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Welcome to P.U.P.I.—Private, Unaffiliated, Paranormal Investigations

A handpicked team trained to solve crimes the regular police can't touch—crimes of magic.

My name's Bonnie Torres. Recent college grad, magic user and severely unemployed. Until I got a call out of nowhere to interview for a job I hadn't applied for. It smelled fishy, but the brutal truth was I needed the work—so off I went.

Two days later I'm a PUPI—me and Nick, Sharon, Nifty and Pietr. Five twentysomethings, thrown into an entirely new career in forensic magic.

The first job we get is a doozy: proving that the deaths of two Talents were murder, not suicide. Worse, there are high-profile people who want us to close up shop and go away. We're sniffing out things they'd rather keep buried.

Looks as if this job is gonna get interesting. The only problem is, we're making it up as we go along....

Hard Magic Details

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melissa says

Tapping out at page 139. So, there's a little paragraph explaining that the main character is a branch off from another series. Cool, but, well, if you're going to continually mention past events, but mention them poorly, there really should have been a heads up to read that other series first. Other than that, nothing so far is intriguing me to pick those up, so I'm cutting my losses. If you stick with this, know that they don't actually get a case until over 100 pages in.

Cathy says

I liked it. It's a promising off-shoot of Gilman's terrific Retrievers series, but not quite as good so far. (Bonnie becomes a neighbor to Wren, although Wren is not in this book at all.)

I thought Bonnie was very likable. She legitimately felt like a recent college grad trying to figure out what to do next. She has some limitations because her Talent interferes with electronics and computers. But she has resources by way of her own determination, and help from her guardian and mentor, a rich and powerful member of the Council, the organized magical community. Bonnie's father was a loner, a Talent who did not affiliate with the Council, so Bonnie falls between both worlds, but can understand and fit in with either as needed. This becomes an asset in the job that mysteriously finds her.

Then comes a lot of set-up for a series and very little mystery for this book. The characters are creating this branch of investigation, so there are a lot of sections showing their progress in the learning phase. Sort of boot-camp for magical CSI. But some of the ideas of how to do magical investigations really flesh out the author's interesting system of magic. Smaller mysteries and interpersonal conflicts as the team begins to gel keep the story moving forward. And eventually they get their first real mystery to investigate.

Like I said before, I like Bonnie. She's a regular young woman in many ways, she makes mistakes, wants to have fun, works hard, etc. I like that no one in the book is perfect. They have tempers, sometimes make bad decisions or get into unnecessary spats. They're real. The interpersonal dynamic with the team members adds to the depth of the story and I expect to see more about that. Especially Bonnie and Ben, there appears to be a past there that Bonnie has only seen glimpses of. And the work is interesting. I think the next book will be even better since they should be able to jump right in to a real mystery. I would guess that each mystery will involve the team having to create new investigative techniques, which should be interesting as long as it's balanced by action and interaction.

Kari Sperring says

I have mixed feelings about a lot of modern urban fantasy, as I can find it self-indulgent and/or patronising. But this one had me hooked from the first chapter. Bonnie makes an engaging protagonist who is convincingly young without being immature, tough without being a kick-ass cliché, and sensible (a rare quality in UF heroines, alas). A strong sense of place, too, and a properly worked out relationship between modern urban society and magic, with no cheating or special snowflakes. Huge fun: fast, humorous, tense and delightful.

Glenn says

I'm not sure why this book was as highly rated as it is. While the premise is original (paranormal CSI investigating a murder), the writing is boring and the plot is not enough to drive the book. The main character, Bonnie Torres, is supposed to have a Latina exterior and Western European interior. She is also bisexual but is really only interested in men in the book. And unconvincing as a 21 year old recent college graduate. So it's a superficial showing of diversity at best. The scenes of high drama are mostly confusing--an unusual amount of tension arises from banal scenes. I did finish the book and was disappointed. In the end, a very little amount of investigation resulted in finding the killer. I will not be reading the second one.

