



Hatter M: The Looking Glass Wars #1



Published By: **Image Comics**

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Artist: **Ben Templesmith**

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Like the intro states, put aside what ever preconceived notions you may have about the fairytale Alice in Wonderland. The bedtime story your parents read to you was nothing but a farce and a pathetic embellishment of the truth presented to everyone by the Lewis Carroll Society. The filthy whores fabricated the entire thing in an attempt to cover up the true reasons behind the Hatter's madness. Now at long last, the team of Frank Beddor, Liz Cavalier, and Ben Templesmith shall expose the truth. Prepare yourself though, this account is a far cry from the acid-trip-gone-wrong that was Alice in Wonderland.

Princess Alyss (yeah that Alice. Those bastards at the Society couldn't even get her name right) is missing in a strange land and separated from her bodyguard - Hatter Madigan. They have both fallen through a hole in space-time and have landed in Paris, circa 1859. Hatter must now risk life and limb to find the princess at all costs, but first he must find his hat. After all, he wouldn't be the Mad Hatter without it. Guess I should mention that this is not your typical hat. In the hands of Hatter it transforms into a deadly, razor sharp boomerang. The quest for the hat leads Hatter Madigan on a strange, murderous journey that takes him through the Paris court system, local hat makers, an underground freak show, and lastly a train. As Hatter's body count rises, you begin to see the false story that is Alice in Wonderland take shape. Hatter, when viewed through the eyes of the people around him, would certainly qualify as mad, but in actuality he's anything but.

Hatter M quickly and seductively ensnares the mind, luring it into the world that Hatter finds himself desperately searching for his lost princess in. From the opening intro to the last page, Beddor and Cavalier give you the form of escapism you typically come searching for when reading comics. I really enjoyed the conspiracy theory aspect of the story that was introduced. What could have been

a cheesy plot device, becomes an original take and something that propels the entire story. Beddor and Cavalier also do a great job in establishing the character of Hatter Madigan. They give you a character that is very polite towards others, but is quick to get all "off with their heads" on others if threatened. His care for the princess is clearly shown and the dude is going to do everything he can to return with her to Wonderland.

My only complaint is that the reader is just dumped into the middle of things. After the intro, we see a bewildered Hatter just arriving in Paris. No explanation as to how he or Alyss got there or why. (Bad 'shrooms perhaps?) I just could not shake the feeling that I was missing part of the story. Yes, other titles do this sort of thing all the time and if done right will make the book even stronger, but with Hatter M it was a bit different. It does add a chaotic element to the tale, so I'm willing to forgive it, but I'm reserving the right to raise high holy hell if I keep having this feeling throughout the rest of the story.

Since the first issue of Ben Templesmith and Warren Ellis' *Fell* hit the stands, I have been searching my gray matter to find out who the guy reminds me of. I had never heard of Templesmith before *Fell*, but kept having this feeling that I had seen his work before. Finally, like a million watt light bulb going off in a pitch-black room, I remembered. Templesmith's work reminds me of long time Hunter S Thompson sidekick Ralph Steadman. Ben and Ralph both share that over exaggerated distorted view of people and the landscape. Like Steadman, Templesmith has a simple elegance to his work that you begin to believe that, through his art, you are peering into the true souls of the people depicted on the page, however warped they may be. Add that to a clever use of the color pallet and it makes for a much needed departure from the norm. He not only builds the world that Beddor and Cavalier write, but he brings the dark, dank, chaotic, confusion of that world to your doorstep.

War is coming. You don't want to be on the other side of the looking glass for this one. Forget what you think you might know about the story of Alice in Wonderland; Beddor, Cavalier, and Templesmith are doing their best to dispel the hack job Lewis Carroll has been spewing for years - and they are doing it from on high. Let this become the true bedtime story you tell your little rug rats.