

# Tears of the Shadow Mistress

By: Craig A. Singsank



Sitrini kept her head down and her eyes sternly closed lest a tear escape its confines. Her smoky black locks flowed across her face like a velvet curtain as she knelt against the cold stone of the deserted building. Long ago this alabaster-skinned wisp of a thing promised she would never again cry for herself – this was an oath she meant keep to the end. Tonight's torments would pass, they always did. The details of her encounter this evening didn't matter, it only mattered that she survived. The frightened child that had once clung helplessly to the sundered remains of her dead mother's body no longer existed. Years ago the waves of hardship had crashed upon the shores of her innocent world and threatened to drown her in their depths, but Sitrini had survived the onslaught and fought her way out of the darkness. Sitrini had not let herself perish in the desolation of her childhood. Sitrini had learned to wear her string of loss and misery with pride, like a necklace of the heirloom pearls – darkened, scarred, and pitted by frequent and unrelenting abuse, but radiant nonetheless.

Feeling the chill of the encroaching night, and lacking a blanket or cloak, Sitrini moved to a sheltered corner of the building, pulled her knees up to her chest, wrapped her arms around herself, and began to rock herself into a shallow sleep. Distracted by fatigue, Sitrini almost missed the movement near her. Lifting her head slowly, she glimpsed a figure slip from the shadows and glide toward her with the sultry grace of a dancer. Sitrini stopped rocking and marveled at the figure's poise. Even in the graying light of dusk, its movements were so fluid and alluring they mesmerized. As the seductive and clearly feminine figure approached, Sitrini could not make out its facial features for they were shrouded in a veil of lace thin shadows. By the time the figure was close enough to stroke Sitrini's pale cheek, the young woman was seduced and enthralled. While the beautiful apparition tenderly slid her hand across Sitrini's ivory-skinned face and began to gently stroke the young-girl's hair, a single tear began to trace a path down the stranger's cheek.

With the gentleness of a feather drifting in the breeze, Sitrini effortlessly caught the errant tear on the tip of her index finger before it could fall to the ground. Closing her fingers around the glistening orb, Sitrini brought her hand to her heart and averted her gaze from the mysterious figure. Stepping forward, the figure stretched out her arms and engulfed Sitrini in an embrace of soothing sable shades. The familiar pain and anguish that Sitrini had worn for years receded as the visible world around her faded into a smoky haze. Sitrini found herself standing on a narrow silver path, its surface was fluid like mercury and its countless branches spread before her like the roots of some ancient tree. As the being Sitrini now somehow knew as the Shadow Mistress took her hand and bid her to follow – they began to walk the path together. As they swiftly strode the satiny surface of the silver path, Sitrini began to feel a comforting peace. She reveled in the rapturous embrace and the release from pain. She had found her purpose; Sitrini was now one of the Tears of the Shadow Mistress – and she was eager to begin its pursuit.

## Tears:

Although their individual stories vary, from misbegotten orphan to misunderstood outcast, all Tears see the world as being populated by predators and prey, the users and the used. Attempting to depose of every scavenging jackal is a fool's errand. They will just be replaced by another from the endless pack of stalking beasts. It is an equal fallacy to try and save all the ignorant masses. They are mindless pigeons upon which the jackals feed, their lot will never change. The only pragmatic course then is to save the few unique souls who tread the path outside the roles of predator and prey. To the Tears, these special souls are the beautiful swans of the world, the dreamers and novel thinkers that have found their own path to follow. The Mistress's Tears fill the role of guide and guardian, pulling the vulnerable swans from the jaws of the scavenging jackals. The Tears refer to this role as "walking the Twilight Path." If the jackals must feed, let them feast on the masses of hapless pigeons, their loss is of no consequence to the Mistress.