Chichipio says

I liked it. It didn't blow my mind but it made me curious to read the second installment.

With other series that wouldn't be much, but after the meh feeling left by the original series, *Retrievers*, I started this ready to hate it. So, reverting my opinion to the point of leaving a positive feeling was a real achievement.

Bonnie is easier to like than Wren, whose shyness and pacifism, though interesting to read, were just off-putting after a while. There was a time when she said something like "if I get attacked and it's a case of killing or being killed, I rather die than hurt another person." Props to Gilman for staying true to the character, but I don't want the heroine of my book to think like that. Bonnie is a little more normal and the fact that she's a geek doesn't hurt.

It's too soon to tell much about the rest of the team but at least they didn't annoy me, which is always good, and I believe there's some potential there. We'll see.

Also, I didn't know this at the time I was reading the other series, but I like reading about CSI stuff (even when it comes to magic) more than about the planning and execution of robberies.

Much of the world of the Cosa Nostradamus is briefly explained throughout the book, but not all. Still, I believe that this book is a better place to start reading Gilman than *Retrievers*, unless you are one of those people who, like me, need to read everything in order.

Brad Foley says

I read this book because it was on the NPR best-of-the-year Fantasy list. And, in a fit of self-loathing I read the whole series in a couple of days, as well as the related "Retrievers" series. I kept thinking, "They can't be this bad", and by the time I finished them, I had to admit they were. I went through the next couple of weeks with a kind of glum indigestion of the soul as a result: a spiritual equivalent of having eaten three Big Macs, and a strawberry milkshake in a single setting.

I'll say at the outset that the PSI series is marginally better than the "Retrievers". But only marginally. Bonnie is a more engaging character than Wren, and her role in these stories doesn't stretch the bounds of credulity.

Better, the PSI books for the most part skirt the entirely unbelievable story arc of the "Retrievers Series". Still. Few of the characters are very believable, and few of the relationships. The important relationships are entirely unbelievable: the critical relationship between her boss Ian, and Ian's sister makes no sense at all. She seems to be angry at him for trying to standardize magical practice, and in the end kills him because she's so annoyed.

The rules of the world that Gilman has constructed make no sense. And are we seriously to believe that no one in the entire history of the "Cosa Nostradamus" (god I hate that name) ever tried to work magic systematically? I mean, seriously, this group of ragtag misfits (gag) is the first group of people ever to sit down and work this s**t out?

And I have to say it. Their group is called "PUPI". Ostensibly pronounced like "puppy", but, really? Torres is latina and I couldn't read it without hearing it pronounced "poopy" in my head.

This series is maybe barely worth reading, if you are a huge fan of urban fantasy. But only after you've exhausted the many, far-better options out there (Gaiman, Mike Carey, Jim Butcher, Deborah Harkness maybe, Seanan McGuire even).

Scooper Speaks says

Laura Anne Gilman's newest series Paranormal Scene Investigations is a cute, out of the ordinary spin in the paranormal bookiverse. It's set in the same world as her Retrievers series, but if this is your first foray into Gilman's paranormal worlds you should be fine.

Hard Magic tells magic user Bonnie Torres' story from a first person point of view. Bonnie grew up in two worlds: lonejacker and Council. Lonejackers wield magic on their own. They do what they want, when they want and are not policed. Council is the exact opposite. The two normally do not mix. They do for Bonnie who was born and raised for part of her life as the child of a lonejacker. After her father was murdered, she became the ward of her mentor who was Council all the way. Her experiences helped create a woman who can see more than one side and makes her a valuable asset to the team.

However it was her search for a job after college that I related to. That initially drew me in. After a while, I don't know what held me. It's not like the story is packed with action or suspense, and there was no true love to be had at the end. No, it's not a romance. It is an urban fantasy which creates an entirely fictional protocol for handling crimes committed with magic. It lives up to its CSI-like name, and that is why I continued reading the story.

