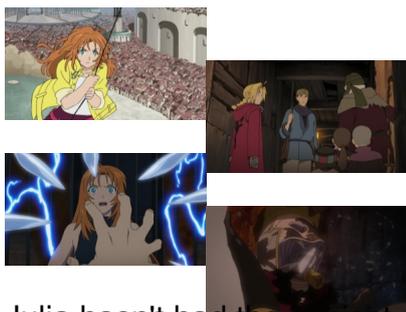




Delving back into the *Brotherhood* timeline for a standalone tale, *The Sacred Star of Milos* takes us to the remnants of a once-proud nation, where a freedom-fighter has plans to use the land's fabled Star of Blood to power her revolution - unaware that the Star is another name for a Philosopher's Stone...

Pursuit of a dangerous criminal with devastating alchemical powers takes Ed and Al Elric to Table City, a remote location on the border of Amestris and neighbouring Creta. There, the brothers rescue a young alchemist named Julia Crichton from the clutches of their mysterious quarry, only to find themselves embroiled in a sinister story of corruption, rebellion, murder and betrayal. Julia is the leader of the Black Bats, a resistance group fighting for the rights of the ancient Milos race, who have been forced out of Table City to live in the slums of the Milos Valley. With her people oppressed by Amestris and Creta alike, the strong-willed girl is determined to win their freedom by harnessing the energy of the Star of Blood, a relic that Table City was created to refine. However, Julia isn't the only one who wants to wield the artefact's enormous power...



Julia hasn't had the easiest of lives. Her parents were renowned alchemists, until they were brutally murdered, apparently on the say-of of Creta. Julia and her brother Ashely were also on the list to be murdered that night, but Ashely helped Julia to escape before apparently meeting a grizzly end of his own while trying to buy her time to get away. Now, though, Ashley has made a surprised return to the scene, busting himself out of prison when he learns of his sister's location - but it's not the freedom of Milos that he's particularly concerned with.

For Ed and Al, this starts off as a jailbreak investigation - first on the scene after Ashley bust himself out of prison, just a few weeks before he was due to be paroled anyway, their pursuit of him leads them first to Julia, and then to the slums beneath Table City - the Milos Valley, a dark, lifeless canyon where the descendants of what was once Milos now live in the shadows of the ongoing hostility between Amestris and Creta, and where planning for Julia's little rebellion is gathering pace.

The thing about *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood* is that there really didn't need to be any more of it. Unlike the first incarnation of the show, the reboot ended on a conclusive note, so *Sacred Star of Milos* has to rewind the clock a little bit, and throw a story into the timeline that isn't going to disrupt events of the main season. The problem with this is twofold: one, you know that there's no

serious threat to Ed and Al, as they've "already" lived through this and gone on to beat King Bradley and the homunculus threat; and two, the main series villains don't get a look in. I would've loved to have seen more of the Fuhrer and Father's other grim creations, but they're out of the mix here and replaced by faceless (in one case, quite

*literally*

so) military men who, when they get dragged into battle, really don't carry the same sense of *ohshit*

about them that we're used to seeing in

*Brotherhood*

's big scenes.

It's also a movie that moves at a glacial pace. It *feels* like there's an awful lot of time spent moving from one location to another, talking along the way, when the movie could have done with being a bit shorter and getting to the point a bit more quickly. For something that has all the ingredients of an action-packed adventure, it very rarely

*feels*

like one, and that's a major failing.

If there's a counter to those downsides, it's Julie herself - still in her teens, she's a firey redhead with an attitude to match - she's first seen making a break from prison herself, and she has no hesitation about doing whatever she feels needs done to achieve her aims, her own personal safety be damned. I idealist, for certain, but one whose certainty that she's doing the right thing has gathered a group of people around her who have a good chance of making her dreams reality. For a one-off movie, she gets a decent amount of development, and that's enough to make her - and her interactions with Ed and Al - the highpoint of the movie.

But she's not enough on her own to lift the movie from "okay" into "great". *Sacred Star of Milos* has its moments, including a decent climax when the ultimate purpose of Table City becomes clear, but it takes such a meandering path along the way that that I'd just about lost interest by the time it got there. Decent enough taken on its own, but well short of the high standard set by the TV series.

*Sacred Star of Milos* is available on its own, or in a double-pack with the first FMA movie, *Conqueror of Shamballa*. You can find our review of *Conqueror of Shamballa's* original 2008 release [over here](#) .

