



LITTLE FIGHTER EMPIRE

THE OFFICIAL FANSITE

CONTEST #18

WRITING CHALLENGE

Theme: “Write a story set in the LF2-World”

Winning entries by Blue Phoenix, Azriel, and Reaper

BLUE PHOENIX

“Smoke rose from the top of Forbidden Tower. During the past days, the unimaginable has happened. A group of a handful people had managed to plough their way through an army of trained fighters and ultimately faced the one that controlled them: the ruler, drawn from the underworld, empowered with the souls of the fallen. Incredibly strong, he was able to merge and subject the separate kingdoms into one empire with him pulling the strings.

And this person was now sent back to his realms, into the world where reality and imagination merge into chaos. After a long and ferocious battle, he had to surrender to the immense force he was facing. Lord Julian was defeated.

Only a couple of people know what happened afterwards. Most have fallen in the war. It is no surprise that the ones still alive do not dare to tell the story, given the circumstance that supporters of the ancient regime are to face atrocious punishments. However, I have lost everything I ever had. Wife, children, possessions, everything. I am now a beggar, living on the streets, trying to live my life as good as I can. I am one of the few that still remember the good old times, where order and righteousness ruled this empire rather than single kingdoms trying to get the full control over the remnants of the empire. In fact, I was one of the most loyal servants. My name is Justin and this is the story of the war’s aftermath.

Even though Lord Julian fought with all the power he possessed, it was not enough to beat the Little Fighters. Instead, he lost the final battle. And with him, the empire crumbled. What had been united under his strong hand has been torn apart, anarchy followed. The fighters demonstrated their superiority against Lord Julian but did not care about the consequences. These usurpers destroyed the empire and let it deteriorate.

Technically, they are still the leaders of the empire but except for receiving glory and praise, they do nothing to help us come to peace. This is where my master’s ultimate deed comes in. Right before he was taken out of this world, he laid a curse on his opponents. Long time, it was a mystery as to what this curse did to them. Shortly before Forbidden Tower finally collapsed, a few brave sorcerers dared to enter the library to find the banned book. A book that contained spells immensely powerful. So powerful that the world could have been destroyed in a single blow. These sorcerers knew that, in case they get ahold of the book, they would become the most powerful wizards alive. What they did not know was that the book itself was cursed as well. Soon after they discovered the magic spell Julian spoke upon the Fighters, they mysteriously disappeared and were never seen again.

Now, the book is gone. Forbidden Tower is a place of ruins and the books got, as a measurement to remain in power, burnt by a man called Firen. I never forget his face, this devilish antic, seeming to enjoy his deeds. Nobody will ever be able to cease control again and restore order.

Shortly before the disappearance of the sorcerers, they talked to me about what they have done. The last thing they said to me before they went was to keep the knowledge alive. The knowledge about what has really happened that day. Not the story told by the Little Fighters, which is about a few good men destroying all evil and giving the empire back its freedom. In reality, right before Julian’s demise, he laid the Spell of Remembrance upon them. Every night, they have to fight against the ones they killed. However, in a way that they cannot win. Eventually, the Little Fighters get taken out by the images of our fallen brothers.

Julian’s hope was that the lunacy would then stop somewhen. That these people would eventually get to their senses and establish a solid empire. That we can find to peace. If not today, then maybe tomorrow. So far, no success. Will this madness ever stop? I don’t know.

I am sorry, I have to leave now. I feel the menacing presence of somebody...”

Later that day, a corpse was found, laying in a dark corner of a street canyon in Tai Hom Village. The chest area was exposed and heavily mutilated. Somebody had written into its flesh with a sharp knife:

We are everywhere.

-- Rudolf

AZRIEL

We finally defeated Julian. Our fight through this deadly fortress was complete. We felled countless servants of the dark lord. Every fight was violent, bloody, *painful*. Blade against bone. Fist against steel. Flame against ice. Light against dark.

Gone are the days where we have to commit these brutal murders. We always told ourselves that "we fight to protect", but no matter what words we use to justify our actions, we are still taking peoples lives. There is no honor in killing. These *soldiers of the dark lord* were not willing servants; they were forced. Those that resisted were killed. They were merely fighting to survive. How then can we say, "we are good, and they are evil?"

But we had to take action. Stopping the dark lord meant destroying all that protected him, even if it meant taking lives, and we only did what was *necessary*.

The battle against the dark lord himself was horrifying. His power came from *souls* - souls that he absorbed from dying humans. Throughout the battle, each time we struck down a soldier, the dark lord would absorb the human's soul and use it to fuel his power.

But we held. We fought fiercely, persistently, ceaselessly, until the dark lord's power started to fail him. Our hope for a chance to end this war grew. It was an illusion that sealed the dark lord's fate. The one with the twin blades conjured images that proved a successful diversion on the dark lord, allowing the swordsman to land a fatal blow.

We finally defeated Julian. That is what we tell the world. But this is just a partial truth. We never revealed the event that happened after the swordsman delivered that fatal blow. This was always kept a secret, but now, while I am still sane, I must record the event that followed the dark lord's death.

As we fought our way through his army, he was made aware of our potential. Even if he defeated us, there would be others that would take our place, and others more to take theirs, and eventually he would expel much of his power destroying those that opposed him. Realizing this, he devised a cruel plan that would outlast his demise.

Unbeknownst to us, just before he died, the dark lord cast a spell, a spell that forces us to remember - to relive the pain, the agony, the heat of every battle that we fought.

Now, each night we are forced into endless nightmares - fighting, wounding, and *re*killing every soldier that we once fought. The very peace that we strove to achieve was taken from us. Even as we spend our waking moments enjoying the glory of victory over the dark lord, every night we suffer, fighting in our minds every life that we have taken.

