



## We're All Mad Here

Lowdown by Fletch Adams,  
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*On December 7th, something will pass through the looking glass into our world. Frank Beddor, producer of There's Something About Mary, introduces a 4-part mini-series called Hatter M: The Looking Glass Wars to North American audiences. The series, or Geo-Graphic Comic as Beddor refers to it, is actually an extension of Beddor's Looking Glass Wars novel, currently available in the UK only. This past weekend, Beddor stopped by to talk about both his comic and novel which details the true story of Alice in Wonderland.*

### **BROKEN FRONTIER: What are The Looking Glass Wars and how does Hatter M relate to it?**

**FRANK BEDDOR:** The comic book mini-series (Geo-Graphic Comic Volume 1) Hatter M tells the parallel story of Alyss [Heart]'s 13-year exile through the travels of her Royal Bodyguard, Hatter Madigan. Hatter crisscrosses the globe in a desperate non-stop search to find the lost princess after they are separated in the Pool of Tears while escaping a bloody coup in Wonderland.

For those unfamiliar with the first book of the Looking Glass Wars trilogy, the bigger story reveals the true history of Wonderland based upon a stunning discovery which unmasked the ultimate literary lie, a twisted fabrication that had existed for nearly 150 years. While universally accepted that Lewis Carroll was inspired to write his classic children's books to entertain 7-year-old Alice Liddell, it is far from true. Lewis Carroll did not tell Alice Liddell the story of Wonderland, she told him! Alice was not born into the Liddell family, she was adopted. Her true



identity was Alyss Heart, the future Queen of Wonderland. Lewis Carroll had changed everything and everyone including the identity of her royal bodyguard.

Hatter M is not the story of a Mad Hatter. Hatter Madigan is an expert bladesman, a ranking High Cut of the Wonderland Millinery and not the tea guzzling madman of children's lit. Aggressively focused on the one purpose in his life, Hatter's search for Alyss commences immediately and continues incessantly leaving the whispers and totems of myth in the wake of his non-stop quest.

Hatter M is a classic, archetypal comic book hero with his angst, his loss, his barely suppressed rage as he searches the world. Also, by doing Hatter M as a comic book series, I am able to connect to and expand upon the universe of The Looking Glass Wars as it was introduced in Book 1 and as it will continue in Books 2 and 3. So, for those fans of the series in the UK and other countries who have read Book 1, the comic is a great way to deepen, enhance, and bridge the world. Of course, since LGW Book 1 will not be available in the States until next year, Hatter M's adventures will be what introduces American readers to the LGW universe. It's a total reversal—but the bridge will be there for anyone wanting to experience more of the world.

### **BF: Who is at war in The Looking Glass Wars?**

**FB:** There have always been wars in Wonderland as the powers behind White and Dark Imagination have struggled for control. The civil war that sent Princess Alyss Heart fleeing through the Pool of Tears to safety in our world erupted over succession to the Wonderland throne. Alyss' mother, Queen Genevieve, ruled Wonderland but her elder sister, Redd, believed the throne belonged to her. Civil war raged between the sisters for several years before Redd's bloody coup killed both Alyss' parents and left Redd to rule Wonderland until Alyss could return to claim the throne.



## **BF: What inspired you to create The Looking Glass Wars?**

**FB:** A number of years ago, I was in London for the European premiere of *There's Something About Mary*. One afternoon, I went to the British Museum and saw an exhibit of ancient cards. For instance, Napoleon hired artists to hand paint depictions of his many victories in battle. But what caught my attention, at the very end of the exhibit, was an incomplete deck of cards illuminated by an unusual glow, almost as though they were alive. I was intrigued by the exhibit and captivated by the images on the cards. This was a much darker version of Wonderland.

For the remainder of my trip, I was preoccupied with the images and told several friends, one of whom suggested I meet with an antiques dealer he knew who specialized in collecting all sorts of ancient playing cards.

The next morning, on the way to the airport, I stopped at the dealer's shop. When I told him about the unusual exhibit, he revealed that he in fact owned the cards missing from the deck. I was stunned. He brought out this old, worn leather box filled with cards and told me the story as he flipped one card over at a time, revealing the saga of *The Looking Glass Wars*. It was a darker *Alyss* from a darker world and I knew I was meant to tell the story.

## **BF: Who is Hatter Madigan?**

**FB:** This is NOT the story of a Mad Hatter. Hatter Madigan is absolutely unique, an incredibly complex, tortured, stubborn, emotional grown-up hero. The only visual connection to the Mad Hatter in Lewis Carroll's work or the Disney film is the iconic Hat. But in Hatter M's case, the Hat is much more than some identifying headwear – it is his signature weapon. While formidable with blades, his true expertise is with the Hat. Woven and blocked from a material not available in any realm except the origins of wonder, the Hat was awarded to young Hatter upon his graduation from the Millinery. The Hat, when hurled by his expert hand, instantly unfolds into a circle of polished blades to attack or defend. Carnage accomplished, the blades retract and the Hat boomerangs back to its master.

