

TEEN BOOK REVIEW

REVIEWS OF YOUNG ADULT/TEEN BOOKS.

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Review: *The Looking Glass Wars* by Frank Beddor

This book has popped up everywhere. I've seen it all over the place! For some reason, however, I haven't been too enthusiastic about reading it. I'm not sure why; it's the "true" story of Lewis Carroll's famous *Alice In Wonderland*, and I usually really like classic stories retold. But this one...it just didn't spark my interest. Then, I got an ARC in the mail, and figured, why not?, and read it.

Wow, am I ever glad I did! I absolutely loved this book. It kept my attention (and the final page count is over 350 pages--it's pretty long!) all the way through. I didn't just keep reading; I was completely absorbed. Every time I had to go do something else, I'd race through it as quickly as possible, just to get back to *The Looking Glass Wars*.

This is the story of Alyss Heart (Lewis Carrol, the horrid man, even misspelled her name!), the heir to the throne of the great queendom of Wonderland. All seems well on the morning of the princess' seventh birthday; she wishes her father could be there to celebrate with her, but he's hurrying back, and the queendom is celebrating in honor of Alyss.

Quickly, things go horribly, horribly wrong. Alyss' murderous, insane aunt Redd, long since exiled and passed over for the throne, chooses that morning to overthrow Alyss' mother, Queen Genevieve, and take control of Wonderland for herself. Genevieve is beheaded, Alyss' father murdered as well, and everyone loyal to them is dead or hunted by Redd's soldiers or her loyal, deadly assassin, the Cat.

Alyss herself flees through the Pool of Tears, a portal to a parallel world, with Hatter Madigan, her mother's bodyguard. However, the two are separated, and while Hatter Madigan ends up in France, searching for his charge, Alyss herself ends up in Victorian England, where she joins a ragtag group of homeless children. She uses her talents at imagining things into being to make money so the group can eat well, but, the longer she is away from Wonderland, her imagination grows weaker and weaker.

Eventually, she is taken off of the streets and adopted by the wealthy Liddell family. There, she is Alice Liddell, and Wonderland a children's story. Even the man she thought believed her, the Reverend Charles Dodgson, writes a book (under the

name Lewis Carroll) that horribly distorts her story. He makes light of her story, turning her tragedy into an amusing children's tale.

Back in Wonderland, the Alyssians, naming themselves after the princess whom they believe is dead, rebel against Redd's rule. Alyss' childhood friend Dodge Anders, her old tutor, and various others stay hidden in the forest, an active resistance against Redd. However, the evil queen grows stronger all the time, and they aren't sure they can beat her alone.

All hope is not lost; Alyss is not, as they believe, dead. They find out she is alive and well in England...But is she still the same person, heir to the throne of Wonderland, the one who can lead them against Redd? Or is she now completely and totally lost, to the character that is Alice Liddell?

Frank Beddor has created a brilliant, absorbing story. Sure, the pacing seems a little off; important things are rushed through sometimes, and unimportant things dragged on. And I did notice some awkwardness with the dialogue. Some of the characters should have been more fleshed-out as well.

With all of that going against it, what makes *The Looking Glass Wars* so amazing? That, while reading it, none of that seems to matter. This story goes beyond all of those little details, sucking you in completely from beginning to end. Even with those flaws, it still left me desperate for more of the story (thankfully, it'll be part of a trilogy).

Rating: 9/10

POSTED BY JOCELYN AT 5:34 PM