I'm not too interested in Bonnie or her co-workers, but her bosses...yeah—I want to know it all. I want to know where they come from and what makes them tick. I want them to succeed at making the world a better place for everyone. I want the magical assholes of the world to deal with exposure just as the regular jerks do. This story is about making that possible. That doesn't mean I didn't get bored while reading about the PUPI's search for a magical killer. Now it's time for the only question that matters:

Would I recommend this book to a friend? I don't know. It's not exciting, but it does drag you in. When I finished the book I was curious enough to read book two, Pack of Lies. It was only after reading that book that I decided to continue the series. If you decide to read Hard Magic keep an open mind, think of it as an introduction to a new world and enjoy it.

Scooper Speaks (<http://scooper.wordpress.com>)

Peter says

I actually picked this book up by mistake. I thought I was picking this Hard Magic, but with a different cover. It was short though, so once I figured out I made a mistake around the 20% mark, I decided to go through with it anyway, mostly because it wasn't overtly bad. I did the audiobook version which had a narrator with a particularly grating voice. Luckily, it seemed to get more manageable once I sped up the playback speed.

As for the story, it's pretty straight forward, especially if you've ever seen a show like CSI. However, unlike most shows with an 'investigation' at their core, the plot in this book was.... well, really stupid. There's no way of putting that gently. (view spoiler). Besides the plot, there's a lot of general silliness introduced and never explained which annoyed me towards the end. Things like teleportation being apparently just a common thing that magic people do, yet they still have a need for public transport when the plot suits it. There's a bunch of other random, yet clearly world-altering additions to the world, yet it appears to be our present day world which also annoyed me by how poorly it all fit together. (view spoiler)

The writing is unfortunately very amateurish. The constant babbling narration that actually slowed the pacing was particularly noticeable. The language used was also very childish which made me think this was aimed at the YA market, but then you get into the ridiculous sexual appetite of our protagonist which put that notion off the table really quickly. The characters were equal parts forgettable and cliché. I actually struggled to keep a few of them separate in my mind by how generic they were. If by this point you expect any of them to have gotten any sort of real development, you might just be the target audience for this book.

I feel quite bad giving this a single star though since I didn't actually 'hate' it which is the case with most of my 1-star ratings. It's just so badly written, poorly executed, unsatisfying and forgettable that I can't justify giving it anything more. There's really nothing more to say other than you should definitely make sure that the book you're picking up is actually the one you intend to read.

Maya says

That magic is too easy, all you need is to want something, and it happens.

Still, I feel the need to investigate the puppies' secrets.

Rhonda says

I really have liked this series. Love how all the characters interact. There is still a lot we don't know about them. Slowly builds what you know what you want to know.

Bonnie has just graduated from collage. She is living in a hotel that her mentor is paying for her. Trying to find a job but no one hires her. Her resume looks good and she gets lots of call backs but because she can not use technology she doesn't get hired.

Then one day she gets a message on her answering machine from a business she did not apply for a job, time of her interview and address. She is curious so goes and finds a group of people waiting to be interviewed for a job just like her at same time. after a half hour no one comes into the office they get curious and knock on

inner door and look in and find a dead body.

They don't rush to call cops but infact go closer to the body making sure he is dead. They all look around and keep noticing facts asking questions and answering them. Then the dead body gets up and tells them they are all hired.

After they all recover they find out about P.U.P.I. A company that looks into things that talents are doing not for council but for truth and holding people accountable for their actions. They are all talent. Which means they have magic gifts that they can use to help them find the facts of a case.

They all have different skills. Bonnie is great at remembering details of things she sees.

One is computer hacker that is a very rare skill most can't use technolgy because their power is current so destroys things. One can tell when most people lie.

Ian and Ben are the Top Dogs who started the company because they saw a need. They spend a lot of time teaching them how to use their currents in different ways to gather evidence and find the facts. Forensic magic its never been used that way.

They are people that don't want the facts comming out about what they might do and try to destroy the company.

Their first case a daughter does not believe her parents committed suicide in a car that know one knows who owns it.

its a well rounded book. I like Laura Anne Gilman's books. I have in last 3 days read 3 of them and plan to read more in the future.

