



CBR News **THE COMIC WIRE**



BEDDOR BRINGS "THE LOOKING GLASS WARS" TO COMICS WITH A NEW ORIGINAL MINI-SERIES

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In 1998 the movie "There's Something About Mary" took the world by storm. The wildly popular film was one of the biggest hits of that summer with everyone commenting on the, well, most unfortunate incidents star Ben Stiller found himself in. One of the producers of that film was Frank Beddor, who's since written the novel "[The Looking Glass Wars](#)." The book is Beddor's take on the classic "Alice in Wonderland" story by Lewis Carroll and is, obviously, as dramatically different from "There's Something About Mary" as you can get. The first part of "The Looking Glass Wars" trilogy was released last year, but this November Beddor brings his creation to comics with a new mini-series called "Hatter M: The Looking Glass Wars" from [Desperado Publishing](#) and [Image Comics](#). CBR News spoke with Beddor about his plans to bring his world to comics.



First off we need to catch you up on what exactly "The Looking Glass Wars" is. Beddor explained the idea came to him when he was in London for the European premiere of "There's Something About Mary." "I went to the British Museum and happened upon an exhibit of ancient cards," Beddor told CBR News. "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.'

"The true story of Wonderland based upon these cards unmasked the ultimate literary lie, a twisted fabrication that had existed for nearly 150 years. 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 -- exiled royalty fleeing a bloody coup, the future Queen of Wonderland. Lewis Carroll had changed everything.

"This is a darker Alyss for a darker world told through 'The Looking Glass Wars' trilogy and a trilogy of graphic novels."

Currently the novel is only available overseas, but news of an American publisher has finally arrived. After a fierce bidding war, Penguin/Dial Books has landed the publishing rights and will release the first book in the United States in the Fall of 2006. Regarding the comic, "Hatter M: The Looking Glass Wars" is a four-issue mini-series that tells an all new story that expands upon events that are just touched upon in the book. The first four issues of the series have already been written in collaboration with Liz Cavalier, whom Beddor has worked with for the last ten years at Beddor's Automatic Pictures. Handling the art chores on the series is Ben Templesmith ("30 Days of Night," "Fell").



We asked Beddor to run down the characters that inhabit this world he's built. We start with Alyss/Alice. "Born in Wonderland, destined to be a Warrior Queen-- not merely ceremonial-- but martial. After Redd's bloody coup kills her parents and topples the Heart regime, Alyss is exiled to Earth and arrives via portal in London. She is adopted into the Liddell family, re-named Alice and befriended by Lewis Carroll who transforms her lurid tales of Wonderland into his famous children's books. At age 20 she returns to Wonderland to claim her scepter, battle Redd and lead Wonderland into its next golden age of imagination.

"Redd - The heir to the throne until age 17, when her lack of respect for the laws and customs of Wonderland, and her continuously embarrassing the Heart Dynasty, forced her heirdom to be rescinded," explained Beddor. "She plotted and carried out the murder of her mother, and caused the emotional and mental decline of her father. She was defeated in battle with her sister, and banished to the provinces. She returned to Heart Palace twice, in attempts to wrest it from her sister. The second time, she succeeded. Wrapped in the scarlet cloak-- her snarled mane of vermilion hair flowing down her back. Skin pale. Evil? Yes. But also fascinating, complex and endlessly...imaginative. The feared outlaw Queen who still must deal with spoiled, inbred Royal Suits who demand her attention and favoritism. Redd rules Wonderland for 13 hellish years, reigning by fear, sapping all resources, crushing opposition.



"Hatter Madigan (Hatter M) - A descendent of a long line of assassins, founders of the Millinery. Part monastery, part boot camp, the dojo of the most elite fighting force in Wonderland, the Millinery is a secret police whose foremost responsibility is the safety of the Queen. As the star pupil, Hatter M was chosen as the personal bodyguard of Queen Genevieve. He fled with Alyss from the Heart Palace during Redd's coup, both escaping via the Pool of Tears to London where they were separated. The Hatter travels the Earth in a non-stop search for Alyss during her 13-year exile. Once Alyss is found and returned to Wonderland it is his duty to oversee her training and navigation of the Looking Glass Maze.

"The Cat - Redd's top assassin and Minister of Extermination-- part man and part feline-- a humanoid cat species with a particular shapeshifting power, can morph into either a cat or a man. Its natural state is a combination. Possesses 9 lives. The Cat was the deciding factor in Redd's overthrow of Heart Palace. He was the Trojan Horse, getting to Alyss in the shape of a kitten. Once inside, he disabled the Palace's security system, allowing Redd's mercenaries to arrive and enter undetected.

"Dodge - Son of Sir Justice Anders and childhood friend of Alyss. At 10 he watched his father die at the claws of The Cat, and swore vengeance. The scars on his face commemorate the day and are a permanent

reminder of his loss. He grows up to become a portal runner extraordinaire in the service of anarchy and sabotage against Redd's Rule. A determined vigilante who travels to London to successfully return Alyss to Wonderland. His passion is for revenge not love, but this resolve is tested when Alyss ignores the conventions of Queendom and opens her heart to him.

