



# Dead Iron

*Devon Monk*

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## **Dead Iron** Devon Monk

In steam age America, men, monsters, machines, and magic battle for the same scrap of earth and sky. In this chaos, bounty hunter Cedar Hunt rides, cursed by lycanthropy, carrying the guilt of his brother's death. Then Cedar is offered hope that his brother may yet survive. All he has to do is find the Holder: a powerful device created by mad devisers—and now in the hands of an ancient Strange who was banished to walk this earth.

In a land shaped by magic, steam, and iron, where the only things a man can count on are his guns, gears, and grit, Cedar will have to depend on all three if he's going to save his brother and reclaim his soul once and for all....

## **Dead Iron Details**

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Author : Devon Monk

Format : Kindle Edition 368 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Steampunk, Fantasy, Urban Fantasy, Westerns, Fiction, Paranormal

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# From Reader Review Dead Iron for online ebook

## Kathy (Kindle-aholic) says

I've been waiting for this steampunk adventure for months and I was not disappointed. Really liked the characters. Lots of setup, but also a good story. Liked the worldbuilding and the magic system and the gadgets (gotta have the gadgets!). You've got a man cursed by an Indian god, Strange beings that stalk humans, witches, a zombie, and a girl who is more than she seems.

It's in 3rd person following a handful of characters (both heroes and villains). I've read some books where this effect leads to too many threads and an inability to connect to the characters, but this book did not have that problem. The different POVs propelled the action along, gave me a greater sense of the scope of the world and the magic system, and let me get to know several characters better than I would have in a 1st person narrative. It was a tight story that still leaves a lot of room for more adventures.

I think my favorite character is Rose - hope she'll play an even bigger role next time.

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## AH says

That was different.

Matics, Witches, and Weres, oh my!

I like steampunk. I'm always fascinated by the creativity and usefulness of all those wacky steam powered contraptions and gadgets. I'm not too keen on Westerns. I usually don't seek out that genre, unless there is a sexy cowboy involved. But I digress.

This is a hard book for me to review. I enjoyed it immensely once I got into it, but I recognize that it may not be for everyone. Dead Iron was different from the other books in its genre – no corsets and no airships. At times it felt like I was watching an old Western movie or perhaps an episode of Rocky and Bullwinkle – I kept seeing the bad guy as Snidely Whiplash. But there are also elements of magic, The Strange, a witch, and a werewolf – things I did not expect to see in this book.

There's a lot going on in this book and I often wondered how the author would put everything together. The author manages to capture the Wild West feel and infuse it with magic and steam powered matics.

The characters fascinated me. I loved Cedar Hunt, the bounty hunter from out East. Cedar is cursed and becomes a werewolf at the full moon. The Madder brothers were quite mysterious. I'm still not sure what they are exactly, except that they want a favor from a few characters. The women in this book are strong, independent and unconventional. Mae Linson was a witch. Rose Small had dreams of becoming a deviser and creating contraptions of her own.

Shard Lefel was an oily character, pure evil. His quest to return home at any cost resulted in the recurring death of Mae's husband Jeb. Not sure if Jeb was a zombie or what he was exactly, I just felt bad for the man. Shard's matic creations were frightening creatures powered by steam and other scary things. Shard's

henchman was just as frightening.

This is the first book in Devon Monk's The Age of Steam series. The next book Tin Swift is scheduled for publication in July 2012. I'm looking forward to reading it when it comes out.

Review posted at Badass Book Reviews .

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### **Meigan says**

Review to come.

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### **Timothy Boyd says**

Well this was an interesting mix of genres. An Excellent Steampunk story. A very good supernatural story and a darn good western. Nice plot with some new twists to old ideas. Nice entertaining read with good characters. I look forward to the other books in this trilogy and trying the writer's other series. Definitely give this one a try. Very recommended

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### **Bry says**

Such promise. Seriously. A world with a western theme, magic, strange creatures who prowl the night, earth magic, and the walking dead - what's not to like??

But when the POV changes every chapter from one character to another, and is rarely from the perspective of the MAIN CHARACTER, it is seriously hard to ever become invested in that character. Why should I care about their lives, their past, their emotions when I rarely get to see or experience them either through their perspective or even another characters perspective.

The constantly changing perspective makes the writing seem chopping and the plot disjointed. I am not sure who I am supposed to be focused on, be concerned for, or route for. I am not sure how the points connect, the characters are related, or the occurrences important to the overall plot because everything jumps too much.