Carol. says

End of the year cleaning, both my TBR list and my bookshelves. I've read it before and liked it, but couldn't remember if it really deserved its shelf space or not. A likeable heroine and a team-based, forensic approach to a murder sets it apart from other series.

The story begins with Bonita Torres post-interview, mulling her trouble finding work after graduation from college. Despite her mentor's objections, she decides to respond to a mysterious invitation to an interview. After a stressful interview, she and four other people are offered a position with a brand-new firm seeking to apply magic to forensic science and use it in the magical community.

The team needs to learn to work together, as well as develop magical forensics skills. Their first client is a wealthy daughter and Chicago Council member who wants them to discover if her parents truly suicided or were murdered. The plotting is slow-growing but organic. I would think that readers who prefer frequent conflict might find the pacing slow. However, it gave time to develop Bonita into a real person, as well as allowing the group to start to blend. She is struggling with issues of identity as a new adult, particularly accepting financial support from her mentor, while she makes a life in a new city. In many ways, she still felt very young and very believable to me (mainly because I'm so old) as she wrestled with those issues.

The setting is the same as Gilman's other UF series, The Retrievers. Magic and fairy creatures (called fatae) exist, but are hidden from the 'Nulls' of the world. Magic operates a great deal like electrical current, which unfortunately causes problems with technology. Within the society of people with magic, it is divided into a more codified, elite system of Council members and their families, and people who prefer to operate independently, 'lonejacks.' Bonita bridges both worlds as the daughter of a lonejack and the mentee of a former Council member.

Bonita is a likeable person with a healthy sex drive. It's initially sex-positive but distracting as she seems to note everyone's attractiveness, frequently at an inopportune time. Gilman also writes romances under a pen name, and I can't help but wonder if that's perspective has seeped into her characterization. It mostly lends

itself to building a potential relationship with another character, but it doesn't progress significantly in this book. For a sub-plot, it doesn't pay off here, possibly leaving romance-focused readers disappointed.

Overall, it was slow, but decent. Unlike other reviewers, I had a sense that magic was tricky and that the team worked hard to develop their skills. This is frequently stressed through long days at the office, setbacks, burned/bloodstained clothes, etc. While the writing didn't sing to me, neither did I distract with awkward phrasing or literary digressions. I was disappointed in the general lack of women in the book, given the team format. Sharon is the only other female member of the 7 person team and mostly exists as the straight-laced, uptight, dominating woman stereotype.

Verdict? Glad I read it and I'll give the next a shot (looks like I read it but it was totally unmemorable) but I don't think it needs a spot on my shelves. But I'll keep it until I read the next one to be sure.

Squee says

There was a lot that just didn't do it for me in this book, but I'm giving it two stars anyway. Why? Because I think that my main issue with this book was the main character.

Pretty much every other important character in the book is more interesting than Bonita Torres. Superficially, Bonnie is a lot of things: (A) product of Council (association of magic users) upbringing and freejack (independent magic users) parentage, (B) amateur detective who investigated her father's murder, (C) recent college graduate looking for a job... and yet none of these things seem to have a serious impact on the story. Her background is told rather than shown (as is most of the story), and her mixed magical background (A) and independent investigation into her father's murder (B), which could have made an interesting story by itself, are throwaway facts that help her circumvent (C) when out of nowhere she is offered a job she didn't apply for. Would that we were all so lucky.

A lot of Bonnie's traits seem superficial. She should be interesting, but she just falls flat and frankly I felt a bit deceived about some of her self-descriptions. It was as if she was meant to have this variety of traits without actually adhering to them. She is half-Latina... with natural honey blonde hair. Fine, I'll accept that although I suspect that would be somewhat rare/unlikely. She is bisexual, but spends nearly the entire book drooling over men (which will be its own discussion in a moment). Yes, she checks out Sharon, but after accepting that Sharon isn't interested, gives it up quickly, unlike her interest in the men. She is worried about money even as she lives in a nice hotel room paid for by her apparently ungodly rich mentor/father figure. Sure, she wants to make it on her own, but given the golden safety net she's got under her, her job search woes sound like so much angst and don't give much sense of urgency. Nothing about her carries much weight or meaning.

