

# CRITIQUES

ON INFINITE EARTHS

by Don MacPherson

## THE LOOKING GLASS WARS: HATTER M #2

The creators are to be commended for offering an accessible second issue; one needn't even read the first issue to pick up on the story and appreciate the imagination and black humor of the book. I think the source of this book's appeal is the slightly twisted take on 19th century culture. This gothic adventure offers dark, bizarre conflicts and antagonists, but it never takes itself too seriously either. Templesmith's art is a little clearer but just as sharp and dynamic in this issue, and his reputation is the title's best chance of drawing in an audience.

Hatter Madigan returns from his other-dimensional Wonderland home to 19-century Earth after convincing the slain queen's evil sister that the Princess Alyss was dead. Of course, she's not dead, just lost, and the Hatter sets out to find her. It's a big world to search, but one factor that goes in the Wonderland bodyguard's favor is the fact that creatures of imagination, such as the residents of Wonderland, shine like bright stars in this dark, unfortunate place. The Hatter learns of just such a girl, performing for the masses, and he seeks her out. He soon discovers, though, that others seek to avail themselves of the child's special nature as well.

Templesmith employs some brighter colors in the earlier sequences in this issue, and that makes for a clearer picture of the main character and the world that he's trying to explore. His designs for the gypsies and circus folk serving as villainous henchmen are inventive and entertaining. I really like how flashes of red pop against the darker backgrounds and muted colors, and I'm even more pleased to find that not all of those flashes are representations of blood. Templesmith is also to be commended for the cover artwork; it's the sort of image that really makes a potential reader want to open the issue up and learn what the hell is going on.

The writers' inclusion of a spunky Lois Lane-type of character actually comes off rather well,



Image Comics/Desperado Publishing

**Writers:** Frank Beddor & Liz Cavalier

**Artist/Cover artist:** Ben Templesmith

**Price:** \$3.99 US

in part due to her Russian heritage; it makes for a nice twist on the American archetype for a supporting character in a super-hero title. But I think what really makes her interesting is that she seems to be the one regular who acknowledges that unusual things are happening. Other people who happen upon the chaos that comes in Hatter M's wake seem to pay it no heed, but Magda not only sees it but relishes the professional opportunity that it may bring.

Again, I am struck by the accessible nature of this script, but the aspect of the script that stands out as the book's greatest strength is the emphasis on the magic of imagination. The writers treat imagination as a palpable, magical force in the world that's all too rare. Despite the backdrop for this story, it's an idea that's all-too easily understood by the modern reader. It seems that all too often, the public is mesmerized by people's looks, and real talent for creativity and imagination can go unnoticed. **7/10**