



## *The Looking Glass Wars* by Frank Beddor

Dial, 2006 (2004)

Hardcover, Paperback, CD

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Alyss Heart is the heir to Wonderland, where Imagination has the magical power to affect one's surroundings and the Heart family have long ruled due to their powerful creative abilities. Alyss's own talent for *White Imagination* (whose principles are '*love, justice, and duty to others*') is formidable - for her age.

On Alyss's seventh birthday, her vicious aunt Redd - who is strong in *Black Imagination* - slaughters her parents and takes the throne. At the last minute, Queen Genevieve orders her personal bodyguard, the very effective and acrobatic Hatter Madigan, to take her daughter through the looking glass and keep her safe. They're followed by Redd's assassin, the part-human part-feline *Cat* (one of my favorite characters, even though he's a bad guy!) Alyss's childhood friend and '*partner in adventure*' is a commoner, Dodge Anders. He gives her a Jabberwock tooth for her birthday, which she treasures. Dodge focuses on revenge after *The Cat* kills his father, and his beloved princess disappears and is believed dead.

Unfortunately, Hatter is separated from Alyss when they travel between worlds through the Pool of Tears. In our universe, Alyss is helped by street kids and eventually adopted by Reverend and Mrs. Liddell. Whenever she tells her story, she's accused of talking nonsense. A friend of her adopted parents, Reverend Charles Dodgson, even writes a book that '*transformed*

*her memories of a world alive with hope and possibility and danger into make-believe, the foolish stuff of children.'* Alyss despairingly conforms to this strange new life. In the meantime, Hatter searches the world relentlessly for the lost princess.

**B**ack in Wonderland, General Doppelgänger - who can split into Generals Doppel and Gänger - leads the resistance (including Dodge). When Alice turns twenty, Hatter finally tracks her down, and Dodge dares the dangers of another world to bring his princess home, *The Cat* on their trail. They find Redd entrenched in power in a Wonderland that's changed greatly for the worse. There are many dangers to be faced, battles to be fought, and oracles - in particular the Blue caterpillar, '*sage of sages, wisest of the wise*' - to be consulted, while Alyss works hard to rekindle her dormant imagination. And though she wins back her queendom, it seems that readers might not have seen the end of Redd - leaving scope for future episodes.

***The Looking Glass Wars*** is a rollicking good read, filled with the magic of *Imagination*, and answering many questions raised by Dodgson's nonsense version, *Alice in Wonderland*. Don't miss it! The book is accompanied by a ***Looking Glass Wars Soundtrack*** CD with a variety of artists and styles - all somewhat surreal - and titles that range from *To Another World* to *Sea of Redd* and *Shattered*. (Note that this review is based on the uncorrected text of an advanced reading copy.)