



Book Review: *ArchEnemy* by Frank Beddor

Author: The Masked Movie Snobs **Published:**
Oct 20, 2009 at 9:50 pm



Written by Caballero Oscuro

Frank Beddor's intriguing revision of the Alice in Wonderland mythos reaches its thrilling conclusion in this final act of *The Looking Glass Wars* trilogy. Intended for young adult readers but fun for "old" adults too, *ArchEnemy* reveals the final outcome of a lengthy three-way fight for Wonderland's crown pitting the good princess Alyss Heart against her evil aunt Redd Heart and an interloper from the neighboring Boarderlands, King Arch.

If you're new to the story, it's absolutely essential that you first read the first two novels, *The Looking Glass Wars* and *Seeing Redd*, as there's precious little attempt to indoctrinate newbies as the action gets under way in the new book. While Book One centered on Alyss' fight to unseat Redd from her ill-begotten throne, and Book Two featured the rise of Arch's fringe forces, the final book centers on the full deployment of Arch's power while Alyss and Redd both seek to block him. If that sounds more like a civil war story than a light fantasy novel, there's good reason as the main plot is heavily centered on the various strategic power moves made by the principal players for the crown.

However, there's also plenty of ancillary action with the supporting players that continues to flesh out the intricately designed and magical Wonderland. From the mysterious caterpillar oracles to the winning father/daughter chemistry of royal bodyguards Hatter M and Homburg Molly to Arch's evil henchmen, Beddor takes pains to create a fully realized world populated by multi-dimensional characters that draw readers into the tale.

As in the past novels, Beddor also contrasts the magical Wonderland with our world via travel portals between the two that transport key characters to 19th century England. This time around, Princess Alyss finds herself temporarily

stranded in our world and forced to survive without her powers of imagination.

Part of the trilogy's charm is Beddor's inclusion of original *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* author Lewis Carroll (using his real name, Charles Dodgson) as a character interacting with the visitors from Wonderland, recording and repurposing their tales as fodder for his own literary works. In *ArchEnemy*, he's forced to come clean about his use of the material during encounters with Alyss and Homborg Molly, leaving him none the worse for wear but furthering Beddor's mantra that Alyss/Alice actually came through the looking glass to our world instead of the other way around.

Although I would have preferred even more Wonderland character development and less war strategy, the new book fulfills the promise of the first two acts and does a fine job of wrapping up all plot threads. The three principal players are so consumed with the war that they fail to progress as compelling characters, surprisingly leaving Homborg Molly with the most fully-realized character arc in the book as she struggles to come to terms with being a "halfer" (half royal bodyguard/half normal human) while concurrently mourning her mother and attempting to forge a relationship with her newly revealed father, Hatter M. However, Alyss Heart is still a winning star heroine and readers that have traveled this far into Wonderland's world of imagination will find a fully satisfying conclusion.

ArchEnemy is now available. For more information, visit the [Looking Glass Wars website](#).