



Topic: FRANK BEDDOR & HATTER M, Don't Make Them Mad!

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BY JENNIFER "Ask Alice ..." CONTINO

Writer Frank Beddor thinks he's discovered the true story behind events that occurred in Wonderland and he's about to blow the lid off them in the upcoming **Hatter M** tale, based on **The Looking Glass Wars** novel. Just why does Hatter Madigan come to our world in search of Alyss? Beddor answers that and more ...

THE PULSE: Are you still acting, skiing, and bugged about your role as Victor on Remote Control?

FRANK BEDDOR: HELL-L-L-L-L-L-L-L-L NO! Most people who approach me bring up **Better Off Dead** and **Hotdog: The Movie**, you are the first to even mention **Remote Control** let alone the character's name. Have you actually seen it? How about that hairstyle?

THE PULSE: Heh, heh ... I like a lot of movies. So how do you go acting to producing movies like There's Something About Mary to writing a book like The Looking Glass Wars for Penguin Books?

BEDDOR: On a personal level, I was fortunate that I produced such a successful movie that allowed me some financial freedom. Separate from the financial freedom, I felt a little empty being a facilitator to the creators. I wanted to be a creator. I loved the juice of having a big movie and everybody laughing, everybody recognizing it, but at the end of the day being the creator is the ultimate wish fulfillment.

In a way, I kind of dropped out. Most people would have cashed out and done a whole series of comedies. I was offered a lot of comedies, none of them at the level of **There's Something About Mary**, a number of them I sold and moved along, but I would be disappointed by the outcome of the development process. While this was all sort of swirling around, I made the discovery of this story, of "The Looking Glass Wars" saga and I started to feel my inspiration. It started to become dream-like. Eventually I just dedicated myself to becoming a creator and not a facilitator.

THE PULSE: How did you discover this story? Where were you?

BEDDOR: A number of years ago I was in London for the European premiere of **There's Something About Mary**. One afternoon, I went to the British Museum and saw an exhibit of ancient playing cards. For instance, Napoleon hired artists to hand paint depictions of his many victories in battle. But what caught my attention, at the very end of the exhibit, was



an incomplete deck of cards illuminated by an unusual glow, almost as though they were alive. I was intrigued by the exhibit and captivated by the images on the cards. This was a much darker version of Wonderland.



For the remainder of my trip I was preoccupied with the images and told several friends, one of whom suggested I meet with an antiques dealer he knew who specialized in collecting all sorts of ancient playing cards.

The next morning, on the way to the airport, I stopped at the dealer's shop. When I told him about the unusual exhibit, he revealed that he in fact owned the cards missing from the deck. I was stunned. He brought out this old, worn leather box filled with cards and told me the story as he flipped one card over at a time, revealing the saga of **The Looking Glass Wars**. It was a darker Alyss from a darker world and I knew I was meant to tell the story.

THE PULSE: Why?

BEDDOR: The truth had to be told.

THE PULSE: How long did it take you to develop this idea - to learn "the truth"?

BEDDOR: I first discovered the cards in the British Museum in late 1998, so it has been nearly seven years of non-stop research and literary sleuthing.

THE PULSE: Once your sleuthing was complete, how did you get Penguin Books to publish *The Looking Glass Wars*? Was anyone else interested in publishing "the truth"?

BEDDOR: Following the paperback selling out in pre-publication in the UK and some favorable reviews, US publishers began to take notice. I was fortunate to have the interest escalate into a three way bidding war for the US rights which resulted in a deal with Penguin.

THE PULSE: Whose idea was it to turn *The Looking Glass Wars* into a comic book? Is this an adaptation of the book ... or something else?

BEDDOR: *The Looking Glass Wars Book 1* tells the story of Alyss's exile from Wonderland to our world. I decided to do a comic book series based on the adventures of Royal Bodyguard Hatter Madigan along with the trilogy of **LGW** novels I am doing with Egmont Publishing in the UK. But to answer your question, doing the comic book series **Hatter M** was my idea.

THE PULSE: What do you think it is about this book that lends itself to the sequential art form? Why comics?

BEDDOR: *The Looking Glass Wars* trilogy of novels and the **Hatter M** comic series cover a huge canvas of time,



events and characters. In revealing Wonderland as it truly exists, I have discovered a vast universe to explore. There is so much to tell, so many adventures to recount, so much truth to uncover, that the sequential form is really the only manageable form available.

THE PULSE: Are you a comics fan? You mentioned liking Ben's work in 30 Days of Night ... do you follow other comics as well?

BEDDOR: I wasn't a major fan of comic books growing up. But much in the same way as I re-discovered Alice in Wonderland, comics hooked me as an adult. Beginning with **Alan Moore's The Watchmen, League Of Extraordinary Gentlemen,** and **Neil Gaiman's Sandman** series I became enthusiastic about the visual worlds and storylines being offered. It was partly a natural extension of my work in film, but at the same time the enormous potential for creative expression was extremely exciting. Collaborating with artists in such a graphic, expressive medium is a whole new world for me. Meeting the fans at the different comic cons has been fantastic. Their enthusiasm, knowledge and loyalty is amazing. I hope that **Hatter M** is something that they will feel deserves their attention.

