



The Looking Glass Wars **by Frank Beddor**

I don't normally write book reviews and I have no intention of heading off in this direction too often, but "The Looking Glass Wars" inspired me enough to share my enthusiasm. Frank Beddor's book takes the premise of Lewis Carroll's "Alice in Wonderland" adventures and stands it on its head. Essentially, what Beddor does is re-imagine Carroll's fantasies as the true adventures of a young girl named Alyss (Carroll even got the name wrong, apparently!), a princess who lives in an alternate universe called Wonderland.

As the book opens, she is the heir apparent about to celebrate her seventh birthday, but is forced to make an escape when her evil aunt murders her parents and lays claim to the throne. Fleeing through a 'looking glass,' Alice is deposited in mid-18th century England, where she is soon relating her tales to an opportunistic English writer named Reverend Charles Dodgson (whose nom-de-plume –in reality –is Lewis Carroll).

While it is not necessary to know Carroll's work to enjoy "The Looking Glass Wars", it certainly would add to the reader's awareness of Beddor's humor. Throughout the book, he utilizes characters from Carroll's work in amusingly re-imagined forms; Here, the White Rabbit is a seven-foot tall albino tutor named Bibwit Harte (just unscramble the letters a bit and there you go). The Cheshire cat is actually a mercenary fighting for the evil Redd, who represents the wicked Queen of Hearts. The Mad Hatter is a loyalist named Hatter Madigan, who searches the Earth for Alice so he may return her to Wonderland and help her to regain the throne.

The innately clever underpinning of Beddor's book is how he can gently poke fun at Carroll's work, by making his fantastical descriptions and flights of fancy as a basis for Alyss' reality. The staid, gray world of Victorian England stands in remarkable contrast to the rainbow hues of Wonderland, and the plot manipulations are consistently amusing. While I can't say for sure, it seems quite likely that "The Looking Glass Wars" will one day be a movie, especially since Beddor has previous film credits (as producer of 'There's Something About Mary'). My advice is to read the book before somebody does the visualization for you, because imagining Wonderland for yourself is at least half of the fun.

Grade: 