"Bibwit Harte - Royal Tutor for every Queen of Hearts going back for generations. An imperious but loving 6-foot albino with pale green veins pulsing beneath alabaster skin. Excellent hearing, swift body, razor wit. Can do six things at once, can predict what the Queen will say and follows orders to the letter. But his sensitivity makes him fragile, physically and emotionally. Being on the front line of a war wreaks havoc on him (comical havoc). His name is anagrammed by Lewis Carroll into 'White Rabbit.' Bibwit remains loyal to Queen Genevieve but is captured when Redd overthrows Wonderland. Acting as a 'double agent' he seemingly agrees to assist her but is in reality very active in helping the Alyssians. When discovered and about to be killed he escapes and joins the Alyssians in their attempt to restore Alyss to the throne."



As Beddor was writing the book he also worked with artists Doug Chiang and Brian Flora to create the visual look of world found in the novel. Seeing their artwork in finished form helped him shape the world found in "The Looking Glass Wars." From there he found inspiration in the exquisite glass blown artwork of [Dale Chihuly](#) as well as surrealist Salvador Dali. Other influences included 1950s German fashion designer [René Gruau](#) for the warrior gowns for the martial queens and the masquerade ball; Victorian art, literature and history, Allan Moore and "The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen"; and films like "The Matrix," "Star Wars" and "The Lord of the Rings."

As for bringing "The Looking Glass Wars" to comics, Beddor said it seemed like a necessary, organic progression from the artists he worked with on the novel. "So much art had been created-- there had been so much collaboration with artists, but the work wasn't used in the actual book-- by creating comics I am not only collaborating but showcasing the artists I work with.



"In 'The Looking Glass Wars,' Hatter M was introduced, but his story was only explored for about 4 chapters-- there was so much more to tell about his mad search for the lost queen that I realized he needed his own forum-- and comic books would allow this dark, compelling, more mature story to be told best. 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 one and as it will continue in books two and three. So, for the fans of book one of 'The Looking Glass Wars,' this is a great way to deepen, enhance, and bridge the world they were first introduced to in book one."

"The Looking Glass Wars" is planned as a trilogy that will see three novels released. The same is planned for the graphic novels, with three planned series to come. "Regarding parallel stories, Hatter M's search for the lost princess is set up in 'The Looking Glass Wars' book one, but not addressed in detail," explained Beddor. "His 13-year search for the lost princess sends him around the globe between the years 1859-1872, a fascinating time of discovery and innovation. It's an amazing opportunity to juxtapose a hero from Wonderland with the excitement of the mid- to late-19th century

"Two years were spent in world creation, generating a bible of history, characters, lineage, biology,

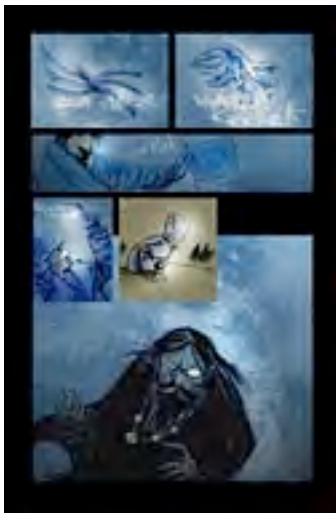
weaponry, environments, logic, even foods to help fuel the creativity."

Beddor went on to explain that future stories will find readers following Hatter M in his travels around the world, one finding him traveling through Asia and another finds him in the middle of the American Civil War. There's also been some discussion of a prequel which would tell the story of the Wonderland Queens Genevieve and Redd as young girls-- two sisters and one crown-- a story which would lead to the coup in book 1.

As we mentioned previously, Beddor is joined on "Hatter M" by artist Ben Templesmith, best known for his renderings of worlds filled with vampires like the "30 Days of Night" series. Beddor was a big fan of that book and pitched the character of Hatter M to him, which Beddor says Templesmith got instantly. "Ben is the genesis artist for the look of the 'Hatter M' series," said Beddor. "He is fantastic, perfect for the character/story/era, and I hope to have a long association with him."



But what is it about "Alice in Wonderland" that has made this such a compelling world for Beddor to explore? He admits as a young boy he initially hated "Alice in Wonderland," finding the tea parties and the little girl in a blue dress quite, well, boring. "'The Looking Glass Wars' is my revenge," explained the writer.



"My grandmother's name was Alice and the book was a favorite of both her and my mother," continued Beddor. "When I was 10-years-old and it was 90 degrees outside and everyone else was swimming, my mother decided she and I should read the book together. Not the best introduction to Wonderland and I did not enjoy the experience-- little did I know what the future held.

"I came to appreciate 'Alice in Wonderland' having rediscovered it as an adult-- the wit and imagery and imagination-- v ery inspiring."

Beddor is excited about joining the world of comics, having a great respect for the artists and fans, and sees comics as a great outlet to tell his stories the way he wants to tell them. "There are a lot of stories I would like to tell-- a lot of artists and writers I would like to work with. I'm excited by the new worlds and realms to be explored; it's all very thrilling."

As for the future, Beddor does have plans for books outside of "The Looking Glass Wars" well down the line, but right now he's focused on this series. "At the moment I'm deep into writing Book 2 of 'The Looking Glass Wars' trilogy entitled 'Seeing Redd' and along with everything else going on I cannot see outside of this world right now."