THE PULSE: Most people hear "Hatter Madigan" and think Mad Hatter. Who is the Mad Hatter in your volume? Most people remember him as the tea party dude, but I take it there's a lot more to him than just hosting parties with Tweedle-Dee and Dum. Is this story about the Mad Hatter, because this doesn't sound like the one I remember ...



BEDDOR: You're totally right. This is NOT the story of a Mad Hatter. Hatter Madigan is absolutely unique, an incredibly complex, tortured, stubborn, emotional grown-up hero. The only visual connection to the Mad Hatter in **Lewis Carroll's** work or the **Disney** film is the iconic Hat.

But in Hatter M's case the Hat is much more than some identifying headwear – it is his signature weapon. A career soldier and expert bladesman, Hatter is a ranking High Cut of the Wonderland Millinery. While formidable with blades, his true expertise is with the Hat.

Woven and blocked from a material not available in any realm except the origins of wonder, the Hat was awarded to young Hatter upon his graduation from the Millinery. The Hat, when hurled by his expert hand, instantly unfolds into a circle of polished blades to attack or defend. Carnage accomplished, the blades retract and the Hat boomerangs back to its master.

Coming from Wonderland, Hatter must learn to navigate our world. Since Wonderland's language consists of a system of energy and rhythm, Hatter faces no language barriers and is able to transmute and translate everything from Zulu to dolphin as he crisscrosses the globe in search of Alyss. But while he begins his search intent upon the single purpose of finding the lost princess, he gradually comes to discover that his travels have a purpose above and beyond this initial motivation and that purpose is to protect and serve Imagination.

As revealed in **The Looking Glass Wars**, Wonderland's great gift to our world is Imagination. As a traveler from the source of all wonder, Hatter will continually find himself facing off against those who wish to either suppress Wonderland's gift or channel the flipside of Dark Imagination for their own diabolical use. This discovery and service to

humanity will act upon Hatter and his own humanity as he continues to develop throughout the series.

THE PULSE: That sounds really intriguing. So, you're mentioned Alyss/Alice, when does this story take place in regards to when she made her first trip through the Looking Glass?

BEDDOR: The Looking Glass Wars Book 1 begins in 1859 when Princess Alyss Heart flees a bloody coup in Wonderland. According to extensive documentation, Alyss (a.k.a. **Alice Liddell**) told her story to **Lewis Carroll** in 1862 resulting in the initial book, **Alice's Adventures Underground** being published in 1864. The LGW Book 1 tracks the years 1859-1872, within this period of time **Alice in Wonderland** and **Through the Looking Glass** were both published.

The comic book mini-series (Geo-Graphic Comic Volume 1) Hatter M tells the parallel story of Alyss' 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 a bloody coup in Wonderland. For those unfamiliar with the first book of the **Looking Glass Wars** trilogy, the bigger story reveals the true history of Wonderland based upon a stunning discovery which unmasked the ultimate literary lie, a twisted fabrication that had existed for nearly 150 years.

While universally accepted that **Lewis Carroll** was inspired to write his classic children's books to entertain 7-year-old Alice Liddell it is far from true. Lewis Carroll did not tell Alice Liddell the story of Wonderland, she told him! Alice was not born into the Liddell family, she was adopted. Her true identity was Alyss Heart, the future Queen of Wonderland. **Lewis Carroll** had changed everything and everyone including the identity of her royal bodyguard.

Hatter M is not the story of a Mad Hatter. Hatter Madigan is an expert bladesman, a ranking High Cut of the Wonderland Millinery and not the tea guzzling madman of children's lit. Aggressively focused on the one purpose in his life, Hatter's search for Alyss commences immediately and continues incessantly leaving the whispers and totems of myth in the wake of his non-stop quest.

Hatter M the comic just seemed like a necessary, organic progression from all of the work I did with artists on **The Looking Glass Wars**. In LGW Book 1, Hatter M was introduced but his story was only explored for about four chapters. There was so much more to tell about his mad search for Alyss that I realized he needed his own forum -- and comic books would allow this dark, compelling, more mature story to be told best.

Hatter M is a classic, archetypal comic book hero with his angst, his loss, his barely suppressed rage as he searches the world. Also, by doing **Hatter M** as a comic book series I am able to connect to and expand upon the universe of **The Looking Glass Wars** as it was introduced in Book 1 and as it will continue in Books 2 and 3. So for those fans of the series in the UK and other countries who have read Book 1, the comic is a great way to deepen, enhance, and bridge the world. Of course, since **LGW Book 1** will not be available in the states until next year, Hatter M's adventures will be what introduces American readers to the **LGW** universe. It's a total reversal – but the bridge will be there for anyone wanting to experience more of the world.