Speaking of her job woes, though, she would probably have more luck acquiring and maintaining a career if she didn't *date both clients and suspects*. She is very firm about not wanting to date coworkers because of the potential trouble involved, but she constantly drools over one of her two bosses, she goes on a date with their first and only client's son, and she goes on a date with the main suspect *right after she questions him*. I suspect that that author was trying to make it clear that Bonnie is a sexually mature and independent woman, but the character just comes off like both an unprofessional idiot and an overly hormonal teenager. I was almost embarrassed for her in some of the scenes with her boss; that wasn't sexual tension as I've seen other reviewers describe it, it was an exercise in juvenile humiliation. Zoinks. If the descriptions of Bonnie's lustful nonsense were cut out, the book would probably be a couple dozen pages shorter.

Also, I don't care what she is wearing. It is not necessary to describe the full details of every outfit unless it is

relevant to the story, which it usually wasn't.

Even with all of Bonnie's diversity failure and foolishness, the book does have things going for it. Pretty much every character other than Bonnie seemed more interesting than Bonnie herself. Her mentor Joseph is a high-powered magical lawyer with a seat on the Council. One of her bosses left Chicago after seriously shaking up the Council over something we are never told details about, and he and her other boss (the one she can't stop drooling over) can work tandem magic, which apparently pretty rare but which, again, we don't get to hear much about. One of her coworkers is on parole, which we find out in a single line and never hear about again. Another coworker (the truth-teller! surely significant!) is hauling whiskey to work, but it isn't explored further. One is a gifted magical hacker in a world where magic fries electronics pretty easily. The last one is a former star football player. Come on! So much to work with here, but nothing is really explored or even thought about by our protagonist, who has much more important lusting over inappropriate targets to do.

The premise of the main plot is excellent. Magical CSI! What more can you say? The name of their team is cutesy and regrettable (PUP! Seriously? I think that one of the two bosses should have been snickering over that one.) but their approach to magic, which amazingly no one in the entire magical community has ever tried to do before, is very cool. The author presents a number of potentially interesting side plots that I would have liked to see explored. The case they are working on is sort-of solved... they learn who ordered the murders but do not (or seemingly attempt to) track down the actual (hired) killer.

I'm guessing that the loose ends are there because this is the first of a series, but there really needed to more meat and less filling in this volume. This book retails for \$14.95 in the U.S., and at that price I don't think it's too much to ask for a complete story, which I don't think this book is. I could honestly imagine all or most of my complaints being addressed and/or made plot points of in future books, and I'm just barely interested enough to maybe *-maybe-* read the second book to see if anything pans out, which is the only reason I gave it two stars instead of one. I won't go out of my way for it, though.

Nikki says

This is kind of fun, but nothing momentous. It might help if I'd read Gilman's other, linked series, I don't know. I don't know that this was good enough to encourage me to keep going when there's so much of this sort of urban fantasy out there. There were a couple of points in its favour, though: a diverse cast (one bi, one poly, one a PoC...) being the main one, for me. Though it'd have read better if we actually saw Bonnie being interested in women more: obviously not everyone who identifies as bi is slap bang in the middle of the Kinsey scale (though I am, which might colour my views on this), but still, it takes more than an odd thought about an ex or how women are easier but more full of drama. (In fact, that last one is why straight girls are always telling me that I must have a hard time of it: it's a straight girl view that two women equals twice the bitchiness and drama.)

Story wise, the focus is really more on the formation of the team than on the actual mystery, I think. The mystery is kinda eh: the team-building, the scientific approach to creating forensic magic, all of that is more important. And yet... I don't feel much of a connection to the characters. Overall, I'm left feeling pretty lukewarm.