Coming from Wonderland, Hatter must learn to navigate our world. Since Wonderland's language consists of a system of



energy and rhythm, Hatter faces no language barriers and is able to transmute and translate everything from Zulu to dolphin as he crisscrosses the globe in search of *Alyss*. But while he begins his search intent upon the single purpose of finding the lost princess, he gradually comes to discover that his travels have a purpose above and beyond this initial motivation and

that purpose is to protect and serve Imagination. As revealed in *The Looking Glass Wars*, Wonderland's great gift to our world is Imagination. As a traveler from the source of all wonder, Hatter will continually find himself facing off against those who wish to either suppress Wonderland's gift or channel the flipside of Dark Imagination for their own diabolical use. This discovery and service to humanity will act upon Hatter and his own humanity as he continues to develop throughout the series.

**BF: Which other Lewis Carroll characters will readers encounter in Hatter M?**

**FB:** After my discovery of the cards in the British Museum and the true story behind Lewis Carroll's Wonderland books, I began putting all the pieces together and weaving the revelations of just how different the real Wonderland and its inhabitants were compared to the children's lit version the world had known and accepted for nearly 150 years.



Carroll's choices in how he changed Alyss' story were so fascinating (he even changed her name!) – the monsters and heroes of her lost world became these cheery reinventions. It was such a betrayal on Carroll's part and was in fact, the reason for the rift that eventually occurred between the writer and his muse. For instance – the characters we know as the White Rabbit, the Red Queen, the Cheshire Cat and of course, the Mad Hatter all appear in *The Looking Glass Wars* as they were intended to by Alyss when she told Carroll her harrowing tale. The White Rabbit was in fact Bibwit Harte, the six-foot albino royal tutor for all Wonderland Queens (Carroll had anagrammed his name to create the White Rabbit), while the Red Queen was in truth Alyss' aunt Redd, the revenge maddened usurper to the throne ably assisted by her top assassin, The Cat, a mansize feline who morphs from adorable kitten to giant mutant feline when called upon to kill.

So you see, there is a lot of truth to be uncovered. I felt I owed it to Alyss.

**BF: Thinking of people who are familiar with either the source material or the Disney version of Alice in Wonderland, what do you think would be the biggest differences they will find in your Wonderland?**

**FB:** The world. For the first time readers will get to experience the full-on Wonderland. A complex, vibrant, architecturally extreme world. Its hierarchies, politics, and people. A place fully imagined and revealed. Geography and history, arts and rebellions, this is Wonderland's debut.

**BF: What comes after Looking Glass Wars Book 1 and Hatter M?**

**FB:** We have two more comic book mini-series planned to complete our trilogy of 'Geo-Graphic' Novels. Rather than graphic novels, we've been playing with the idea of calling them Geo-Graphic Novels since the adventures are broken up geographically and follow specific maps for each volume.



The first volume tracks Hatter through Europe, the second follows Hatter's journey aboard the HMS Christina to South America, but the ship is attacked by Chinese pirates and Hatter finds himself on San Francisco's Barbary Coast about to embark on a search for Alyss that will take him across the battlefields of the Civil War to a historically suppressed meeting with President Abraham Lincoln. And the third volume will find Hatter in the Far East where he reunites with a fellow Millinery Man.

I am planning another comic series featuring Queen Redd—the main villain of the Looking Glass Wars. I've always been intrigued by the fact that every villain considers themselves the hero of their own story. So I would like to explore Redd from this angle—from her perspective—as she rages against Alyss, vanquishes Wonderland and sends Dark Imagination on to other worlds. Besides, villains are the most fun to write.

**BF: How did Ben Templesmith come to be involved with Hatter M? What does he bring to the project?**

**FB:** I'm a big fan of 30 Days of Night, so I called him and pitched the character of Hatter M and he got into it.

Initially, I was attracted to Ben's use of color and how he conceptualized his characters. I liked what he had done in 30 Days of Night and saw that he had the ability to do horror, which occasionally pops up in Hatter's fantastical journey. But it was all luck and intuition that really brought me to Ben. Since working with him, I have discovered his sense of humor and this is coming out more and more. It's not all shadows and solitude for Hatter—much of who and what he encounters is bizarre, twisted and funny. Ben's art nails it every time.



**BF: Considering your background in the film industry, do you have any plans to bring the Looking Glass Wars to the big screen?**

**FB:** I've adapted The Looking Glass Wars into a script and currently am meeting with directors, but my real priority is finishing the trilogy and getting the books out before I push too hard on the film side.

**BF: What sort of reaction are you hoping to get from a person that reads Hatter M?**

**FB:** Addiction.

**BF: When can people who enjoy Hatter M expect to find The Looking Glass Wars book in North American bookstores?**

**FB:** The book will be published through Dial Books, a division of the Penguin Group, in September 2006. There is a book extract currently available on [www.lookingglasswars.com](http://www.lookingglasswars.com). There's also a trailer for the novel.