatever it takes to solve the case.

This might as well have been a really shitty 70s cop movie, they totally ignored all the potential for what the Space Station (The Fuse) could be...just such wasted potential.

Part of the Image Humble Bundle pack from Christmas? Ya. It's just such a shame that this could have been something...oh and to boot? The art is sub-generic at best. NO imagination, nothing cool, the colours aren't very popping, there's no hues of focus, there's nothing dynamic or memorable.

In short? This is about the most boring Space Cops Comic Book you could ever read. So don't.

Sara J. (kefuwa) says

Really liked this. Okay I said crime is not exactly my thing. But crime with a sci-fi setting? Working homicide on an orbiting energy platform? I'm up for it! Lol. Yeah, funny how things work out like that. Would definitely line up Vol. 2 of this...

Rhonda says

A police procedural set in space? You can bet that got my attention!

I had some difficulties with this book—sometimes I had trouble keeping track of characters, the pace was problematic and I floundered a bit trying to get my bearings in the world—but I enjoyed it enough that I'll pick up the next one. I hope that one will give me a better grasp on the world (the various factions in particular) and I look forward to learning more about the two main characters.

Craig says

Not bad for a first outing, though there's a lot more that could be done with the futuristic setting (a giant orbital space station) and characters. We follow a brand new police detective, Dietrich, as he arrives from Earth and is immediately thrust into a mystery involving a pair of dead "cblers" (the space station's version of the homeless, people who live in the crawl spaces and vents, where the "cables" are). Dietrich and his partner Klem Ristovych, one of the original settlers on the station, follow the mystery right to the front door of the mayor and his wife. This is a pretty run-of-the-mill mystery, but it introduces us to the characters and the places. The artwork by Justin Greenwood is reminiscent of his work on Wasteland, where it wasn't

always possible to tell characters apart from each other or even to know what exactly was happening in each panel. It helps that this art is colored rather than in black and white, but it still suffers from some slapdash efforts. Being touted as Homicide crossed with Battlestar Galactica, or CSI in space, this series has a lot to live up to and hopefully future volumes will build on this very workmanlike start.

Saga Norén says

Leído a principios de año, una gran decepción. Esperaba muchísimo más. Sólo el nombre y la portada eran lo que atraía...
