

## Book/Comic-Book Review – ‘The Looking Glass Wars / Hatter M’

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### Reviewed by Nico

When I was asked to read *The Looking Glass Wars* and write up my thoughts, I'd tried to remember the last time I'd done that. Surely college, I guess. Unlike college, I can tell you, gentle review reader, that I actually finished this book in its entirety. Not only because I had to for proper reviewing, but rather because I wanted to see how it ended.

Remember a British bloke by the name of Lewis Carroll (pen name for the Reverend Charles Lutwidge Dodgson) and his book *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*? The story of that book's creation is often tied to Alice Liddell, its real-life inspiration. *The Looking Glass Wars* supposes that Carroll got it wrong, that Alice Liddell was really exiled Princess Alyss Heart, who narrowly escaped her wicked aunt Redd's bloody takeover of a very real Wonderland.

Lewis Carroll's imaginings were inspired by Alyss Heart's real life, except he took many unforgivable liberties.

Alyss's life was turned upside down on her seventh birthday when her jealous Aunt Redd (user of Black Imagination) captured her mother Genevieve's throne. Secreted away by royal bodyguard Hatter Madigan, both Alyss and Hatter slip into the Pool of Tears to escape certain death. Unfortunately, both a grip and a princess are lost. Alyss finds herself alone and unguarded in our world (Britain to be more exact), a world without the brilliant power of imagination that she's used to. As Alyss grows up and starts to doubt her childhood's reality, the Hatter literally searches the globe for her, creating a myth in his wake. Back in Wonderland, things collapse under Redd's tyrannical rule and Alyss's childhood friend Dodge joins up with the resistance in the hope of avenging the death of his father at the hands (or paws, as it were) of Redd's assassin, the Cat. The first two-thirds of the book are split into three stories thusly: Alyss's life in the "real world", Hatter's quest to find and protect her, and Dodge's life with the Wonderland resistance. I will let the clever children among you think up what the final third could be.

Frank Beddor's work here is a fun ride of reinvention and I can see why it would be courted for a trip to the big screen. Every character we're familiar with has a new spin, with Hatter and the Cat getting the most revision with a dash of cool. There are many Wonderland characters that don't get this treatment and make an appearance. I'll just assume that's why this is only book one of a trilogy. The mingling of details from Carroll's work and the real world mingle cleverly in the story.

One thing I normally despise is the insistence that something is real. I remember a trip to Plymouth Plantation in my youth where I spent the entire time there trying to get a "colonial" to break character and talk about TV shows with me. I hate when someone won't give a wink and acknowledge and while the text associated with the book, specifically *Hatter M*, does just this, it didn't interfere with my reading.

*Hatter M* acts as a trailer/introduction to the world of *The Looking Glass Wars* and focuses on Hatter's thirteen-year search for Alyss. It allows the reader to get acquainted with the world of the novel and its numerous concepts, such as White Imagination and the Millenary order to which Hatter belongs. If you're not convinced enough to commit to *The Looking Glass Wars*, this is the taste that will tell you if it's to your liking. It's a perfect sampling and I'd recommend that people dip their feet in this pool before diving into the novel proper.

## FINAL WORDS

Give *Hatter M* a chance.

If you like it, you're a true follower of White Imagination and can move on to *The Looking Glass Wars*.

If you don't like it, then *The Looking Glass Wars* probably won't be your cup of tea either, merry un-birthday.

