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opening extract from

# The Looking Glass Wars

written by

## Frank Beddor

published by

## Egmont

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## THE LOOKING GLASS WARS

'Fantastic battle scenes, plot twists, character interest and slow-burning love make this an ace read for both sexes'
*Guardian*

'To say Beddor's revolutionary novel is an adaptation of Lewis Carroll's original would do justice to neither author … The magic with which Beddor has imbued each character really and truly brings them to life'
*Independent*

'This ingenious reworking … is powerful, eventful and dark. Which is entirely legitimate, given the surreality of the original'
*Times*

'I loved the world that was created. I love the use that was made of all the Wonderland and Looking Glass creatures who, I must admit, go through a total transformation … It emerges as a very moral story, which is really rather refreshing'
Michael Bakewell, *Lewis Carroll: A Biography*

'I think the remarkable thing about the book is it's very vibrant, it's imaginative, it's visual, it's very well researched. What Frank has done is he's interwoven the history … of Alice and then told his own extraordinary, and believably visual and fast-moving tale'
Michael Morpurgo, Children's Laureate

'A storming, imaginative tour-de-force … Inventive, dramatic and clever, with a colourful cast of characters to die for … Beddor has created something new and original, something fresh and exciting'
John McLay, Children's literary scout





‘A highly original and engrossing read that takes the story of Carroll’s Alice and turns it on its head in a totally believable way. I couldn’t put it down and I can’t wait for the next volume’
*Children’s Buyers Guide*

‘Behind this entertaining and highly readable story lies a message about the value of imagination and the strength it can impart’
*Good Book Guide*

‘Beddor’s film production background is evident in the book’s page-turning action and (often gory) detail’
*Bookseller*

‘Audaciously inventive’
achuka

‘A superlead title’
*Publishing News*

‘Children and adults will be enthralled’
*Good Book Guide*

‘What compelling stuff! It was brilliant, I was completely hooked’
Gardner’s, wholesaler

‘I couldn’t put it down … and would recommend it to everyone’
Emily, 15

‘I loved this book. It was absolutely awesome …11/10 if that is possible!’
Charles, 11



FRANK BEDDOR

# THE LOOKING GLASS WARS

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## A word of warning to my readers:

A number of years ago, while on a business trip to London, I went to the British Museum and came across an exhibition of ancient playing cards. At the very end of the exhibition was an incomplete deck of cards, illuminated by an unusual glow. The cards showed *Alice in Wonderland* as I had never seen it before.

On the way to the airport the next morning, I went to an antiques shop specialising in playing cards. When I told the dealer about the unusual exhibit, he revealed that he in fact owned the other cards missing from the deck. He then proceeded to tell me the story of *The Looking Glass Wars*. That story is the one you now hold …

But one word of warning: the true story of Wonderland involves bloodshed, murder, revenge and war. I apologise in advance to those of you who might find some of the scenes in this book distressing, but I feel it's important that the facts are set down as they actually happened. Those of you of a more sensitive disposition might prefer reading Lewis Carrol's classic fairytale.

Frank Beddor

*Dedicated to my niece Sarah*
*for her sense of wonder*

# PROLOGUE

***Oxford, England. July, 1863.***

*Everyone thought she had made it up and she had tolerated more taunting and teasing from other children, more lectures and punishments from grown-ups, than any eleven-year-old should have to bear. But now, after four years, it had arrived: her last, best chance to prove to them all that she had been telling the truth. A college scholar had thought enough of her history to write it up as a book.*

*She sat on a blanket on the banks of the River Cherwell, the remains of a picnic lunch in a basket at Reverend Charles Dodgson's elbow. She held the book in her hands. He had written and illustrated it himself, he said. It had a nice weight and heft, felt substantial. It was wrapped in brown paper and tied with a black ribbon. Dodgson was watching her, anxious. Her sisters Edith and Lorina were hunting minnows at the river's edge. She*

*untied the ribbon, carefully undid the wrapping.*

*'Oh!'* Alice's Adventures Underground? *What sort of title was that? And why was her name misspelled? She had told Dodgson how to correctly spell her name, had even written it out for him. 'By Lewis Carroll?' she read with growing concern.*

*'I thought it would be more festive than saying it was by a Reverend.'*

*Festive? She had told him little that was festive. Concern was fast turning to alarm, but she swallowed it. What mattered was that he had faithfully recorded her history in Wonderland as she remembered it.*

*She opened the book and admired its rough-cut pages, the neatness of the handwriting. But the dedication took the form of a poem, in which her name was again misspelled, and she didn't think the lighthearted rhyme scheme appropriate, considering the material it was supposed to introduce. Her gaze caught on one of the stanzas:*

> The dream-child moving through a land
> Of wonders, wild and new,
> In friendly chat with bird or beast –
> And half believed it true.

