



Book Review: The Looking Glass Wars: ArchEnemy

by [R.J. Carter](#) Published: September 23, 2009

Alyss Heart has resumed the throne of Wonderland -- and things have never been more tumultuous for the citizens who practice the art of White Imagination.

In author Frank Beddor's universe, the young Alyss was exiled from Wonderland to save her from the clutches of her power-mad Aunt Redd. But the young girl became separated from her guardian, the military milliner, Hatter Madigan, and was found by the Liddell family, through whom she met Charles Dodgson. She told him her true story, only to be disappointed in finding that he turned the entire thing into a fanciful children's tale.

Eventually Alyss was recovered, leaving a doppelganger Alice Liddell in her place, and all was right with the worlds.

If only.

As this third book of the trilogy opens, King Arch of the Boarderlanders had effectively dampened the power of imagination in Wonderland, making it possible for him to invade with his nomadic forces and take hold of the all-powerful Heart Crystal for himself -- to see it destroyed once and for all. But events in Wonderland bleed over to Earth, for the Heart Crystal is the nexus of imagination -- things imagined in Wonderland and made real are passed into the crystal, so that someone on Earth will become inspired and write/paint/invent a similar thing.

Now on the run with her lovestruck but fervently loyal guardsman, Dodge Anders, Alyss must strike an uneasy alliance with her sworn enemy, Redd, who covets her throne -- and who may be her superior in strength of imagination. Meanwhile, the caterpillar oracles have an agenda of their own, as they begin to take a hand in influencing the events so that the outcome is more to their own liking.

Populated with characters both amusing and sinister, *ArchEnemy* moves at a brisk pace, with a number of subplots that weave their way together. As Alyss struggles in Wonderland, Hatter Madigan's daughter, Hombur Molly, is left on Earth in the care of none other than Charles Dodgson, who discovers her untapped skills as a reflexive math prodigy. The only major flaw in the novel is that it rarely surprises, being more of a linear adventure with future actions telegraphed. This is made up for, however, by the variety of personalities and unique skills possessed by the different characters (assuming sprouting skin-shredding knives from your fingerprints, or issuing bone-crumbling sonic screams can be considered a skill).

With the upcoming Tim Burton sequel to *Alice in Wonderland*, there's a resurgence of interest in the Lewis Carroll classic. Beddor's novel couldn't be hitting the shelves at a more appropriate time.