

Life seems but a quick succession of
Busy Nothings

--Jane Austen

MONDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2009

What's Ashley Reading: Wonderland Edition

It's been a while since I've shared any books with you on *Busy Nothings*, but don't think that means I haven't been reading! I'm in the middle of *The Book Thief* and I finished the third book in the *Looking-Glass Wars* series just before NaNoWriMo began. Currently, I'm reading *The Beekeeper's Apprentice*, *The Maze Runner*, and an extraordinary novel written by... myself. Actually, it's mediocre as it's written. But it's fabulous in my head!

Today I will be sharing *Arch Enemy*. This is the third book—and I believe the last—in the *Looking-Glass Wars* series. These stories tell the TRUE tale of Alyss, the young queen of Wonderland, and her quest to keep the throne away from her evil aunt, Redd, and the king of the Boarderlands, Arch. In the first book, *The Looking-Glass Wars*, Alyss witnesses her parents' murder at the hand of Redd, the queen's sister. Hatter Madigan, a cabinet member of the Heart family empire, takes Alyss away from the battle and through a portal to the real world, where she is adopted by the Liddell family in Oxford. Over the next few years, the Liddells convince Alyss (now Alice) that imagination is not real and she forgets all about her previous life.



Of course, her past cannot stay hidden for long and she is brought back to Wonderland as a young woman. She combines forces with the rebels in hiding—those true to the Hearts and White Imagination—and various battles ensue. I won't tell you who wins, who loses, and how King Arch fits into all of it, but I will say that I enjoyed spending time in Wonderland. I LOVE the chemistry between Alyss—the leader of the people, Queen of imagination, and savior of creativity—and Dodge, the royal bodyguard. Frank Beddor really captures the intricacies of that kind of a relationship and the pull Alyss feels between her responsibility to her family and her people and the love she feels for her childhood friend.

A word of warning: this is the type of fantasy story that requires a map and glossary. Wonderland is a very defined geographical space and the peoples of the Boarderlands come into play in *Arch Enemy*. Similarly, Wonderland is run on Imagination; those blessed with Imagination can simply think



something into existence. Therefore, Wonderland is filled with weapons, tools, food, etc. that do not exist in the real world. What the heck is a Spirit Dane? I still don't know, but it denotes length. Just beware that this series will require a little bit of work on your part in order to keep the new terms straight. However, I simply gave up after the first hundred pages of book one and still managed to enjoy the story.

In a nutshell: These are great books if you have the time and inclination to conquer the fantasy aspect. The characters are very realistic and the idea is quite original. However, book three, *Arch Enemy*, is a little stilted and could easily have been combined with book two, *Seeing Redd*. In fact, I wonder if Beddor didn't just get sick of writing halfway through *Arch Enemy* and wrote the rest in his sleep. OVERALL--as a three-book story-- it was worthwhile.

Interesting tidbits: The author was on the US Olympic Skiing team AND produced *There's Something About Mary*. The LGW has been optioned for film and is in the pre-production phase. It will make an AWESOME movie as the story is very visual. I can't wait!

[Here's a recent interview with Frank Beddor on Good Morning America](#)

POSTED BY ABENNING AT 2:13 PM