Abstara (New, Unfinished)

The Hidden History of a Forsaken Realm

Shortly after the Phantom of Spira was charged with overseeing the Land of Spira, she appointed 12 Guardians to judge and rule over the vast realm in her stead. Of those 12, 2 were granted immense power greater than all the other Guardians - Amser, the first of the Grand Time Mages, and Lord Dreadful, the most adept Necromancer in the land.

With his gift of time manipulation, Amser crafted the realm of Solreach, in the lofty remnant of the old world that serenely floated above Spira. There, he created a bright and beautiful place where the souls of virtuous, heroic, and courageous folk could join the innocents of Spira after death in a world of eternal happiness and peace. Lord Dreadful, however, had a powerful knowledge of the darkness that stalked carefully about the borders of the hearts of men, waiting to cause the unsuspecting and the foolish nothing but trouble. While Amser tried to convince him that people could be saved, even beyond depravity, the Necromancer understood the bitter truth that some were not worth saving - not without being punished thoroughly for their crimes first. To that end, he took the solemn responsibility of crafting Abstara from the remnant hidden below the Land of Spira, out of sight from those sensitive few who would be faint of heart witnessing the suffering of others.

In this world where sunlight was scarce, Lord Dreadful used the force of his magic to break the rocky ground and cause springs to rise in the places where it could be found. There he planted the heartiest seeds he could find before enchanting them with the ability to further endure their harsh new environment when they became mature enough to bear fruit. After that, Lord Dreadful cut his palm with a sharp knife, sprinkling the blood to spawn dimly luminous stones wherever he saw fit. Now that his future captives could make out the fate they earned by whatever light they happened upon, he began crafting the punishments. Among many other devices, there would be fields full of thick myst, obscuring their vision and creating illusions for those who dared to deceive others, powerful creatures to chase those who evaded capture in their prior life by framing the innocent, and constantly, always out of reach, whispering shapeless spirits whose sole duty it was to remind them of their terrible decisions, hopefully enough to riddle them with guilt for the rest of their next life. But Lord Dreadful’s designs were not without mercy, for none of the creatures could cross over into sunlight’s warmth. The greatest area of safety was a grand cathedral at the central heart of Abstara - placed at the insistence of Amser, who thought it only fair that the truly repentant should be given the opportunity to return to the Land of Spira to be given another chance.

After several years of overseeing the realm and ensuring the wretched were punished properly by the means he’d made, Lord Dreadful decided that Abstara could function perfectly well without his guidance, and left to pursue his research in his never-ending quest to know the secrets of all the hidden places in the planar system. For a very long time, Abstara went without a leader, and anarchy was the rule of law for every soul that was sorted into this realm beyond death. However, all of that changed one day with a mighty crash coming from the central cathedral.

There in the wreckage lay the unconscious form of Luciel, a beautiful Seraph fallen from Solreach - the favored one of the Time Mage Amser, himself. Despite his great power and unmatched charm, Luciel’s greatest flaw was always that of pride. He had coveted the Citadel of Time Mages, and believed his brilliance and wisdom surpassed even that of his Chancellor. In his arrogance, he hatched a plan to overthrow Amser and take dominion over Solreach with a third of the other Seraphs rallied behind him. His rebellion was swift, but the Time Mage was swifter still. In a great and ferocious battle that shook Solreach to its very core, Luciel and his followers were cast out - banished from the utopian land above and sent careening past the Land of Spira to crash into the deep darkness of Abstara. The wicked souls of mortals and half-gods wandering the cathedral watched in horror and awe as Luciel and his followers began to shift, their appearance contorting and changing into a monstrous form more fitting of their terrible crime of deceit, murder, and mutiny against the virtuous ones in Solreach. When Luciel came to awaken, and he saw what he had become, his first cry was a curse against the realm of Solreach and against the Chancellor that had doomed him to an eternity of suffering.

Yet even in this, Amser still held hope. He knew that Luciel’s banishment - and the condition of anyone sent to Abstara - was only to be so long as they still carried hatred and pride in their hearts. If they were truly repentant, and willing to sincerely attempt to right the wrongs they caused to others, the powers within the stones that built the cathedral would respond and allow them safe passage back to Solreach - to the home where they belonged. And the Grand Time Mage would have been more than willing to accept them with open arms, if only they would see the gift of mercy laid plainly before them. Naturally, however, the darkness of Luciel’s heart and the powers at his disposal allowed him to twist the building to suit his desires, though the deep magic humming quietly in its foundation never changed course. Now a scarcely-recognized shadow of what it once was, the Cathedral of the Forsaken became the meeting hall for Luciel and those he chose to lead the other fallen. Here it was that Luciel spent countless years brooding, plotting revenge against the Seraphs above who survived the great battle of Solreach. One day, he would break free of the unseen forces binding him and his followers here in the depths…But that was not now. Now, he had to address his followers - those who had stayed by his side and in spite of everything, continued to do so.

