



Ratty ([blinger](#)) wrote in [50bookchallenge](#), @ [2009-11-02](#) 15:00:00

Book 27: The Looking Glass Wars III: Arch Enemy by Frank Beddor - 370 pages

My little synopsis: *With both Redd and Alyss imagination-less after the dropping of W.I.L.M.A by Boarderland's King Arch, the fight for the throne of Wonderland begins. While the Clubs' incite a coup against the dominance of imagination, General Doppelganger, Bibwit, Alyss and Dodge try and figure out a way to keep the crown on Alyss' head. Meanwhile, Hatter is forced to remove a depressed Molly from the situation altogether - much to her disgust. And just what the hell Arch, and Redd alike, is up to nobody knows...and bloody hell, you've just gotta read it!!!*

Firstly, I must say that I harrassed my beloved book website, www.bookdepository.co.uk for receipt of this book long before it had even been released. I've never been more excited for a book then I was for this one, and I took to ringing home every afternoon at 4 o'clock (when the mail comes!) to see if it had arrived. When it finally did turn up last Tuesday, I was so excited I almost couldn't pick it up to read it. I kissed it quite regularly, and did in fact tell my friend Natalie that it was more sacred than the Bible (Yes, I understand that this is totally inappropriate but I was REALLY excited!). Having said that, I think the best review I can provide you all with is the one I did on facebook just moments after closing its last page (I read it in five days - it would have been faster but I wanted to drag it out as long as possible, and also I have to work, and also I have an assignment to do). So, as it is excessively long and does feature a few revelations about the plot I have hidden my very excited review of Arch Enemy behind the below cut - please enjoy it...

In no uncertain terms, this is one of the most brilliant books ever written. I held little interest in Alice in Wonderland prior to discovering the first in this trilogy and now I adore it. But more so, I adore this story. The Looking Glass Wars is one of those rare gems of a story - funny, heart-breaking, joyous, poignant and real, a rare attribute for a fantasy novel. This conclusion to the trilogy had a lot to live up to - the first two books are brilliant and they had left Arch Enemy with a million loose ends to tie up. What will happen to imagination? Who will rule Wonderland: Arch, Redd or Alyss? Will Dodge ever kill the damn cat? Will Alyss and Dodge ever figure their relationship out? What will become of the tentative father/daughter relationship between Hatter and Molly? Will Bibwit ever shut up? Without giving anything away, Beddor answers these questions and a million more.

The story's brilliance lies in the fact that Wonderland is so richly imagined. The place names, the citizens, the food, the weaponry, the mythology and history of this fantasy place are all so clever. You truly believe that Wonderland might exist just on the other side of the stars. Moreover, the rich breadth of characters and their individual nuances are expertly crafted. You can understand Dodge's desire for revenge over the Cat but at the same time you're like 'Get over it, Dodge!' Alyss' torment as she struggles to be a just Queen is painful yet spot-on. Molly's struggle to accept both her newly discovered father, but more so, herself, is heartbreakingly real. Hatter struggling to be a father to a stubborn, mourning teenage is both funny and tragic. By the end of it, I even felt sorry for Redd - nothing justified her actions, but understanding a little of how she came to be who she is, helps build empathy

for a character I never thought I'd feel sorry for.

The other thing I love about this story is the strong female characters, both good and bad. It never feels as if Beddor is trying to imply anything by having a heroine, because one of the bad guys is a woman too. Nor does the character of Arch result in a all-out portrayal of men as misogynist, not when the remaining cast of men - Dodge, Bibwit, Hatter, General Doppelganger - are such good strong male characters. Wonderland's loyalty to the Queendom even when offered a Kingdom never feels fake or like its trying to make a point. Weak characters simply don't exist in this story, male or female, and those that manage to sneak in are very quickly chucked out. You feel as if you too could take on the world and win with a cast this brilliant.

Ultimately, Beddor has tied up matters so well, and yet weaved a story separate from LGW and Seeing Redd. Just when you think its all going to work out, Beddor throws a curveball at his audience, and yet in the end, somehow, you walk away with a grin the size of tomorrow feeling on top of the world, as if you've just saved the world. There are some fantastic morals wrapped up in an adventure that is as imaginative as its heroine.

One of the best books I've ever read - I would recommend it to anyone, fantasy-lover or not. It has given me a new respect for Alice in Wonderland, and inspired me more than I can say. I bow down to you, Mr. Beddor!