All the young ones that will someday become Tears began life with the unblemished spirits and dreams of swans. That was until tragedy shattered their lives forcing the innocent swans to reconstitute themselves as cunning ravens – shrewd beauties possessing lethal talons. Every Tear of the Shadow

Mistress is a female of striking beauty and deftly honed skill. She is the instrument by which the Shadow Mistress to shows her contempt for the stifling machinations of both the dark cults and self-righteous orders of the world. Her Tears are just as likely to strike the tyrannical leader of a sinister cabal as they are to disrupt a pompous preacher's dogmatically harsh teachings. Nevertheless, a Tear is not some glassy-eyed zealot that swoons with false piety over the dream of burning on the wasteful pyre of martyrdom. Traversing the perpetual grey twilight between darkness and light has cultivated a philosophy of pragmatic individualism within all the Tears. They possess no steadfast dogma. Their moral compass can be described as intellectually promiscuous and porous. If the beliefs and practices of her past are not relevant to the challenges of tomorrow, the Tear sweeps them from her memory, like a traveler brushing the dust from her boots at the end of a day's journey.

A Tear's principal goal is to assist the swans she encounters in making their way along the Twilight Path, helping to prevent them from being lost to the darkness or consumed by the light. Through the use of subtle guile and merciless assaults, Tears also cull the more vicious predators from the ever present pack of jackals. Tears have found that the removal of a single predator can result in great change, much like how dislodging a single pebble can move a mountain – as long as it's the right pebble. Therefore, prowling jackals that gorge themselves upon prey that they poach from the Twilight Path find themselves hunted relentlessly. In the end, to attack a beautiful swan is to chance a sunset meeting with a Tear, her talons at the ready.

The vast majority of Tears are dual-classed rogues and sorceresses, although some Tears have additional training as bards, fighters, and even rangers. Paladins, clerics, and monks are completely absent from the sisterhood of Tears, as are the races of dwarves, half-orcs, and gnomes. Three-fourths of all Tears are humans or half-elves with the remaining quarter composed of tieflings, elves, drow, and a menagerie of assorted refugees and half-breeds.

**Hit Die:** d6.

Class LVL	Base Att	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per Day					
						0	1	2	3	4	5
1st	+0	+0	+2	+0	Shadow's Child, Sneak Attack +1d6	2	0	--	--	--	--
2nd	+1	+0	+3	+1	Shadow Familiar, Shadowy Seductress	2	1	--	--	--	--
3rd	+2	+1	+3	+2	Sneak Attack +2d6	2	2	0	--	--	--
4th	+3	+1	+4	+3	Seduction's Shield	3	2	1	--	--	--
5th	+3	+1	+4	+3	Sneak Attack +3d6	3	2	2	0	--	--
6th	+4	+2	+5	+4	Seduction's Sting	3	3	2	1	--	--
7th	+5	+2	+5	+5	Sneak Attack +4d6	4	3	2	2	0	--
8th	+6	+2	+6	+6	Chasing Shadows	4	3	3	2	1	--
9th	+6	+3	+6	+6	Sneak Attack +5d6	4	4	3	2	2	0
10th	+7	+3	+7	+7	Shadow's Embrace	4	4	3	3	2	1

### Requirements:

To qualify to become one of the Tears of the Shadow Mistress a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

**Alignment:** Chaotic Good or Chaotic Neutral.

**Bluff:** 9 ranks.

**Hide:** 9 ranks.

**Move Silently:** 6 ranks.

**Pick Pocket:** 6 ranks.

**Feats:** Expert Tactician, Evasion, Improved Initiative, Uncanny Dodge (can't be flanked), Weapon Finesse.

**Spells:** Ability to cast arcane spells.

**Special:** Sneak attack +3d6, female, and prior contact with the Shadow Mistress.

### Class Skills:

The Tears of the Shadow Mistress prestige class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Diplomacy (Cha), Disable Device (Int), Disguise (Cha), Escape Artist (Dex), Gather Information (Cha), Hide (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Open Locks (Dex), Perform (Cha), Pick Pocket (Dex), Search (Int), Spot (Wis), Tumble (Dex)

Skill Points at Each Level  $6 + \text{Int modifier}$ .

### **Class Features:**

All the following are class features of the Tears of the Shadow Mistress prestige class.