*Dream-child? And what did he mean by* half *believed?*

*She turned to the first chapter and immediately felt as if her insides had*

*been scooped out, like the half-grapefruits Dean Liddell ate for breakfast every morning, after which only raw, pulpy hollows remained. Down a rabbit hole? Where had the worrisome white rabbit come from?*

*'Alice, is something wrong?'*

*She skipped ahead, turned page after page. The Pool of Tears, the caterpillar, her Aunt Redd: it had all been twisted into nonsense.*

*'You've turned General Doppelgänger, the commander of the royal army, into two fat boys with beanies.'*

*'I admit that I took a few liberties with your story – to make it ours, as I said I would. Do you recognise the tutor fellow you once described to me? He's the white rabbit character. I got the idea for him upon discovering that the letters of the tutor's name could be made to spell 'white rabbit.' Here, let me show you.'*

*Dodgson took a pencil and small notebook from the inside pocket of his coat, but she didn't want to look. He had indeed said it would be their book, his and hers, and she had found strength in that – strength to suffer the indignities that came from insisting on truths no one else believed. But what she held in her hands had nothing to do with her.*

*'You mean you did it on purpose?' she asked.*

*The grinning Cheshire cat. The mad tea party. He'd transformed her memories of a world alive with hope and possibility and danger into make-believe, the foolish stuff of children. He was just another in a long line of unbelievers and this – this stupid, nonsensical book – was how he made*

*fun of her. She had never felt more betrayed in all her life.*

*'No one is ever going to believe me now!' she screamed. 'You've ruined everything! You're the cruellest man I've ever met, Mr. Dodgson, and if you had believed a single word I told you, you'd know how very cruel that is! I never want to see you again! Never, never, never!'*

*She ran, leaving Edith and Lorina to make their own way home, leaving Reverend Dodgson – who considered children to be spirits fresh from God's hands, their smiles divine, who thought there no greater endeavour than devoting all of his powers to a task for which the only reward was a child's whispered thanks and the airy touch of her pure lips – shaken, unsure of what had just happened.*

*He picked up the book, still warm from Alice Liddell's touch, not knowing that it was as close to her as he'd ever be again.*

# PART ONE



# CHAPTER 1

The Queendom had been enjoying a tentative peace ever since the time, twelve years earlier, when unbridled bloodshed spattered the doorstep of every Wonderlander. The civil war hadn't been the longest in all of recorded history, but no doubt it was one of the bloodiest. Those who had entered a little too quickly into the carnage and destruction had trouble adapting to life during peacetime. When hostilities ceased, they ran amok on the streets of Wonderland's capital city, looting and pillaging Wondertropolis until Queen Genevieve had them rounded up and shipped off to The Crystal Mines – a spiderweb-like network of tunnels carved in a far-off mountainside, where those unwilling to abide by the laws of decent society lived in windowless dormitories and laboured to excavate crystal from the unforgiving mountain. Even after these people were taken off the streets, the peace that settled on Wonderland was nothing like that which had existed before the war. A third of Wondertropolis' quartz-like buildings had to be rebuilt. The smooth

turquoise amphitheatre had suffered damage in an air raid, as had countless towers and spires sporting fiery, reflective pyrite skin. But the scars of war are not always visible. Although Queen Genevieve ruled her Queendom judiciously, with care for the well-being of her people, the monarchy had been forever weakened. The coalition of Diamond, Club and Spade dynasties that made up Parliament was falling apart. The matriarchs of the families were jealous of Genevieve's power. Each thought she could rule Wonderland better than the Queen. Each watched and waited for an opportunity to wrest control from her, keeping a none-too-friendly eye on the other families in case they happened to make a move first.

After twelve years, the daily life of Wonderland had returned to what might be called 'normal.' Were you to walk Wondertropolis' gleaming streets, enjoying the sight of its jagged crystal buildings and shop fronts, were you to pass the stations where Wonderlanders arrived for work in sleek glass tubes hovering on cushions of air, were you to stop and purchase a tarty tart from a vendor and relish its tarty tart flavour bursting upon your tongue, you would have never known that in certain back alleys, on certain open plains, precautions were being taken: regiments of card soldiers put through military manoeuvres, transports produced, weapons of attack and defence designed and tested. And you would not have been alone.

