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THE LOOKING GLASS WARS by *Frank Beddor*

Category: Fantasy

Age Recommendation: Grades 9+

Release Date: 9/26/06

Publisher: Dial

Reviewed by: Jennifer Wardrip, aka "The Genius"

Rating: 5 Stars



I have a confession to make. I have never particularly cared for Lewis Carroll's (aka the Reverend Charles Dodgson's) ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND. Although I've read that story, once, it has never even come close to being one of my favorites. With Frank Beddor's THE LOOKING GLASS WARS, however, I can easily say that I was drawn into the story from the first page--and have found a new book to add to my list of favorites.

THE LOOKING GLASS WARS begins in 1863, in Oxford England, with eleven-year-old Alyss Heart having told her story to the Rev. Charles Dodgson over a matter of months. After four years of living in this world, Alyss is sure her story is about to be told. Unfortunately, the "liberties" that college scholar Dodgson took with her telling of her life in Wonderland have been turned into a parody, a fictional tale that resembles nothing like the life she had previously led. The events that led to her living in England have become nothing but a foolish story, something to be read to privileged children by their pampered parents.

Alyss's story actually begins long before that day she is given a bound copy of ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND by Dodgson. While Alyss was celebrating her seventh birthday in Wonderland, plans were being put into action to overthrow the Queen, Genevieve, Alyss's mother. Genevieve's

evil sister, Redd, has grown tired of being exiled from Wonderland--and her powers have grown strong. She stages a coup that begins with the death of the King, Genevieve's husband, Nolan. And it doesn't end until Genevieve is dead, as well, and Alyss is forced to escape through the Pool of Tears.

This is only the beginning of Alyss's toils, and the troubles and woes that come to all Wonderlanders who refuse to recognize the new queen. As the other houses (Spades, Diamonds, and Clubs) take sides, as battles are waged, Wonderland fades from the beautiful, prosperous city that it once was. And Alyss, who was destined to be Queen, is forced to live a life of lies in an alternate world.

Frank Beddor has come up with a wonderful story that draws upon Lewis Carroll's original characters and turns them around to bring them to vivid life. From the Chessboard Desert to the bodyguard Hatter Madigan, from the scholar Bibwit Harte to the young Dodge Anders, from the Generals Doppel and Ganger to The Cat and the Glass Eyes and The Cut, it's all there, in wonderful, splendid glory. This is definitely one story that will stay with you, and have you turning pages long into the night. If you're like me, you'll also be eagerly awaiting the second book in the series, SEEING RED, which, unfortunately, is still being written. The good news, though, is that once you've finished THE LOOKING GLASS WARS, you'll be happy to start reading it all over again.