**Special:** The Tear must intercede on the behalf of a “swan” at least once a level. The Tear cannot advance in level until this requirement has been met. Swans are to be removed from harm's way before all else -- it is irrelevant how many of the soulless masses and jackals need to be sacrificed to meet this end. Nevertheless, Tears are unlikely to sacrifice themselves in hopeless acts – it is better to let one swan perish so a larger bevy can be saved later.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Tears are proficient in all simple and martial weapons. They possess no armor proficiencies.

**Spells:** A Tear's bonus spells and saving throw DC's against spells she casts are based on her Charisma ( $DC = 10 + \text{spell level} + \text{Tear's Charisma modifier}$ ). Any spells she attempts to cast with either a “Light” or “Fire” descriptor have a 10% chance of failure per prestige class level. At 10<sup>th</sup> level, the Tear is completely barred from using these spells, even if she would have access to them due to levels gained in another spell-casting class. The Tear may fill open spell slots from her other arcane spell-casting classes with spells from the Tear's spell list – as long as she has gained enough levels in the prestige class to cast the spell as a Tear. Tear's cast spells in the same manner as sorceresses.

**Sneak Attack:** This power is identical to the rogue ability of the same name and stacks accordingly.

**Shadow's Child:** This power grants the Tear low-light vision to 60 feet (a bonus of +30 feet is gained by characters that already possess low-light vision). Second, the character can move through the shadows at her normal movement rate while using the Move Silently and Hide skills without penalty. While running or charging through the shadows, the Tear suffers a -10 penalty to all Move Silently and Hide checks.

**Shadow Familiar:** The Tear's familiar gains the “Shadow Familiar Template”. As the Tear gains levels, her familiar slowly transforms into an ebony-hued creature of shadow-stuff (see the Shadow Familiar Template below). The shadow familiar retains all the abilities it possessed in its natural form in addition to the new ones it gains as it slowly transforms. If the Tear does not possess a familiar she may choose one: the most common being a raven. The familiar will have the base abilities granted to normal familiars of a first-level arcane spell-caster.

**Shadowy Seductress:** While within 10 feet of shadows large enough to hide in, the Tear gains a +2 situation bonus to all Bluff checks and a +2 bonus to all spell DC's that are “mind-affecting.” Further, the Tear adds half her Hide ranks to any save against shadow magic from spells, magic items, or a creature's special ability.

**Seduction's Shield:** The Tear's innate persona is enormously enthralling, making it difficult for opponents to execute effective attacks against her. Due to her commanding presence, the Tear adds a base +1 to her armor class plus an additional +1 for each Charisma modifier, as long as she is not wearing armor. The Seduction's Shield power is potent against all living creatures regardless of the Tear's awareness. This power can not be used on most creatures that are immune to mind-influencing effects (e.g., constructs, oozes, plants, and undead).

**Seduction's Sting:** The sultry gaze of a Tear can cause even the most experienced warrior to lower his guard, if for but an instant. In that sliver of a moment, when skilled seduction overcomes the trained intellect, the Tear can thrust the tip of her blade home with such mastery that the initial sting often goes unfelt. The Seduction's Sting ability enables the Tear to feint in combat using her Bluff skill as a move-equivalent action. As a secondary use of this ability, the Tear may willingly cause her “attack” to miss its mark, allowing her to pick-pocket her opponent ( $DC=25$ ). Prior to trying to pick-pocket in combat, the Tear must make a successful Bluff check and have a hand free. If the Pick-Pocket attempt fails and is noticed (e.g., the opponent's Spot check beats the Tear's Pick Pocket check), the Tear's opponent is allowed an attack of opportunity against the character. Once noticed, no further Pick Pocket attempts

can be made against the opponent for the duration of the combat. This ability can not be used on opponents that are immune to critical hits or sneak attacks.

**Chasing Shadows:** No longer a passive ally, the shadows now actively intercede on the behalf of the Tear. Once per day, if she is within two feet per Hide rank of the shadows, and not flat-footed, the Tear can draw upon the shadows to displace her true location just enough so she can escape the damage of a lethal blow. When a Tear is struck in combat and would be reduced to 0 to -9 hit points, she can make a Hide check (DC = 10+damage dealt) in order to take only half damage. If the check is successful, the Tear will always have at least 1 hit point remaining regardless of the total damage dealt. However, if the initial damage would reduce the Tear to -10 hit points or less, this ability cannot be used. The use of this ability is not without its costs to the character. In order to evade the fatal blow, the Tear gives up a bit of her essence to the shadows. Each time this ability is successfully employed the Tear loses 100xp per prestige class level. If the cost in experience points would reduce her in level, the Tear temporarily gains a negative level in the prestige class until she earns enough experience points to return to her former level.

