



September 19, 2006

Go Ask Alyss



When I was in eighth grade, I played on of the cards in our middle school production of Alice in Wonderland. I also happened to be the class clown and used the opportunity to be the most over-the-top card in the deck, i.e. doing things intentionally to screw up our carefully choreographed line. I never read the book, but like many teens, always loved the artwork and the general trippiness factor that seemed to go along with Lewis Carroll's classic. Caterpillars, hookahs, Tom Petty and that messed up video.

So when a publicist contacted me about the U.S. launch of Frank Beddor's reinterpretation of Alice in Wonderland called [The Looking Glass Wars](#), and asked if I wanted to do an interview and book give away, I jumped at the chance. The book has hit big in the UK and will be available here on September 26. Here's why I think this book seems fascinating from a Ypulse perspective (full disclosure: I haven't read it yet, but with my passion for Hobbits and non-muggles, I think I will adore it):

- 1) It's a YA book that will cross over because of its "adjunct" comic series Hatter M, which already has [geek cred](#)
- 2) It has tons of multi-media potential (just look at [the website](#)) -- plus it already has its own soundtrack and a theatrical adaptation is already in the works
- 3) It will appeal to both guys and girls. The guys will dig the dark fantasy comic aspect and girls will go for the strong heroine named "Alyss"

Newsletter readers come to the site to read the interview with Frank Beddor and to find out how you can win a free copy.

Here's the book's synopsis:

"Alyss Heart, heir to the Wonderland throne, was forced to flee through the Pool of Tears after a bloody palace coup staged by the murderous Redd. Lost and alone in Victorian London, Alyss is befriended by an aspiring author to whom she tells the violent, heartbreaking story of her young life only to see it published as the nonsensical Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. Alyss had trusted Lewis Carroll to tell the truth so that someone, somewhere would find her and bring her home. But Carroll had gotten it all wrong. He even misspelled her name! If not for royal bodyguard Hatter Madigan's nonstop search to locate the lost princess, Alyss may have become just another society woman sipping tea in a too-tight corset instead of returning to Wonderland to fight Redd for her rightful place as the Queen of Hearts."

And here's my interview with Frank Beddor, a Hollywood producer (There's Something About Mary) turned author:

Ypulse: How hard was it to write a young female character in your book? Where did you look for inspiration to create someone young readers would relate to?

Frank Beddor: What helped me the most in writing the character of Alyss was remembering the girls of my own childhood who were wild and creative and the most exciting to be around. There was always that little buzz around these girls...that they were somehow special and different and kinder and glowed a little brighter than the gray, anonymous masses. Everyone was attracted to these girls and I felt that if I could capture some of their complexity and fun and emotion as I imagined it to be then it would connect with young readers who presumably feel the same attraction for certain types of behavior and character as I did as a child.

YP: I noticed you have some experience in theater -- do you see a stage adaptation of this a la Wicked at some point?

FB: Yes. I am very excited to be adapting a musical entitled "Alyss of Wonderland." This feels particularly right after my extremely satisfying and imaginative experience producing the soundtrack for the book.

YP: What is the relationship of Hatter M to the Looking Glass Wars? Do the readers cross over? Has Hatter M made the Looking Glass Wars more

appealing to adult readers?

FB: As an adjunct to the novel, the comic book series Hatter M tells the parallel story of Alyss's 13-year exile through the travels of her Royal Bodyguard, Hatter Madigan as he crisscrosses the globe in a desperate non-stop search to find the lost princess after they are separated in the Pool of Tears while escaping the bloody coup in Wonderland. The Hatter M series has definitely driven readers – readers well beyond the Young Adult designation – to check out the origins of this mysterious Hat wielding character.

YP: I see you have a [MySpace page](#) and a fairly elaborate website...How involved were you in the development of your marketing strategy? How important to you think it is to have a strong web presence when you are writing for this generation of young readers?

FB: Deeply involved. My hunch of several years ago to really utilize the internet and build a great website to help tell the story of Alyss has been a huge boost to connecting and maintaining contact with my audience. It's really just a natural progression of exchange and entertainment that is hardly that remarkable given that younger readers have grown up with – perhaps even been helped in learning to read – by being on the internet.

YP: What is the biggest compliment you received from a young reader?

FB: The fan art and lit is always my favorite reaction from a young (or old) reader. The fact that they were inspired to go and write something based on LGW or create some fantastic drawing from something I've written is extremely exciting because it demonstrates the power of Imagination to inspire others.

YP: For all of the aspiring authors reading, describe your writing process?

FB: The process, once you have your idea, is relatively simple. Getting the idea, finding the story that you want to write – I think that's more of a personal challenge than a process. But once you have an idea and you are ready to write it I think it is important to get as much out as possible without any interruption of the flow. Images, characters, phrases, bits of plotting – pour it all out and then go back and start arranging it into a coherent form. Don't try to force form too soon – and then – once the form is there – that's when you re-write and polish. But that's just me. Everyone eventually finds the method that works best for them. It's part of being a writer.

YP: A lot of people think this generation of kids isn't reading (with the Internet and all the gadgets they're using). What's your take on this?

FB: "A lot of people" say a lot of things. I don't have a literacy poll in front of me so I have no idea of the figures and how they relate to pre-Internet reading levels etc but the fact is if a kid wants to read something they will as long as they have been taught the basic tools of comprehension which is about all teachers and parents can do. Teach them to read...and they will. If they want to. The kids I've met in the UK and here in the US seem to be very excited about books and reading AND the internet AND games AND movies. I don't think anything cancels anything else out if the kids are motivated and find something they are interested in reading.

YP: If you were to tackle re-imagining another classic, which one would it be and why?

FB: I doubt very much I would ever do this simply because stumbling upon the true story of an established literary classic probably will not happen twice in this lifetime. But now that you mention it I have had my doubts about the veracity of The Three Bears – there may very well have been FOUR. But don't get me started.

If you've read this far, you must want a free book. I have five copies to give away to the first five people who answer the same question I asked Frank in the comments:

If you were to re-imagine a classic, which one would it be and why?

Posted by anastasia