The dark lord's plan was to break our minds and drive us to insanity. Slowly but surely, we are being drawn into this abyss. We, once the hope of our people, are now being corrupted by the dark lord.

We are cursed.

-- Louis

REAPER

“Keep it cool, Mark. You're not in control of yourself right now.” The bandit was looking rather concerned. “You'll squander all of our money. Garnering it took us months!”

“Shut up! You may have forgotten it, but I'm still the boss. You obey my orders or I'll find a place for your head better suited than your neck. Understood?” The bandit audibly gulped.

“Good. Either way, I'll get my money right back and then you can thank me for making us rich.” Mark adjusted his sunglasses, attempting to come across relaxed, but the droplets of sweat on his forehead gave the lie to his behaviour.

He wiped off the beads with his left hand, his right one still holding the cards. If the air just wasn't as stifling... But they were in the very middle of the messy anthill that was Tai Hom Village. A modern anthill, admittedly - a clear advantage compared to the forbidden castle where they didn't even have constant hot water - but an anthill nonetheless.

Mark was sitting in a corner of an old casino that had somehow managed to survive amongst the skyrocketing buildings Tai Hom nowadays consisted of. Someone was playing the piano, but his strumming stood no chance against all the laughing and shouting of the half-drunk people in there.

The casino itself was mostly comprised of heavy, dark furniture which, legend has it, was older than the village. The table he was sitting at right then was one of those very pieces. Scattered across the room, these tables built the isles shattering the flood of people into little groups of stranded survivors.

Which was exactly what they were – stranded. After the Little Fighters had defeated Julian, all his minions and accessories were suddenly out of work. Some had managed to get a regular job and live a mostly normal life, safe for the alcohol they used to wash away the memories of their life as a servant of evil. But most of them ended up the way Mark and his followers did – as scoundrels, rogues, crooks, sub-prime criminals altogether.

“Worried?” the figure on the other side of the table asked in a condescending tone. “You'd better be.”

Mark fixated his eyes on it, showing a glance even a basilisk might be envious of. However, the impressiveness of his stare was severely limited by the fact that he was still wearing his sunglasses. As much as they were helpful for maintaining his poker face – in this situation he would have been better off without them.

“Oh shut up, you freak. You take a pride in your flawless poker face? Well, guess what? You don't even have a face.”

Even though his antagonist was lacking any kind of facial features, Mark could have sworn that he was smirking at that moment. It was a weird feeling. He could sense the smirk was there, but he couldn't see it.

“Ow, that really hurt. Perhaps I could get yours, seeing how you're already risking your skin in this game.” Now Template's invisible smirk had turned into an outright grin.

“Alright, that's enough. Just continue the game, we'll see who laughs last.”

“That's right. We will see indeed.”

Template took another look at the table. The Flop had been a jack, one ace and a king, the Turn Card a mere five. Mark glanced at the two aces he already had in his hand. He was in a good position, but he had to be careful. A handful more loses and he would be broke.

“How much money do you still have?”

Puzzled by the question, Mark remained quiet for a few seconds.

“Well, whatever. I'm pretty sure it's far less than a thousand.” With these words, he took a large chunk of his chips and pushed them towards the middle of the table. Still Mark didn't move.

“What's up? That's your chance to get back all the money you lost during the last couple hours, your ticket for the return journey, your little time machine if you want so. Don't tell me you chicken out now.”

One of his gang members put a hand on his shoulder, but Mark shook it off. A dead grin seized his facial features.

“Alright, all-in.”

He turned towards the dealer who burned the uppermost card, then took the next one from the stack and placed it face-up on the table. It was another king.

“I guess it's time to say bye-bye to your money. Full house.”

“Time to say goodbye indeed. But worry not, I will grant you a minute or two before the departure.”

With these words, Template threw his cards on the table. The other two kings. For a second, Mark was paralysed.

“You're not getting my money, you freak.”

“I've just won it. You've got to kill me if you want to get it back.”

Mark bared his teeth. “Well, maybe I will.”

In a blink of an eye he pushed over the table, making Template fall over. With a sudden fierceness Mark leaped at him, determined to make him pay for all this. His arms found Template's neck when he suddenly felt a searing pain in his left arm. Shockingly, it was bleeding out of a deep cut just above the elbow.

“What the fuck?”, he muttered, turning back towards Template, only to find that Template wasn't there anymore. In his place, Rudolf stood, one of his swords speckled with blood.

“No! You are... That cannot be. I -”

“Oh, for fuck's sake, spare me your stuttering. You can account yourself lucky as I'm not in the mood for fighting right now. I'll just take my money and then I'm outta here.” With these words he took the notes the dealer gave him in exchange for his chips and slashed himself a way towards the exit.

“What the hell? That was all of our money. We can't let him take it.”

“Shut up. I'm not going to mess with Rudolf again. Remember the last time? Half of our gang had been cut into package-sized pieces. I'll find us another source of income.”

“You better do. Because if you don't, we will just take whatever we can get from you.”

Outside of the casino, it was already pitch-black. The dim light of the neon signs was the only thing that illuminated the streets. Template turned right into a back alley, walking on for a few hundred meters until he was out of earshot.

Then he started to laugh maniacally. It had all worked out. Nobody could tell the difference between him and Rudolf. It had taken him more than a year to perfect his shape-shifting, but it was well worth it.

Now he would have his revenge on the Little Fighters who didn't let him join the fight against Julian, telling him he wasn't even meant to exist. Template, the creators prototype stopped halfway in its track. They did not understand he wasn't a mere scheme, but the base of all other persons. And thus, with a bit of training, he could become anyone. They did not understand, but they would soon see.

This time he really was smirking. The Little Fighters had no idea what they were getting into.