Ian says

Bonnie desperately needs a job. So when she gets a mysterious call summoning her to a job interview she goes. She gets the job and becomes part of a team of magical investigators, mercenaries for hire.

They find themselves hunting a mysterious and powerful magical hit man.

Hard Magic was OK, but it was missing something.

The end.

Jess says

This is the first book in a new series. It reminded me of CSI (which I don't really watch) and Law and Order Criminal Intent.

The main character in the book is named Bonnie (Bonita) Torres. She's a recent graduate and unemployed. The reason she's unemployed is because she's a Talent. In this world there are people who have the magical ability to control what is known as current (like electrical current). Some jobs don't want people with these abilities, especially a lot of tech jobs because Talents have trouble being around technology and not blowing it up. So Bonnie is looking for a job when she gets an anonymous phone call telling her to show up at a location for a job. When she shows up, it's to find 4 other people there who also have Talent. The job is to become a part of P.U.P.I, and investigate crimes via magic means. The team works together to become better at using their magic, and when they get their first case they must work to find a killer while battling resistance from the magical community.

I'm still trying to process what I thought about this one. On one hand, there were things I really enjoyed about it. Namely, it felt different from other UF books. Yes there was the idea of magic and some fey creatures but it also felt a lot like a criminal investigation book. I thought it was a unique combination of genres. I really liked Bonnie (also, I think she is the first bi-sexual lead heroine I've seen - there were no real sex scenes though) she was an interesting mix of tough girl persona and a softie at heart. I found it amusing as she battled against her hormones and would talk to herself. I also really enjoyed the side characters. They were pretty developed, and they definitely added entertainment and drama to the book. I did get a little tired of the sniping between two of them. But otherwise, they were a pleasure to read about.

Some of the things I didn't like, the number one issue was the speed of the book. It was not a fast paced, page turner. It moved at a speed resembling a tortoise IMO. This didn't necessarily make it a "bad" book, but I guess I went into it with expectations of being like the other UF books, constant battle, constant battle, some sex, constant battle. And it wasn't really like that. The worst part for me was the beginning. It was a little slow to start after an interesting Prologue, and then it went a little more slow as the world was becoming built. After that, I got used to the pace eventually and the story was interesting.

I will definitely read the next book in the series, Pack of Lies. There were loose ends that weren't tied up in this book, and I want to see if a relationship becomes more developed.

Cathy says

Sort of lame to me. Main mystery/question not answered/resolved.

Diane says

I didn't finish this and really couldn't get into it. I heard a lot of magical terms I've heard before, like leylines and I forget what else. In spite of this familiarity I was still confused as to how the magical system and it's users worked and I found the characters bland. It never really captured me.

Angela says

30 November 2015: \$2.99 on Kindle

I always find it hardest to write the reviews for the books that were 'okay,' but not fantastic or horrible. Those middle of the road books, with nothing that really stands out to me as either totally offensive or as beautifully brilliant. Which doesn't mean it's a bad book, not at all. There's potential here - and as I already have the second book to read I'll definitely be giving it a shot.

One of the things that I did love, immediately, is that the heroine - Bonnie - is bisexual. And it's a complete non-issue. She is, it doesn't matter, whatever. That was refreshing and nice. I liked that she could like women and men and no one cared one way or the other. Bonnie herself was somewhat of a rare character type. She wasn't exceptional, she wasn't bratty, she wasn't trying to prove something to everyone she ever met - beyond the stuff that we're all trying to prove to our mentors and the world. She was kind and cared, she has a subtle sense of humor, and she wants (and works) to stand on her own, but doesn't turn down help when it can help.

The downside of all that is that Bonnie is a bit bland. And despite the fact that I enjoy sex, and think about it frequently, and enjoy appreciating a fine form (male or female)...well, Bonnie thought about it way too much and at completely inappropriate times; like when interviewing a *person-of-interest* in their investigation. I did appreciate that she realizes it, is sort of reprimanded for it, and vows to not do it again. But it still irritated me a bit.