**Shadow's Embrace:** Once per day, a Tear can step onto the plane of shadows to receive solace in its embrace. Within the shade of this haven, the character heals 1d4 hit points per Charisma modifier – this effect is instantaneous. While cocooned in the shadows, the Tear sees the physical world she left in muted silhouette. The Tear can remain in the Shadow's Embrace up to 10 minutes plus 10 minutes per rank of Hide. When leaving the land of perpetual twilight, the Tear can emerge from any shadow within 30 feet of her original position as long as it is visible from her point of entry. If all the shadows within 30 feet of the Tear's point of entry are dissipated, including the shadows she entered, she is instantly expelled. This expulsion will daze the Tear for 1d4 rounds. During this period the Tear can take no action other than defend herself. Now fully embraced by the shadows, the Tear is immune to all attacks and effects that employ any form of shadow magic.

#### Spell List:

**0 Level** – *daze*, *distort shadow*<sup>1</sup>, *ghost sound*, *prestidigitation*, *visages of the twilight path*<sup>2</sup>

**1<sup>st</sup> Level** – *cloak of shadows*<sup>2</sup>, *deadly nails*<sup>3</sup>, *reshape shadow*, *shade's sight*<sup>1</sup>, *tears of the mistress*<sup>2</sup>

**2<sup>nd</sup> Level** – *eye of the needle*<sup>3</sup>, *animate shadow*, *ecstasy*<sup>4</sup>, *minor shadow conjuration*<sup>1</sup>, *shadow images*<sup>1</sup>

**3<sup>rd</sup> Level** – *dar' tan's shadow bolt*<sup>1</sup>, *minor shadow evocation*<sup>1</sup>, *shadow form of lyrand*<sup>1</sup>, *suggestion*

**4<sup>th</sup> Level** – *confusion*, *phantasmal lover*<sup>4</sup>, *shadow conjuration*, *shadow weapon*<sup>1</sup>

**5<sup>th</sup> Level** – *greater shadow conjuration*, *rie's dance of seduction*<sup>1</sup>, *shadow evocation*

#### Visages of the Twilight Path

Divination

**Level:** Tear 0

**Components:** V, S

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Personal

**Target:** You

**Duration:** 10 minutes/level

You gain the ability to see the "Twilight Path." When this spell is cast, the colors of the prime material fade into black charcoal-colored hues as nearby objects become blurred. In contrast, a narrow glossy-silver path of amorphous shape and texture appears in sharp focus at your feet and branches out in a multitude of directions before you. As you step forward the path disappears behind you. It is not possible to trace your steps backward. On the Twilight Path, moving forward is the only option. For the duration of the spell, you will be able to see all the "swans" that tread the Twilight Path in your field of vision – these are the only individuals besides yourself and other Tears that walk upon the silvery path. Other beings may cross the path, but their footsteps always seem to miss its surface. This spell may only be cast during twilight each day. For the duration of the spell, you suffer a -2 penalty to initiative checks and AC.

#### Cloak of Shadows

Illusion (Shadow)

**Level:** Tear 1, Sor/Wiz 2

**Components:** V, S, F  
**Casting Time:** 1 action  
**Range:** Personal  
**Target:** You

**Duration:** 1d4 rounds + 1 round/level

You can use your Hide skill to “Hide in Plain Sight” as the feat of the same name. While casting this spell, you must be within 10 feet of a shadow, excluding your own. Once cast, you can use your Hide skill under direct observation as many times as you would like for the duration of the spell. Moving faster than half your normal movement rate, casting an offensive spell, or engaging in melee will render you visible. When visible, nearby shadows tug at the edges of your garments elongating the fabric causing thin black strands of animated clothing to billow about as if blown in a light breeze. This phenomenon grants all individuals within sight of you a +2 modifier to their Spot checks.