In the end I realized it is silly for me to keep reading a book that I am not enjoying and is actually just seriously annoying me. So I'm done. I'm sure others are bound to love it. I didn't like Devon Monks other book Magic in the Bone but thought I would give her another chance since she is so highly recommended by the writing team Ilona Andrews. Since I LOVE their books I figured I would try Monk again, but sadly this has sealed thoughts on her. I won't be reading anymore from this author.

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## **Ilona Andrews says**

This is a story with a uniquely American flavor. It is Wild West, but not the stark, romantic West of cowboys riding into town and not the cleaned up cutesy version where the hero wears a white hat and sings ballads. This is a gritty, harsh world of people who actually populated the small towns of American West: miners, traders, shop keepers, smiths and railroad workers.

Against this background, a wicked, dark magic spreads through the land, carried by the rails. Strange creatures roam the continent. Some use the magic, some fear it, others fight it. Cedar Hunt is one the latter. He is a man cursed by a god into lycanthropy and although he can be bought, he isn't cheap to hire.

Aside: Cedar, what a cool name. I wish I could steal that. Cedar is also pretty hot. Also god-curse is an excellent mythological touch. There are some Native American legends... Okay, shutting up.

Anyway, three miners - who are also not without talents - hire Cedar to find a magic doom doohicky for them. In return, they imply that they know his deceased brother, who may not be dead after all.

And that's the basic plot of it. What makes this book isn't the worldbuilding - although it is very cool. It's the relationships between the characters. The book is full of angst, and struggle, and anger. For example, Cedar meets a widow, a woman who loved her husband so deeply, that she wished him to never leave her side. Her husband is murdered but even in death, he attempts to return to her. All of her love turns to hate for those who had robbed her of her love and Cedar ends up helping her as well. It is tragic, and it makes you angry. At the finish I wanted them to nuke the bastard responsible. I just wanted him to die.

The novel doesn't have a heavy romantic element, but there is a second book and my money is on the widow, btw. I have a signing with Devon, so I will pick her brains and find out.

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## **Audrey says**

At its heart, this novel is two stories: one, a really above-average steampunk Western, and the other a fairly basic dark-fairy fantasy story. And throughout the book there's a kind of tension between the two; as a reader you really feel the \*clunk\* as one story gives way to the other, back and forth. They're not well wedded, is what.

But that doesn't mean this book's not AWESOME.

Missing werewolves! Mad Welsh brothers! Mountain lairs! Stolen children! Found children! A traveling train-zoo of supernaturally powered steam animals! Two men who cannot be killed but who really want to kill each other! Witches! Not-witches! Non-glamorous werewolfing! Heroines who can ride and shoot! No one in the fridge!

I do have questions about the race/ethnicity issues (you have one Black person in the story and they're dead? Okay, let's discuss that choice) but then again I will always have questions about the race/ethnicity issues.

But there was something on every other page that popped up out of nowhere and proceeded to be extremely excellent at whatever part of the two stories it set its mind to. And all these tiny details, these tiny epic,

wonderful things just kept adding to the book, until it was fairly over-flowing with crazy awesomeness. And in the end analysis, that was enough, for me, to keep the two stories balanced and in sync.

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## **All Things Urban Fantasy says**

Review courtesy of All Things Urban Fantasy

America was built on blood, sweat, and gears. Is that not the best tagline ever? It's also a pretty apt description for the story in DEAD IRON. The steam age America that Monk has created for this series is ingenious. The details of this world are revealed layer by layer until the whole setting is laid out is a glorious magic meets machine old West. Specifically the gadgets in DEAD IRON are magnificent both in conception and description, couple that with a motely crew of noble and nefarious characters and the result is a lovingly crafted world that needs just a bit of tinkering to really shine.

The story in DEAD IRON is told through several different point of views, all of them a little Strange. There's the main character from the description, a werewolf plagued with guilt; a witch desperate to avenge her husband's murder; a displaced girl who longs to escape her small town life; a man who manages to nearly elude death; and the Strangest of them all, the villain who ties them all together.

The first hundred pages or so are a bit sleepy, despite the lovely writing. It takes a while for the gears to really start turning in this story and all the various POVs to make sense together. I also had a few issues with the backstory, or lack there of. There are so many key incidents that are referred to repeatedly throughout DEAD IRON but only vaguely. The result felt many times like I was reading the second book in the series even though this is the first book. It's unfortunate because I think that had Monk explained exactly what had happened with Cedar and his brother and the villain and his brother (the most glaring examples) their motivations would have been so much stronger. As it is, I'm left feeling ignorant and not a little frustrated.

