



The Looking Glass Wars by Frank Beddor

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Author Web site: <http://www.lookingglasswars.com>

Everybody thinks they know the story of Alice Liddell Hargreaves, but they only experienced Lewis Carroll's (or Walt Disney's) interpretation of the events Alice relayed. Few have had the chance to see the true version of what happened on the other side of the rabbit hole. This is the basic premise of Frank Beddor's novel, the first in a projected trilogy of stories revealing Wonderland both familiar and darkly new. ***The Looking Glass Wars*** is being marketed as a young adult title, but may have a wider appeal considering the place ***Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*** has in popular culture and the collective unconscious.

In Beddor's re-imagined Wonderland, Alice is a princess of Wonderland making our world her home after her parents were murdered by her Aunt Redd, Beddor's version of The Queen of Hearts. While the Queen of Hearts was fond of saying "off with their heads," Redd takes the threat to the full measure and kills those who oppose her and keeps her "allies" at bay with similar threats. One of Redd's most trusted companions is a dangerous assassin with many lives, a re-imagined Cheshire cat. Alice has a dangerous bodyguard in her retinue, too – Hatter M. These are perhaps the most prominent characters Beddor has re-imagined, although any reader with a passing familiarity with the story will recognize much of the cast. Much of the fun and entertainment of this book comes from making the connections between Carroll's template and Beddor's twist.

Re-imagined, familiar stories are quite popular and it would be difficult NOT to compare Beddor's novel to one of the more popular and widely known in this particular venue – Gregory Maguire's ***Wicked***. Despite the apparent differences in the intended market, both authors hang something of a dark cloud on these familiar milieus. Both writers do a fine job of peeling back layers of what seems to be a familiar world only to reveal something darker and not-so-pleasant. Where Maguire spends a great deal of time developing his main characters, Beddor focuses more of his novel on the plot and extending the familiar story.

I wasn't expecting to enjoy this book as much as I did. The story moved along rather quickly and Beddor's reinventions worked relatively naturally. I think the intended (young adults) market will enjoy the book and parents who are familiar with the original story will enjoy reading along. Beddor has added layers and twists to an established world, making it something his own. The book ended with a good measure of closure, while leaving certain elements up in the air for the promised second and third book of the trilogy. Beddor told an entertaining story and he has my curiosity piqued for the next installment.

I would recommend anybody interested in the book to check out the extensive Web site at: <http://www.lookingglasswars.com>. Beddor is scripting a prequel to the story in the form of a comic book with acclaimed artist Ben Templesmith. All of this points to either how rich Beddor's world is, how extensive his plans for the world are, or how great the marketing is behind his work. I suspect a bit of each.