

# Fantasy Book Critic



For me, “*Alice In Wonderland*” is one of those unforgettable tales that has been imprinted onto my imagination for as long as I can remember, alongside such classics as *The Wizard of Oz* and *Star Wars*, and remains one of the most beloved stories of our time. So when I heard about **Frank Beddor’s** “*The Looking Glass Wars*”, which supposedly told the *true* story of **Alice Liddell** and a **Wonderland** that was real, I was definitely intrigued and picked up a copy of the book when it was finally released here in the states two years after its UK debut (2004). Even though the book was somewhat aimed toward a younger audience and was a little rough around the edges writing-wise, I enjoyed “*The Looking Glass Wars*” enough to read the excellent **Hatter M** comic book series and have been looking forward to the second volume in the trilogy, “*Seeing Redd*”.

In “*The Looking Glass Wars*”, readers are introduced to a world quite different from the one depicted in **Lewis Carroll’s** books. Earth and **Wonderland** are parallel universes connected by portals (**The Pool of Tears**). **Wonderland** itself is a fantastical landscape where magic (**White Imagination / Black Imagination**) and advanced technology exist side-by-side. **Alice Liddell** is actually **Alyss Heart**, future queen of **Wonderland** whose empire was usurped by her evil aunt **Redd**. The Hatter is really **Hatter Madigan**, the queen’s personal bodyguard and expert fighter; the White Rabbit is **Bibwit Harte**, the Heart family’s tutor; the Cheshire Cat is the **Cat**, **Redd’s** deadly assassin; Tweedledee & Tweedledum are represented as **General Doppelgänger** who can split his body into two personas **Doppel** & **Gänger**; the caterpillars are actually oracles; and **Reverend Dodgson** aka **Lewis Carroll**, is the writer who twisted **Alyss’** real-life confessions into the fairy tale that became known as “*Alice In Wonderland*”. There are countless other ‘departures’ from the story readers know, but it’s best if you discover those on your own as **Mr. Beddor’s** vivid imagination is one of the major highlights of the series.

As far as the actual plot in “*The Looking Glass Wars*”, I won’t get into any specifics, but basically **Alyss** finds her way back to **Wonderland**, joins a group of rebels, and somehow defeats **Redd**. Needless to say, it’s probably in your best interest to read “*The Looking Glass Wars*” before starting on “*Seeing Redd*”, which takes place not long after the first book. In “*Seeing Redd*”, **Alyss** is dealing with the difficulties of being queen, which not only includes rebuilding her empire after the devastation wrought by **Redd’s** reign, but also facing new threats from such enemies as the chauvinistic **King Arch of Boarderland**, and dealing with her personal feelings for the Captain of the Palace Guard, **Dodge Anders**. Subplots include **Arch’s** devious plan for taking over **Wondertropolis** which involves **Hatter Madigan** and a weapon of mass destruction (WILMA), **Homburg Molly** (Alyss’ personal bodyguard) discovering who her parents are; **Dodge Anders** whose duties are threatened by his need for vengeance against the **Cat**, and of course **Redd** who may not be so defeated after all...

If you enjoyed *"The Looking Glass Wars"* I daresay you're going to like *"Seeing Redd"* even more, which I think is better than the first book in many areas. The writing for one is tighter and more accomplished; because a lot of setup was taken care of in *"The Looking Glass Wars"* the pacing is much faster and there's more heart-pounding action; the fabulous cast of characters return along with some cool new faces such as **Arch's** bodyguards **Ripkins & Blister**, an evil version of **Bibwit Harte (Vollrath)**, and such creative villains as **Master Sacrénoir**, **Siren Hecht**, et cetera; and **Mr. Beddor's** imagination is wilder than ever. As far as the story, it's a little bit darker, but still appropriate for PG audiences while also appealing to mature readers, and the ending comes to a nice stopping point even though it's the middle volume in the series. In short, everything that made *"The Looking Glass Wars"* such a fun read is multiplied and improved upon in *"Seeing Redd"* and my only complaint is that I have to wait now for the final book in the trilogy...

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