Overall, DEAD IRON suffers from a slow start and some crucial missing backstory pieces, but once the story got going, it was full steam ahead. The old west world is harsh and beautiful and the steam devices plentiful and fascinating. Monk's writing is quite beautiful as well. The next book in the Age of Steam series should be published in 2012.

Sexual Content:

Kissing. References to rape

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## **Pippa DaCosta says**

**A brilliantly imagined and original tale of magic, curses and steam.**

Steampunk isn't a genre I get on particularly well with, but the character of Cedar Hunt intrigued me enough to give this a try.

Let's get something straight. This is fantasy, not steampunk. That cover is gorgeous, but it says nothing about the wonderful fantasy elements that make up the majority of this story.

*'One witch, one human, one dead man, would not stand in the way of his immortality, his revenge.'*

Dead Iron is a stunning amalgamation of fantasy and steampunk. I'd even go so far as to say this is 85% a fantasy novel, with a steampunk twist. Beautifully written, this author has a poetic way with words, able to weave them in such a way that really gives this world, its dark magic, and the grind of gears such depth.

Cedar Hunt is a cursed and lonely man. Upon every full moon, he chains himself to his hearth to protect those around him from the beast inside. He gets by as a bounty hunter for hire in the small town of Hallelujah, but the guilt of his brother's death and his endless search for a cure to the curse have left him hollow and alone.

The sleepy Wild West town of Hallelujah has its share of interesting folks. A witch, a trio of mining brothers who most definitely are not what they seem, a girl who can see the 'Strange', to name a few. And this town is right in the path of the railroad, driven by the deliciously evil Shard LeFel. LeFel is an ancient 'Strange' cursed to walk this land for centuries, but he's found a way to open the door to the Strange, and the little town of Hallelujah has everything he needs.

When the blacksmith's boy goes missing, taken by the Strange and LeFel, Cedar Hunt vows to find him.

This has everything, lost love, the walking dead, machines (matics) woven together with magic, lycanthropes and a delightful cast of characters that bring it all to life.

Fans of Keri Arthur and Ilona Andrews, (basically urban fantasy fans), will enjoy this. Don't let the steampunk cover put you off. I've bought the rest of the series, and the first book in Devon's UF series too. I can't wait to get stuck in.

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## **Kira says**

Something about this didn't grab my attention. Reading more than a few chapters at a time was hard. Yet there wasn't anything in particular I didn't like about it. There was a fair amount of action and it was well paced. For whatever reason I was somewhat bored.

This was an interesting twist on steampunk. It was a blend of steampunk and fantasy in the wild west. And this was the first steampunk book I've ever read without a strong romantic element. I really liked the world because it was different.

Multiple POVs were used, and it didn't work for me. I think the story would have been more entertaining and suspenseful without using so many POV because then I wouldn't have known what every character was planning and thinking. I like it better when I have to figure out what they're up to.

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## Kelly says

Devon Monk, the author of *Dead Iron*, is also the author of the Allie Beckstrom urban fantasy series, but you'd never know it if her name wasn't on the cover. Monk pulls off the impressive feat of creating a wholly distinct voice for her new Age of Steam series.

Here, Monk paints a vivid picture of a gritty, grimy Old West. Like the Beckstrom books, this is set in Oregon, but it's a very different Oregon. The writing invokes all of the senses, so you can almost smell the metal and oil and blood — and you may find yourself slipping into Old West speech patterns after reading.

Steampunk comes in a wide range of moods, from whimsy to horror. *Dead Iron* is closer to the horror end of the spectrum. Some scenes are skin-crawlingly disturbing, and you'll have no trouble hating the cruel, smooth-talking villain.

Other than the fantastically dark mood, the greatest strength of *Dead Iron* is its characters. This is a largely character-driven novel, with Monk taking us deeply into the minds and lives of the kinds of people who might thrive — or suffer — in a West where magic exists alongside steam technology. Cedar Hunt is a werewolf, haunted by the death of his brother. Mae Lindson is a witch whose magic always twists itself into something dark, even when she means well. Rose Small is a shopkeeper's adopted daughter with a mechanical bent; she dreams of becoming a deviser and making fantastic objects. All three face prejudice in the isolated town of Hallelujah: Cedar because he's a loner, Mae because she married a black man (and later because of her powers), and Rose because she doesn't behave as a young lady is supposed to. These three are arrayed against the sinister Shard LeFel and his ghastly assistant, Shunt. Also in the mix are the enigmatic and highly entertaining Madder brothers, whose intentions are at first not clear to the reader, and who still have mysteries yet to explore in future books.