Entertaining no thoughts of war, Princess Alyss Heart stood on

the balcony of Heart Palace with her mother, Queen Genevieve. The city was in the midst of a jubilant gala. From The Everlasting Forest to The Valley of Mushrooms, Wonderlanders had come to celebrate the seventh birthday of their future Queen, who, as it happened, was bored out of her wits. Alyss knew she could do a lot worse than be Queen of Wonderland, but even a future monarch doesn't always want to do what she is supposed to do – like sit through hours of pageantry. She would have rather been hidden with her friend Dodge in one of the palace towers, dropping jollyjellies from an open window and watching them splat on the guards below. Dodge wouldn't like the jollyjelly bit – guardsmen deserved better treatment, he'd say – but that would only make it more fun.

Where *was* Dodge anyway? She hadn't seen him all morning, and it wasn't nice to avoid the birthday girl on her birthday. She searched for him among the Wonderlanders gathered to watch the Inventors' Parade on the cobbled lane below. No sign of him. He was probably off doing something fun; whatever it was *had* to be more fun than being stuck here, forced to watch Wonderlanders show off their silly contraptions. Bibwit Harte, the royal tutor, had explained to her that most of Wonderland took pride in the Inventors' Parade, the one time every year when citizens flaunted their skills and ingenuity before the Queen. If Genevieve saw something in the parade that she thought particularly good, she would send it into the Heart

Crystal – a thirty-foot tall, fifty-foot wide shimmering crystal on palace grounds, the power source for all creation. Whatever passed into the crystal went out into the universe to inspire imaginations in other worlds. If a Wonderlander bounced in front of Queen Genevieve on a spring-operated stick with handlebars and footrests and she passed this curious invention into the crystal, before long, in one civilization or another, a pogo stick would be invented.

Still, Alyss wondered, what was the big deal? Having to stand here until her feet hurt – it was punishment.

'I wish father were here.'

'He's due back from Boarderland at any moment,' said Queen Genevieve. 'But since the rest of Wonderland is here, I suggest you try to enjoy yourself for their sake. That's interesting, don't you think?'

They watched as a man floated down from the sky with what looked like a hollow mushroom cap strapped to his back.

'It's pretty good, I suppose,' said Alyss, 'but it'd be better if it were *furry*.'

And with that, the mushroom contraption was suddenly covered in fur, its inventor falling to the ground with a thump.

Queen Genevieve frowned.

'He's late,' Alyss said. 'He promised he'd be here. I don't understand why he had to make a trip so close to my birthday.'

There *were* reasons, as the Queen well knew. Intelligence had suggested that they may have already waited too long: unconfirmed reports suggested Redd was growing more powerful, outfitting her troops for an attack, and Genevieve was no longer sure that her military could provide adequate defence. She was as keen as Alyss for Prince Nolan's return, but she had determined to enjoy the day's festivities.

'Ooh, look at that,' she said, pointing at a woman wiggling as she walked so as to keep a large hoop swinging round and round her waist. 'That looks diverting.'

'It'd be more fun if it had fountains of water coming out of it,' Alyss said, and immediately the hoop was spurting water from tiny holes all along its surface, the surprised inventor still wiggling to keep it swinging round and round.

'Birthday or not, Alyss,' Queen Genevieve said, 'I don't think it's nice to show off.'

The fur on the first ever parachute vanished. The fountains of water on the newly invented hula hoop dried up. The power of Alyss' imagination had made them appear and disappear. Imagination was an important part of life in Wonderland and Alyss had the most powerful imagination ever seen in a seven-year-old Wonderlander. But as with any formidable talent, Alyss' imagination could be used for good or ill, and the Queen saw mild reasons for concern. Hardly

one revolution of the Thurmite moon had passed since Alyss' last incident: impatient with young Jack of Diamonds for some childish indiscretion, she'd imagined his trousers filled with slick, squiggling gwormmies. Jack of Diamonds said he 'felt something funny,' looked down and saw that his trousers were moving, alive. He'd been having nightmares ever since. Alyss claimed not to have done it on purpose, which may or may not have been true, Genevieve couldn't tell: Alyss didn't yet have full control of her imaginative powers, but the girl would say anything to get out of trouble.

'You will be the strongest Queen yet,' she told her daughter. 'Your imagination will be the crowning achievement of the land. But Alyss, you must work hard to develop it according to the guiding principles of the Heart Dynasty – love, justice and duty to the people. An undisciplined imagination is worse than no imagination at all. It can do more harm. Remember what happened to your Aunt Redd.'

'I know,' Alyss said sulkily. She had never met her Aunt Redd, but she'd heard stories about the woman for as long as she could remember. She didn't bother trying to understand it all; it was *history*, boring boring boring. But she knew that to be like Aunt Redd wasn't good.

'Now that's enough lecturing for one princess' birthday,' Queen Genevieve said. She clapped her hands and the parachute