

by Randy Lander

SPOTLIGHT ON MORE FIRST ISSUES**THE LOOKING GLASS WARS: HATTER M #1**

by Frank Beddor, Liz Cavalier & Ben Templesmith (Image Comics/Desperado)

Though Oz and Wonderland have been public domain for some time, it seems that both have sparked in the minds of comics creators of late, with a number of Oz, Wonderland or both projects coming down the pike. *The Looking Glass Wars: Hatter M* is somewhat different, having spun off from a novel that Frank Beddor wrote, one that seems to posit a more militaristic land beyond the Looking Glass, with Alice as existing royalty rather than normal girl visiting. The actual content of the novel is somewhat irrelevant to those reading *Hatter M*, however, as the story is pretty accessible, and makes clear the important parts of the setting in both a text piece at the beginning of the book and in the comic story itself.

The tone of the book is odd, almost comedic at times but featuring a large amount of violence and a somewhat trippy premise. I think it may not be for traditional fans of the *Alice in Wonderland* saga, but more for fans of off-to-the-side-of-reality storytelling like *The Maxx*. Actually, it kind of reads like what *The Maxx* would have been like had it been done in the style of the movie *The Last Boy Scout*, if you can imagine that kind of bizarre pairing. The Hatter is a deadly soldier who makes his way through 19th century France, wielding blades with supernatural accuracy and trying to find his errant hat in what is a (hopefully intentionally) somewhat comedic throughline. The actual story doesn't make an emotional connection with me, but the wild ideas and supreme action skills of the Hatter are certainly entertaining.

Ben Templesmith is one of those "love him or hate him" artists, and I fall into both camps, depending on the project. His work here is closer to the work he's done on *Fell*, which means I generally like it, but I do think that *Hatter M* would have been a stronger project if it had featured someone who made the story a touch clearer. Some elements of the story, including the Hatter's emergence from a puddle on the street or the exact nature of his blades and his hat, are obscured by Templesmith's moody, gothic storytelling style, although there can be no denying that this style does perfectly fit the project in general. Basically, if you're enjoying Templesmith's work on *Fell*, you'll probably like it here, although he doesn't seem as perfectly suited to *Hatter M* as he does to *Fell*.