The plot is pretty straightforward; LeFel races against time to perform a terrible ritual, while the white hats (after hesitantly becoming friends with one another) race against time to stop him. For the characters, the plot moves quickly and takes place over just a few short days; for the reader, it can be a little slow since Monk pauses frequently for character study. The character study is so good, though, that it's hard to object.

The Age of Steam series presents a dark, fascinating world and a cast of unforgettable characters whose next adventure I can't wait to read. If you're a reader who loves character-driven stories and are interested in the creepier side of steampunk, definitely give *Dead Iron* a try.

Written for FantasyLiterature.com

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## Justin says

<http://staffersmusings.blogspot.com/2...>

I am fascinated by the necessity those of us interested in genre fiction seem to have for classification. Cyberpunk, hard sci-fi, space opera, high fantasy, epic fantasy, etc. Oh and the debates that ensue throughout the community when something is misclassified. In any case, there is no doubt what **Dead Iron** is - steampunk. Unfortunately, for author Devon Monk, it is steampunk reminiscent of Will Smith's **Wild Wild West**. While a far more successful execution of storytelling it shares a confusion with



Smith's flop film about what it's trying to be. This shouldn't be read as a condemnation, rather a point of reference for discussing a book I ultimately I enjoyed.

Cedar Hunt is a man cursed by the Pawnee gods to hunt the Strange. He bears his curse, but is forever tormented by how it twists his humanity. Traveling west, he follows the Strange to a town named Hallelujah that lies in the inexorable path of expanding rail. When a child mysteriously goes missing, Hunt takes on finding him despite the town's mistrust of an outsider. Hunt's quest soon becomes much more as he sets himself against the Strange who would destroy not only Hallelujah but humankind in their entire.

Like any novel of genre fiction the nuance and ambiance the author sets are critical to success. Monk, trying to create fantasy, offers the Strange. The Strange comes from another plane where something akin to demons rule. It spills into the world and taints it. Personified by two characters, Mr. Shunt and Mr. Lefel, it is linked to the expansion of the railway as it paves a way to carry the Strange itself across the land. There is an obvious, if not overt, metaphor here about the expansion of technology and its impact on humanity.

Monk combines the Strange and technology powered by gear and steam with something called glim. Glim is essentially the Strange made tangible. Placed into a construct of metal and oil it brings technology to life or at least supercharges it. Every time glim made an appearance I was reminded of Tim "The Toolman" Taylor from ABC's 90's hit, **Home Improvement** - more horsepower! I found the gears and steam extremely satisfying, but imbuing them with the Strange felt unnecessary and made inventing somewhat tangential to "magic". It made what I felt like was an alternate reality steampunk novel feel like **Final Fantasy**. A few times I was sure Monk was moments away from summoning Bahamut.

As for the worldbuilding, Monk does a satisfactory job. Hallelujah is well imagined. It feels right - a frontier town like any other in an old western, replete with blacksmith, banker, storekeeper, town bully, wild eyed dreamer, and hard working black man looked down on by his peers. While it felt authentic, at least as I imagine a western town to be (since all my experience in such comes from **Silverado** and **The Magnificent Seven**), it didn't feel particularly original or unique.

Beyond Hallelujah, the world is only hinted at. Airships, universities, unseen technology, and mysterious cabals lurk beyond the mountains in the east. In this I think Monk did a better job. Her world felt far more fleshed out and alive than the town itself. It is unfortunate that we never see this world in **Dead Iron**, but I am certain more will come in the promised sequels. That said, the novel itself is entirely self contained and should I never read a sequel I won't be worse off for having spent the time reading this one.

It should be noticed that I'm now easily seven paragraphs into his review and I haven't mentioned the plot outside of a brief introduction. Believe it or not, it's intentional. The plot in **Dead Iron** is good. It's fun, with adequate emotion and action. If it seems a bit abstract at times when Mr. Lefel waxes poetic about the Strange, it quickly finds it's way again. But to me, in a novel like this the plot is of secondary concern (assuming it's adequate, which it is). The success or failure of Monk's first installment in the Age of Steam series, and her subsequent sequels, will be entirely dependent on how readers connect with the world she's created.

