

# Grinding to Valhalla

Recognizing heroes of the MMO community one interview at a time...

## Reading the text: Frank Beddor

Posted by **Randolph Carter** on October 12, 2009

*Frank Beddor is a former world champion freestyle skier, film producer, actor, stuntman and author. He talks about his Looking Glass Wars trilogy which tells the real story of Alice in Wonderland and sheds some light on the new free to play MMO card game, Card Soldier Wars, based on his books.*

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### Author's website:

<http://www.lookingglasswars.com/home.html>

### Could you take a minute and explain what your novel *The Looking Glass Wars* is about?

Essentially, it is the TRUE story of Alyss OF Wonderland.

While in London for the U.K. premiere of *There's Something About Mary*, I visited the British Museum where I came upon an exhibit of ancient cards – playing cards, Tarot cards, illuminated cards, cards Napoleon had hired artists to create illustrating his victories. There was also an incomplete deck that intrigued me. The images reminded me of 'Alice in Wonderland,' but they were more mysterious and twisted, much more gothic. After that, I couldn't stop thinking about those cards. Through a series of events, I met an antiquities dealer who owned the remaining cards from that deck. And the story he told me – as he revealed one card at a time, each with this incredible imagery – is the basis for the 'Looking Glass Wars' trilogy."

*The Looking Glass Wars* became somewhat of a scandalous sensation in the U.K. when it debuted there in 2004 and revealed how Lewis Carroll, author of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, had willfully misrepresented the story of seven-year-old Alyss Heart, betraying the exiled princess of Wonderland by turning her painful history into a fairytale, when, in fact, it is a dark and dangerous depiction of familial treachery, thwarted love, and the despotic domination of imagination.



### What the process was like for you in getting the book published?

Initially, frustrating but after being rejected by a number of publishers in the US I found a home at Egmont Books in London. After LGW's success with the British edition I was able to interest Penguin in doing the trilogy.

**Before becoming a successful novelist, you met with success in other fields as well. Would you mind talking a little about your background?**

I was a pro freestyle skier when I first worked in Hollywood doing some stunt work in films. The experience was a good one and I stayed to do some acting and then some producing. In 1998 I produced *There's Something About Mary*.

After the success of the film I formed Automatic Pictures to develop creative properties. I put a bunch of projects into development but at the same time was coming to realize that, as a producer, you're a facilitator for the creative team, but what I really wanted to be was a creator. Once that seed had been planted in my mind, it was impossible to shake it loose and I started writing.

**Are you or have you ever been a gamer? What has your gaming experience been like (board games, pen & paper RPGs, console & computer games, etc.)?**

With the exception of HALO I have not played many console or computer games. My gaming roots go back a little further (several thousand years) to GO, a game I've always been fascinated by. So much so, in fact, that the LGW card game is based on the same surrounds and conquers game play as GO. My other game experience occurred when I was approached as a producer by Hasbro to develop a film based on Monopoly. I created a pitch and attached Ridley Scott to direct. The film has not gone into production yet but every now and then I read something about it in the trades. We'll have to wait and see what happens.

**Have you ever ventured into online worlds? If so, please explain what that experience has been like.**

One of my initial experiences with online worlds occurred when I wanted to build a web presence for LGW. Most of the sites that authors presented lacked the stickiness I wanted to create for my readers. This is when I discovered sites like Neopets, Gaia Online, Habbo Hotel and some of the larger communities like EVE and WoW. These were amazing, highly interactive communities and I was inspired to create something similar for my fans.

**Speaking of online worlds, you've created an MMO based on your Looking Glass Wars series. Would you mind talking a little bit about the game and explaining what the experience of creating it was like?**

Daunting. I worked with my friend and author PJ Haarsma. We came up with the idea in my backyard, but neither of us had any experience. We simply jumped in and started creating our worlds. [RingsofOrbis.com](http://RingsofOrbis.com) was the guinea pig based on PJ's book series The Softwire, followed by my game [CardSoldiersWars.com](http://CardSoldiersWars.com). The games quickly developed a life of their own, each with an insatiable appetite for our time and attention. Despite the work it has been very rewarding. I don't know of any other authors that have online games that allow readers to interact inside their worlds on a daily basis.

In CSW, players pledge allegiance to a suit and then create an army of card soldiers. The most powerful army wins the honor of placing their queen on the throne. Players interact with each in a PBBG format while immersed in the story line of my novels.

**Would you say you were inspired by other games in its development?**

I was inspired by the sense of community these games create. I wanted a place where fans could hang out between my books and interact with the massive universe that I had created for LGW. My world is so much larger than what lies between the pages of my books and the game provided an amazing format to share more stories.



**You've mentioned you are trying to keep up with technology and your website is certainly a testament to that. I managed to get lost in there for quite some time (a good thing, mind you). What do you have in store for future additions to the site?**

There's always something coming. One thing that might interest your readers is we are adding player vs. player COMBAT to the Card Soldier Wars so things will be heating up over there. Also, we are expanding our avatar customization with a lot more uniforms and costumes so you can really trick out your avatars.

I am also planning to add a full on website for Hatter M that will feature the Hatter M Institute for Paranormal Travel. Since the Institute is responsible for tracking Hatter's 13-year quest via maps, journals, photographs etc. there is a lot of fun to be had with it as well as a lot of information that readers can investigate on their own. I would like it to be a sort of website homage to the famous cutaway art of the Baxter Building so visitors will have a physical sense of entering the Institute and exploring the various departments as well as meeting the hardworking, eclectic staff. Check out [this link](#) if you haven't seen the Baxter art.

**Back to writing. Is grind involved in the writing process? Please explain.**

Yes. Writing is work. Work is grind. You don't always feel like doing it. It can be frustrating and days can go by where nothing great is happening on the page. But then you get a breakthrough, a thread of something starts to pop and you lose all common consciousness and are just in the flow. That's usually when you get a stiff neck because you totally forgot to move your head for 5 hours. Basically, I think most people would agree that grind is involved in just about anything worth doing.

**By contrast, what would you say is one of the most rewarding things about being a writer?**

Two things have equal power. Sensing, knowing that you got it right. And having a reader come up to you, eyes all wide and excited, telling you they stayed up all night to finish your book.

**When do you find time to write?**

I just make time. I try to write as much by longhand in a notebook as I can so I never go to the computer and stare at a blank screen for 2 hours...wasting time loading pics on facebook and googling my own name...etc.. I've always got something sketched in and ready to try. Additionally, I set page quotas and deadlines and I

meet them. It's the only way I can do it. I can't wait for the mood to hit or the planets to line up.



**What current writing projects are you working on?**

With the Looking Glass Wars trilogy completed it's all about Royal Bodyguard Hatter M and his parallel story. Volume 2, *Mad with Wonder*, is available October 15 and I am working to have Volume 3, *The Nature of Wonder*, debut at the San Diego Con in July 2010. I have planned two more volumes so the full arc of Hatter's search will be told in 5 volumes.

**How do you tend to escape these days?**

I close my eyes.

**Would you have any words of advice for the would-be-writers out there?**

Well...I never really took anybody's advice about writing so I guess I would just have to say go for it. See what you can do.

**Is there anything else you'd like to share with this gamer/reader audience?**

On October 15th, ArchEnemy the final book in my trilogy and *Hatter M: Mad With Wonder* will be available wherever books are sold, hope you enjoy them!

Also, the Looking Glass Wars Card Game will go live on October 15th as well. I hope your gamers will deal themselves into the deck.

[Here is the link](#) to sign up.