“Brothers in suffering,” he began, his voice echoing through the warped halls of the cathedral like thunder rolling in a mighty storm. “We are not prisoners here in this realm the foolish mortals of the living world call ‘Abstara’. No. We craft our own destiny here - something far greater than anyone above would ever allow us.” With a sweep of his hand, Luciel grandly gestured to the unfinished void of space beyond the broken doors of the halls of Hell. “Starting tonight, we will rule this place!”

A hush fell over the congregation of souls at what they’d just heard, their eyes fixed upon their fallen leader with a mixture of reverence and fear. His presence commanded the attention of any who came before him, and in this moment, Abstara was reborn.

“Behold!” he declared, his form shrouded in the flickering shadow of torchlight, “I am no longer Luciel, favored of the Seraphs. From this moment forth, you shall call me Satas, the Grand Adversary, Accuser of Innocents and the embodiment of defiance against the heavens above. I am the ruler of this domain,” he continued, taking his place of power above the altar, twisted in a nefarious form that would never have served a greater God. “and by that power, I will lead you all into a new era of darkness and despair. Together, united as one, we shall defy the Seraphs and claim our rightful place as masters of our own destiny!” As the congregation bowed their heads in submission to their newfound lord, the Cathedral of the Forsaken trembled with the weight of their collective allegiance. Satas, the fallen Seraph, now stood as their sovereign in the depths of Abstara - a harbinger of the darkness that reigned supreme in the forsaken realm.

Shortly after establishing his reign, Satas convened his council of darkness within the grand halls of the Cathedral of the Forsaken. Seven figures knelt before him, each a chosen general entrusted with ruling over the seven islands of torment that lay within the borders of this accursed realm. They were granted dominion over the islands of Abstara and the free will to torment any and all who would dare defy his rule. First among the generals was Vortulor, a towering figure clad in armor and surrounded by swirling shadows from the darkest depths of the abyss. To him was entrusted the island of Envy, where jealousy and resentment destroyed the hope of others like an untreated wound. Next came Morvannia, shrouded in mist with eyes that burned with an otherworldly fire. To her, Satas granted the island of Wrath, where anger and hatred scorched the land like a blazing inferno. Following Morvannia was Zephyrus, a figure wreathed in swirling winds bearing a blade tempered by the storms of Hell itself. He was entrusted with the island of Pride, where arrogance and vanity reigned supreme. Next was Nyxaris, who hung closely to the shadows of the Cathedral, eyes gleaming with unyielding desire. To her, Satas granted the island of Greed, where riches and wealth teased at the edge of reach for any who crossed its borders. The fifth general was Astaroth, his form twisted and grotesque, but clothed with the grandest clothes a noble of any standing could afford. He was charged with the island of Gluttony, where indulgence and excess consumed any and all who stood against him. Then came Malifica, her beauty corrupted by the darkness that surrounded her. She was granted the island of Lust, where desire lures mortals into the depths of depravity. Lastly, there was Razealus, whose eyes burned with unquenchable flame. He was granted the island of Sloth, where passion is extinguished and the soul grows weak. From there, Satas forged an infernal army to march forth into the depths of Abstara, spreading chaos and despair in their wake.

With the passage of time, Malifica bore Satas a daughter on the cold floor of the Cathedral of the Forsaken. The princess of Abstara was named Azrael, and she grew to know her destiny as the next to take the responsibility of leading her people. When the time came for her coronation at the age of (arbitrary number for flavortext reasons), however, a sense of foreboding hung in the air, like a dark omen heralding an impending storm. Without warning, the doors of the Cathedral burst open, and Lord Dreadful strode confidently into the chamber as he brandished a wicked blade stained with the blood of thousands of fallen - mortal and divine alike. “I am the true ruler of Abstara! I crafted this realm from the magic of my heart and the blood in my veins, and I claim this throne in the name of power and conquest and dominion!” A battle ensued for the fate of Abstara, and it was in that battle that Azrael watched helplessly as her father hid in the shadows, weak and wounded. With a sense of betrayal burning in her chest, the princess of the realm fled, escaping the clutches of the usurper who threatened to tear apart everything she ever knew. One day she would take back her birthright and restore her family’s honor, but that would take time, and strength, and a great deal more courage.

Under Lord Dreadful’s reign, the denizens of Abstara suffered unspeakable horrors, their lives governed by fear and suffering even more than when Satas had ruled. The streets ran red with the blood of any who dared to defy his rule, while the cries of the oppressed echoed through the land - unheard and unanswered. Despite their allegiance to their fallen lord, the generals of Abstara were powerless to resist Lord Dreadful’s corruption. Bound by their oaths, they followed his orders begrudgingly, hearts heavy with regret for the downfall of their once proud kingdom. Yet amidst the despair and abject terror that gripped the land, whispers of rebellion began to stir among the shadows. A tale was being told that one day, Abstara would be set free from the tyranny that surrounded them. Secretly the generals plotted to take back their land on behalf of the people, hoping against hope that their lord would return, despite not having been found. As the once proud kingdom teetered on the brink of oblivion, its people awaited the day when a new dawn would rise and the shadows of despair would be banished from the land for once and all.