For me, it was *ok*. I believe she would have better served if **Dead Iron** had been her second installment in the series. The remembrances of Hunt's time among the Pawnee and his days of learning in the east would have been far more compelling of an introduction to Monk's world. Furthermore she could have avoided the strong emphasis on the Strange and glim and instead explored more of the steampunk tradition before turning things on their head with the introduction of "magic". This combination is what seems to lead the book astray as it loses cohesion in trying to be a western, a steampunk novel, and more traditional fantasy all

at the same time.

All that said, I enjoyed the book. The characters are warm and alive. I feel confident in recommending the book to fans of the sub genre. I feel even more confident in the fact that the next book in the series will be better than the first.

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## Catherine says

I was pretty excited to start this book. I liked that the author set the story in a Western environment and that the back cover indicated that the main character would be a guy. I've been trying to read more books with guys as the main character. They're not quite as easy to find in my genres of choice as I would have first assumed. But this book surprised me. To me, Cedar Hunt **was not** the main character. In reality, there were **multiple** main characters. Cedar Hunt was not given any more page time than them, and I was disappointed that I was never able to sink into his character and get to know him well.

In my opinion (based on time spent in POV sections) there were at least three main characters. Cedar Hunt, a cursed man who's determined to hunt for a missing boy, Mae Lindson, a grieving widow out for revenge, and Shard LeFel, the man at the center of all the unrest in the area. In addition to cycling through those main POVs, we also spent time in the heads of multiple other characters. Because of this, I never became substantially invested in any of the characters. I felt a distinct lack of depth, despite finding the plot intriguing.

I found the storyline fascinating, although after finishing the book I find myself with a lot of unanswered questions. Being that this is a series, it's possible that the author wants to dole those answers out slowly, so I'll give her the benefit of the doubt. The mix of magic and Steampunk worked very well together. Curses, magic, werewolves, zombies, and the Strange...they were all fascinating. And occasionally really creepy! Mr. Shunt and his freaky ability to stitch himself back together gave me the shivers.

I thought Mae's storyline about her murdered husband was very tragic. Seeing Jeb's POV gave their bond a particular poignancy. I think that's why I resented the author's subtle attempts to set the foundation for a future relationship between her and Cedar. Don't get me wrong, it wasn't in your face and there's no actual romance in this book, but the author would throw in a little bit of lingering eye contact and subtle attraction that irritated me. Her husband died **two days ago** and they had such a soul deep bond that he was forced to be killed multiple times because the bond was so strong it pulled him from death. Trying to forge the seeds of a connection with another man while her husband is barely cold seemed a smack in the face to the bond that they shared.

My favorite characters were Rose Small and the Madder brothers. The Madder brothers were so fierce and wild and a little creepy. Their ability to pop up at just the right time and their habit of bargaining for favors made me intensely curious about what they are. The hints we were given about their connection to LeFel's home just intensified that. And the way they shake hands—what's up with that? Rose was impossible not to like. She was stuck in a life where she was unappreciated and thought a little mad. Watching her open herself to other people like herself was one of my favorite parts of the book.

Although the storyline takes place over a very short amount of time it never felt rushed. It actually felt a little bit slow at times. I'm interested in seeing where the author takes the characters in the second book. My only

hope is that she gives her characters a little more depth. While I liked the book it felt more like I was watching a movie play out rather than immersing myself in a book.

### **Favorite Quote:**

"Now, isn't that a pretty thought? Forks of silver, spoons of moonlight. What do you suppose your knives should be made of, Mr. Hunt? Tears?"

Cedar cocked the hammer back on the Walker and aimed it at Alun's head. "Don't know about my knives, but my gun's made of pain."

Review originally posted on Fiction Vixen.

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### **Fangs for the Fantasy says**

Dead Iron falls into the category of paranormal steampunk. I really looked forward to this book when I saw that it was chosen as the book of the month by one of my Goodreads reading groups; however, that excitement quickly turned to dust, and I found myself looking for anything to do other than reading this book. How do you know when a book is bad? When you find yourself thinking after reading a few pages, hnnnnnn I suddenly have a desire to clean the kitchen, or do a load of laundry. Yes, housework is more amusing than this book.

One of the major faults with Monk's work is how convoluted the story is. First we have a werewolf named Cedar Hunt, who is considered an outsider in the small Oregon town of Hallelujah. He has moved to Hallelujah in an attempt to forget his past. Hunt believes that he killed his brother, one night when the wolf's blood lust blocked out his ability to reason. His wife and child are also dead. Out of the blue, Rose Small, the General Store owner's adopted daughter tells him about a missing child named Elbert Gregor, and he decides to hunt him down. Because Rose has told him that she believes that the boogeyman took the child, he decides to pay a visit to the Madders brothers, who seem to have a special skill working with stone. Even though he has no connection with this child, he is willing to owe the Madders a favor in order to secure their help.

