Hard Magic: Book I of the Grimnoir Chronicles by Larry Correia

Jake Sullivan is a licensed Private Eye—with a seriously hardboiled attitude. He also possesses raw magical talent and the ability to make objects in his vicinity light as a feather or as heavy as depleted uranium, all with a magical thought. Its no wonder the G-men turn to Jake when they need someone to go after a suspected killer who’s been knocking off banks in a magic-enhanced crime spree. Problems arise when Jake discovers the bad girl behind the robberies is an old friend, and he happens to know her magic is just as powerful as his, and the Feds have plunged Jake into a secret battle between powerful cartels of magic-users—a cartel whose ruthless leaders have decided that Jake is far too dangerous to live. . . . Praise for Larry Correia’s Monster Hunter series: 
“A gun person who likes science fiction—or, heck, anyone who likes science fiction—will enjoy Monster Hunter International and its new sequel, Monster Hunter Vendetta. . . . The plotting is excellent, and Correia makes you care about the characters . . . I read both books without putting them down except for work. . . . So, whaddaya waiting for? Go out and buy some . . . for yourselves, and for stocking stuffers.” —Massad Ayoob
“The idea of Larry Correia’s Monster Hunter International might remind you a bit of X-Files or Men in Black, but it’s neither. However, it is as good as or better than both. . . . Correia is going to be a writer to watch.” —GoodReads.com “[A] no-holds-barred all-out page turner that is part science fiction, part horror, and an absolute blast to read.” —Bookreporter.com “If you love action and monsters, you’ll love this book. If you love guns, you’ll love this book. If you like fantasy, and especially horror fantasy, you’ll love this book.” —Knotclan.com

My Personal Review:
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***The Review***
There are very few authors whose body of work makes us cackle with boyish glee. Chris Wooding is one. Jonathan Maberry another. Recently Sarah Pinborough has joined those ranks. For those of you keeping score, when Larry Correia writes something new we drop everything. You can then find us camped out with a flashlight in the living room under a tent made of sheets and blankets. Never mind we own our own homes.

We are just going to come out and say it: Larry Correia’s HARD MAGIC, book 1 of the Grimnoir Chronicles, is completely fun and awesome. Everyone knows how much we like his Monster Hunter series. We like this one more. Much more. Everything about HARD MAGIC is positively saturated with style...

...well, and explosions of course.

HARD MAGIC takes place during an alternate USA of the 20 and 30s. Magic has been reintroduced into the world which has obviously changed it dramatically. There is some detective story stuff here and some magic. But apart from those automatic win buttons the main thing that Larry’s novel has going for it is its epic foundation. This is Epic Alternate Historical Urban Fantasy...with superheroes...kinda. Yeah. Tell us that doesn’t sound completely fun and awesome if executed right. And yes, Larry does it right.

You may be tempted to dismiss Larry as a pure action author. The style (and “splosions) over substance type. The explosions and violence are there, and they are GLORIOUS! But we’ve said it before, and well say it again. Larry’s work is deceptive. No doubt we read his work for the gunplay (one of the best out there) and the B-movie feeling it all invokes. But if we are honest with ourselves--and you readers of course--we would have to admit we read Larry’s work for the characters. HARD MAGIC, in our opinion, has the best character work of all Larry’s novels so far.

To understand the characters, we should probably talk a bit about the main magic system of the novel. Rare individuals have the ability to perform a certain type of magic. Some can alter their own personal gravity. Some can teleport. Some use animals in a borderline possession way. Others can perform miraculous healing feats while their opposites can cause plagues. In the back of the novel you’ll find a list and description of them all. They sound a bit like superheroes. You readers of MISTBORN will feel very comfortable picking up the magic of this created world.

One of the main characters of the novel is Jake Sullivan. He is one of those individuals that can alter his personal gravity--a Heavy. He’s been in wars (we get some awesome history here), he’s been a P.I., and he’s been in prison. Now he’s on loan to the Feds. Simply put, Sullivan is terrific. He is very reminiscent of the Owen Pitt character from the Monster Hunter universe (some would say a tad too similar), but has enough differences to make him his own character. For starters, Sullivan is more intelligent. The
sequences in the novel that show the research Sullivan is doing on magic are fantastic and are VERY character building.

While there are a ton of characters in the novel--none of with we can point at with dislike--the other main character we want to mention is Faye--a Traveler (aka teleporter). We want to mention this character specifically because Larry does such a great job of keeping her, well, female-ish. So many male authors have such a hard time writing female PoVs (just as female authors have trouble writing male PoVs). Faye goes through some traumatic events early in the novel, and there is a need to balance this lost youth and innocence with the incredible power he grows into as the novel progresses...not to mention all from a females PoV. Tough stuff, yet Larry pulls it off. We dont mean to snub the female characters from his other novels, but Faye is not only the best female character Larry has put on paper, but she is one of his best overall characters, period.

We couldnt wrap us this review without mentioning the world-building. It may seem hardly worth mentioning since this takes place in a familiar-ish 1930s USA, but Larry did an amazing job here. Information is never just dumped on you during the course of the story. Rather than killing the pacing, Larry puts all the historical changes and details in the chapter bumps. The chapter bumps (or leads, if you will) in HARD MAGIC are easily on the same level as those in Brandon Sandersons novels. Weve mentioned before that we think Sandersons chapter leads are some of best in the business (if not THE best). Larrys are THAT good. As you read through the novel, the attention to detail is noticeable. You can tell that a ton of research was done, and then effectively spun into the text.

When all is said and done, Larry Correias HARD MAGIC is one of them most entertaining, fun novels we have read. Whats more is that it has all the qualities that make us love Epic Fantasy, only in a Raymond Chandler, noir setting. No one type of reader will enjoy this novel more than another. This is one of the few novels that will capture every readers imagination and leave them--like us--begging for more.

Recommended Age: 16 and up.
Language: Yep. It can be strong, but never feels thrown in for shock-value.
Violence: Its a Larry Correia novel, of course there is violence. The gun-play is perfect, and the set-piece action sequences are completely over-the-top and awesome.
Sex: Nope.

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