THE PULSE: What other Wonderland residents are featured in this adventure?

BEDDOR: After my discovery of the cards in the British Museum and the true story behind **Lewis Carroll's Wonderland** books I began putting all the pieces together and weaving the revelations of just how different the real Wonderland and its inhabitants were compared to the children's lit version the world had known and accepted for nearly 150 years. Carroll's choices in how he changed Alyss's story were so fascinating (he even changed her name!) – the monsters and heroes of her lost world became these cheery reinventions.

It was such a betrayal on Carroll's part and was in fact, the reason for the rift that eventually occurred between the writer and his muse. For instance – the characters we know as the White Rabbit, the Red Queen, the Cheshire Cat and of course, the Mad Hatter all appear in **The Looking Glass Wars** as they were intended to be by Alyss when she told Carroll her harrowing tale. The White Rabbit was in fact Bibwit Harte, the six foot albino royal tutor for all Wonderland Queens (Carroll had anagrammed his name to create the White Rabbit), while the Red Queen was in truth Alyss's aunt Redd, the revenge maddened usurper to the throne ably assisted by her top assassin, The Cat, a man-size feline who morphs from adorable kitten to giant mutant feline when called upon to kill.

So you see, there is a lot of truth to be uncovered. I felt I owed it to Alyss.

THE PULSE: I see. So how did Ben Templesmith become involved as the artist of the series?

BEDDOR: I'm a big fan of **30 Days of Night**, so I called him and pitched the character of Hatter M and he got into it.

Initially I was attracted to Ben's use of color and how he conceptualized his characters. I'd liked what he had done in **30 Days of Night** and saw that he had the ability to do horror which occasionally pops up in Hatter's fantastical journey. But it was all luck and intuition that really brought me to Ben. Since working with him I have discovered his sense of humor and this is coming out more and more. It's not all shadows and solitude for Hatter – much of whom and what he encounters is bizarre, twisted and funny. Ben's art nails it every time.



THE PULSE: How many parts is The Looking Glass Wars: Hatter M?

BEDDOR: We have two more comic book mini-series planned to complete our trilogy of 'Geo-Graphic' Novels. Rather than graphic novels we've been playing with the idea of calling them Geo-Graphic Novels since the adventures are broken up geographically and follow specific maps for each volume. The first volume tracks Hatter through Europe, the second follows Hatter's journey aboard the HMS Christina to South America, but the ship is attacked by Chinese pirates and Hatter finds himself on San Francisco's Barbary Coast about to embark on a search for Alyss that will take him across the battlefields of the Civil War to a historically suppressed meeting with President Abraham Lincoln. And the third volume will find Hatter in the Far East where he reunites with a fellow Millinery Man.

THE PULSE: Do you have plans in place for other members of Wonderland to be showcased in their own series? If so, what plans? Which characters?

BEDDOR: I am planning another comic series featuring Queen Redd – the main villain of the **Looking Glass Wars**. I've always been intrigued by the fact that every villain considers themselves the hero of their own story. So I would like to explore Redd from this angle – from her perspective – as she rages against Alyss, vanquishes Wonderland and sends Dark Imagination on to other worlds. Besides, villains are the most fun to write.

THE PULSE: You said it! What other projects in or out of comics are you working on?

BEDDOR: One of my top film projects right now is **Pretty Wicked**, a psychological murder mystery surrounding a teenage girl's obsession with power. It's basically a revenge fantasy exploring the prepotent energy of teen girls when they discover their emerging sexuality and how this power can be used for good or evil. Along with the film, I want to do a graphic novel to be able to illustrate more of the heroine's inner world of flying dreams, retribution and demon guardians.

I'd just like to mention our website, www.lookingglasswars.com and encourage anyone who can to check it out. A lot of time and creativity went into designing it and I think most people will really enjoy it. We're putting up preview pages for Hatter M and there's an animated trailer for the novel. We've developed a card game drawing on characters and elements in Hatter M and LGW and this is going up first as a web based game.



We'll be previewing the game and giving out playing decks at GenCon in Anaheim in November. And I will be adding a Gallery showcasing the art I've commissioned from artists like **Doug Chiang, Chris Appelhans, Brian Flora, Branislav Hetzel, Matt Wilson, Ryan Meinerding, Kristi Valk, Andrea Wicklund, Catia Chen, Toby Wilson, David Saccheri** and **Eddie Rainwater**.

THE PULSE: This project also sounds like something that would be a great movie. Are there any plans in place to do a film?

BEDDOR: I'm working out the story beats, but I haven't figured out the structure yet, in the meantime I've adapted **The Looking Glass Wars** into a script and hope to put that film together.

The first issue of Hatter M is due in stores December 7th.