



LINE OF FIRE REVIEWS

Sunday Slugfest - Hatter M: The Looking Glass Wars #2

Posted: Tuesday, March 14

By: Keith Dallas

Writers: Frank Beddor and Liz Cavalier

Artist: Ben Templesmith

Publisher: Image

EDITOR'S NOTE: The second issue of *Hatter M* will be in stores tomorrow, March 15.

Average Rating:



John Hays:

Shaun Manning:

Judson Miers:

Kevin Noel Olson:



John Hays



This issue begins with what appears to be an ancient text, detailing how Hatter has come to be where he is. In it we learn of the queen's vile fate at the hands of her hag sister, and how Hatter is in search of her daughter, the princess Alyss. We are then brought back to the present, relatively speaking, where Hatter finds himself in yet another new setting. In this case, though, he is not the only one from Wonderland. Just when Hatter thinks he's found his princess, the girl is kidnapped by gypsies while Hatter must contend with...a monkey! No really, a monkey, with sharp, pointy teeth! Hatter then arrives a wee bit too late to rescue the girl, but makes an ally in his quest.

I like this story. I can't quite place my finger on why, but just something about the combination of the art and the mystery of the story, how it just...ends...with no answers...it draws me in. I also like how the writers are interweaving famous characters into the story, but not necessarily identifying them until later, as was the case here with Jules Verne. He appeared in the first issue, but we did not find out his identity until reading the letter at the end of this issue.

The art continues to intrigue me. It's quite unlike regular comic fare, instead evoking a sense of... well..., wonder, for lack of a better word. I feel like I am inside a classic painting, but in this case the painting is telling a story around me. If I have any suggestion, it might be to allow Templesmith to go even further with his creativity, and break out of the standard boxes used in comic art. I wouldn't mind seeing oddly shaped boxes that work toward providing the most gripping images possible for the story.

I definitely recommend this title to anyone looking for something outside of the usual comic fare. The only similarities to the classic Alice are the names. This tale is destined to follow a different path, its own path, and that's a good thing.



Shaun Manning



The search for Princess Alyss of Wonderland takes bodyguard Hatter Madigan to Budapest, where he witnesses a violin concert by a child prodigy radiant with imagination. Is this Alyss? To find out, Hatter will have to rescue the girl from a band of gypsies, and also the Hungarian royals.

Given that in Frank Beddor's novel, *The Looking Glass Wars*, it takes Hatter more than a decade to finally locate Alyss, it stands to reason that his adventures between his exile from Wonderland and his triumphant return would be varied and diverse. This is where the comic comes in, filling in the gaps. It is rather interesting, though, that while issue #2 seems to bear only the slightest connection to the preceding comic, this one ends with a cliffhanger suggesting that further escapades will be intimately linked. In tone and narration, too, the second issue differs greatly from the first: #1 was very sparse on text, and seemed to favor an abstract and whimsical mood; #2 features considerably more dialogue and captions, and is much more direct in its action. Perhaps as Hatter spends more time in the world, he becomes more grounded, acclimating to his surroundings by adopting the seriousness of our world. That's not to say this issue is devoid of good-hearted silliness, since there are some fun scenes with a monkey cursing in translation and a gun that can harness sunlight.

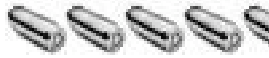
There are some surprises here, too, for fans of the novel—a previously unseen race of beings set in opposition to Wonderland's millinery, and two mysterious sisters who appear trapped in the reflective surfaces of our world. The sisters, in particular, are an interesting development, as Cassandra figures are always fascinating.

Templesmith works with a palette of dark, brooding colors, the blended duotone background permeating the souls of characters on stage.

As a nineteenth-century globetrotter, Hatter Madigan is a fascinating lead, as his obliquely-mentioned adventures in *Looking Glass Wars* give him an enormous depth of stories. The first two issues have been grand, and I am very much looking forward to seeing to where he lands next.



Judson Miers



The Backstory: Everything you knew about Wonderland and Alice is completely wrong! It seems that Lewis Carroll took the tales that Alyss (see how he's already messed up the story?!?!) and refashioned the true tales from Wonderland into the farce that has been published. The Queen of Hearts' sister launched a bloody coup from the outlands surrounding Wonderland. It was only the quick thinking of the royal bodyguard, Hatter M (improperly

known as the Mad Hatter), who was able to save Princess Alyss by jumping into the Pool of Tears and traveling to our universe.

The Happenings This Issue: Hatter M has found his way back to Wonderland to discover that The Hag (Alyss' aunt and sister to the rightful Queen of Hearts) believes Alyss to be dead. Hatter has come back through the Pool of Tears into our world with a renewed conviction to find Alyss. Arriving in Budapest, he becomes entangled with a plot to kidnap and sacrifice a young violin prodigy who looks strikingly like Alyss. It seems that there are those within our world and from Wonderland who feed off of imagination, and they don't like each other!

The Critique:

I am totally hooked on *The Looking Glass Wars* stories. In fact, I was sent an advance copy of the book (that will be released in the US later this year), and the whole history of Wonderland is something I'm going to keep reading! As for the Templesmith's artwork, I just really don't dig it. I like his framing, his action sequences, but just not the actual artwork itself. It has the dream-like quality of Jae Lee with much softer and cartoonish visuals.

Kevin Noel Olson



The second book of *Hatter M: The Looking Glass Wars* finds the millenary madman trapped in a world of waning imagination. His young charge, Princess Alyss, is lost, and he must search the world that continues to sap his Wonderland-born abilities. Utilizing an expertise at knives, he confronts and is confronted by strange aggressors, including a knife-wielding monkey. (Who hasn't had *that* dream?) A female reporter follows the intriguing Hatter M as he seeks to rescue a child of imagination kidnapped by a creature of the night and a baroness who wants the child in her control.

With the imaginative story by Frank Beddor and Liz Cavalier and the mind-bogglingly cool artwork of Ben Templesmith, *Hatter M: The Looking Glass Wars* is a worthy entry into the world of madness and imagination. Hats off to the *Hatter M* creative team-well worth the price of a hat!