If that were not bad enough, we learn that Hunt is a werewolf because he was cursed. When asked what he had done to cause a God to be angry enough to curse him he said, "I walked on the wrong land. Pawnee land. I did no harm other than to be under the wrong go's scrutiny." (pg. 193) He then goes on to say, "Told me there were Strange rising in the land. Told me I was to hunt them. Kill them." Okay, keep in mind that this is the 1800's, and that White settlers and the government are busy slaughtering, raping, and starving Native Americans. It is absolutely problematic that the only time First Nations people are mentioned, is for one of them to choose a White man as their champion. Has Monk ever read a history book or had an actual conversation with a First Nations person? Somehow I doubt it.

[Read More](#)

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### **Ranting Dragon says**

<http://www.rantingdragon.com/dead-iro...>

The first installment in a new series by Devon Monk (author of the Allie Beckstrom novels), *Dead Iron* is a wonderfully fresh and intriguing combination of steampunk technology and western action.

In a world running on steam and gears, science has taken the forefront. However, tales of magic still circulate; magic, and something largely regarded as superstition, a mysterious realm tied to the mortal plane: The Strange.

Cedar Hunt, teacher by schooling but bounty hunter by trade, has come to the Oregon frontier carrying both his guilt over his brother's death and a curse of lycanthropy which transforms his body and mind into that of a wolf's during the full moon. Mae Lindson, a renegade witch who left her coven due to her unorthodox methods, hunts for her husband's killer. And Shard LeFel, railroad tycoon come to Hallelujah, Oregon promising a better tomorrow, is not what he seems to be. In fact, he is something Strange, banished to the mortal plane until his death.

When Cedar learns from a trio of brothers that his brother may yet live, no price is too high to pay to find him. In return for the information, he must track down the Holder, a device created by the mad inventors of the Strange. However, the Holder is in the hands of LeFel, who believes it the key to releasing him from the curse of mortality. But to activate the device, LeFel needs three final victims — a child, a cursed man, and a witch — and he already has two of the three in his possession. It is a race against the clock for Cedar to uncover the mystery surrounding Shard LeFel, the town of Hallelujah, and himself.

### **Intricate cogs and characters**

The character work in the novel is absolutely wonderful. For the major players, enough is seen of who they are and what makes them tick (sometimes literally!) that they are believable as actual characters. Yet there are questions left about each, shadows left to explore, that makes one want to continue reading to discover their secrets. A prime example of the fantastic character work is Cedar Hunt. Though he is a bounty hunter, he has his morals — he will not hunt to kill. However, he is quick (though not without his doubts) to toss these morals out when he discovers his brother might still live.

### **A well-oiled machine**

Apart from the characters, the aspect of the novel that really sold it for me was the plot. It had the right mix of fast-paced action coupled with suspense to hold my attention through the entirety of the book (even though much of my reading was done in the pit at the theatre!). The division of the storyline between the major players is very balanced, and each is engaging. Not only was the plot of the novel tight and concise, it also laid a few foundations for series-spanning subplots — a great selling point for me.

### **Shakes, stirs, and serves**

This is a true genre mash-up, and as my first real foray into steampunk novels, *Dead Iron* delivered, and did it well. While it may seem that the western, steampunk, and fantasy genres are simply smashed together, the three genres have actually been closely interwoven, much like the many tiny gears in a watch or a clock. It is a polished, well-organized world, and I loved every moment of it. And as a setting for a new series, I believe it holds a lot of promise; while the reader may see the finished facade and some of the underlying foundations of the world, there are enough aspects left unexplained to pique the curiosity of the reader.

The downside to this is that the world almost overpowers the main plot. Almost, but not quite. For me, a novel is usually more about the characters and how they make it through their given circumstances, and that held true for *Dead Iron*. However, I did find myself wanting to know more about things happening back East, in China, and the rest of the world, which is where I think the series is probably heading.

**Why should you read this book?**

It's something fresh, new, and exciting. Instead of being a steampunk novel with aspects of fantasy and western, it reads more like a fantasy novel with steampunk technology. The characters are engaging, the plot lines are twisty but fairly easy to follow, and the premise is original. This is a fantastic start to a promising new series.

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