Bland is something I feel like I can say about the writing, too. There was nothing that really sticks with me. The magic in the world honestly kind of confuses me. It seems that anything can be done as long as someone wanted to really think about how to do it. There doesn't seem to be a lot of repercussions to using the 'current' - as they call it - except that some other Talent (magically inclined person) might take offense at it. I like my magic to have some more costs, I guess. I like my world a bit darker and more difficult.

The secondary characters that make up the rest of P.U.P.I are, sometimes, much more interesting than Bonnie. From Ian and his mysterious disagreement with Council to the rest of the teams abilities - I found Pietr the most interesting actually. I'd really love to know more about him. Benjamin, the other of the bosses, seems to have interesting connections that I would really like explored. Though I find it a little creepy the (possibly historical) connection he has with Bonnie, especially considering her sometime thoughts about him.

The mystery itself is interesting, in a CSI kind of way. There's a lot of learning here as this is a brand new type of magic being done. So we get to see them developing how they're going to go forward in their investigations, and learning to work with each other. I definitely enjoy the team aspect here the most.

If you're looking for a lighter urban fantasy, you can't go wrong picking this up. It's a nice start to a series, with a cast of characters that are definitely interesting enough to want to read more.

Jane says

Interesting concept with cute characters. This being the first book I took the slow build with a grain of salt, but it was a very slow build. Hopefully the second book picks up the pace.

Diversireads says

I am always here for urban fantasy cop/private investigator stories (which is a bit surprising considering I'm not really into cop shows), but I just wasn't here for Hard Magic. Gilman's world isn't that fleshed out, her writing is lazy in parts, and there's no clear conclusion. The current or magic seems to have no limits other than leaving people a little tired. There's no limit to how much they can use and if they run out they can just get some from the nearest electrical source. It allows them to do a Harry Potter type apparition, speak telepathically to one another, get a feel for other's emotions, listen in on other's conversations, do a conference call via magic - that isn't anywhere close to the end of the list. Honestly it was a little boring seeing how easily they could do all this stuff. Here's the thing that every fantasy writer should know: the magic in your world need limits. Limits create problems and problems create tension and tension is what hooks readers.

Bonnie Torres is Latina and bi/pan, which, tbh, was the only reason I ever looked twice at this book. To say I was let down was an understatement. Bonnie is white passing with fair skin and blonde hair. She doesn't address her race aside from the initial introduction, nor does she face any discrimination due to it, which makes me feel like Gilman uses it just to make some points. Bonnie openly mentions her attraction to women. She mentions past girlfriends and an attraction to her co-worker, Sharon. However, all her main love interests in the book are men. I was very disappointed and it was a sudden insight into why this book wasn't regulated to the LGBT section. It was truly representation in name only.

Internalised misogyny featured in Hard Magic to my great joy. Bonnie says she's not a skank. That was in the opening few pages and somehow I managed to continue. She later goes onto say that a relationship with women is too much drama and therefore she would rather be with men. I sighed, rolled my eyes, and continued reading this true disappointment of a book.

Gilman's writing doesn't allow the reader to develop an emotional connection with Bonnie. I was exasperated by her actions (visiting a suspect's house bc you wanna get in his pants while on the job girl like pls do better) and her undying need for sex. Gilman seemed to suffer selective amnesia as well, Bonnie describes her love interest, Venec, as having grey eyes, eyes who's colour she couldn't name, and brown-black eyes in the course of less than 400 pages. It was sloppy writing and even sloppier editing.

The book ends with the conclusion that wasn't. I even picked up the next book in the series in the hope that I might find out the killer's name. Alas, nothing. In a ridiculous way it was a fitting end to a book that had let down so many of my expectations.

In the end, I definitely would not recommend this book to anyone looking to read a decent book let alone someone looking for a woc or a queer character to read about. Gilman claims representation, yet Bonnie never seems to suffer the effects of her minority racial and sexual identity. The book is poorly written, the

world badly built, and the characters not that interesting.