*Focus:* A cloak, robe, veil or other garment large enough to cover your head and shoulders.

### Tears of the Mistress

Evocation

**Level:** Tear 1, Sor/Wiz 2

**Components:** S, M

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Medium (50ft. + 5ft./level)

**Effect:** Ray

**Duration:** 1 round/level or instantaneous (see text)

**Saving Throw:** None

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

You can hurl your tears at opponents as glistening onyx bolts of energy. To strike your opponent, you must make a ranged touch attack. Each shimmering bolt does 1d4 points of damage. For every three levels past 1<sup>st</sup>, you can project an additional bolt with a maximum of four bolts at 10<sup>th</sup> level. You can attack a single opponent a round with as many bolts as you desire up to your maximum. Regardless of the number of bolts directed at an opponent in a round, they are treated as a single attack. Any unused bolts will remain accessible to you as a partial action for the duration of the spell, even if you subsequently cast other spells.

*Material Component:* Caster’s tears

### Shadow Familiar Template:

As the Tear gains levels in the prestige class, her familiar slowly transforms into a black-satin creature of shadow-stuff. As the familiar steady becomes composed of ever more shadows, it gains a comparable concealment bonus which makes it harder to strike. For example, when a Tear reaches 5<sup>th</sup> level, her familiar will be made of 40% shadow-stuff subjecting all attacks against it to a 40% miss chance. Last, all of a familiar’s previous abilities stack with the new skills of the template.

Mistress Prestige Class Level	Natural Armor	Int	Concealment Miss Chance	Special
2	+1	+1	20%	Shared Shadows
3-4	+2	+2	30%	
5-6	+3	+3	40%	Shadow Touched
7-8	+4	+4	50%	
9-10	+5	+5	50%	Shadow Sight

**Shared Shadows:** Whenever a shadow familiar is within 5 feet of its mistress, it can share the benefits of any of the four “shadow abilities” (e.g., Shadow’s Child, Shadowy Seductress, Chasing Shadows, and Shadow’s Embrace) its mistress possesses.

**Shadow Touched:** If both the Tear and her familiar are in the shadows, can see each other, and are within 5 feet of one another per prestige class level of the Tear at the time of casting, the familiar can deliver its mistress's touch attacks. When the spell is cast, the familiar may leave the shadows in order to make the touch attack; however, the Tear must remain in the shadows. If the Tear leaves the shadows at anytime, the spell is disrupted and lost.

**Shadow Sight:** If both the Tear and her familiar are in the shadows and within 100 feet of each other per prestige class level of the Tear, the mistress can see through her familiar's eyes as if they were her own.

#### **[Sidebar] The Shadow Mistress:**

The veil of mystery that shrouds the angelic features of the Shadow Mistress, also known as the Sirine of Shades and the Maiden of the Twilight Path, is not easily breached. More fiction than fact is known of this porcelain beauty. Her origin is only guessed at. The more persistent stories weave tales of her being the offspring of a sirine and a shadow dragon, or a fallen-angel, a celestial that shielded a blasphemous heretic from righteous justice, earning herself exile for her efforts. Either tale is plausible, but with no support the stories are only folklore. The one fact that is known of the Mistress is that she appears to striking young females that have survived great hardship through the sheer force of their own character. Offering these lonely isolated beauties access to astonishing abilities, the Mistress only requires the ladies to accept her embrace and walk the Twilight Path. All other tangible insights into the ambitions of the Mistress are only gleaned indirectly through the observation of the Tears she has embraced.

#### **[Sidebar] Contacting the Tear:**

Once a DM decides that he will allow the Tears of the Shadow Mistress prestige class in his campaign, he needs to determine how the character will be contacted by the Shadow Mistress. One interesting way to introduce the Shadow Mistress is to wait until the character meets all the requirements for the prestige class. Instead of allowing the character to become a first-level Tear, have the player continue adventuring with the character. When the character uses her Hide skill and makes an exceptional check (DC=30) during a challenging part of an adventure, have the Shadow Mistress appear to her. To the rest of the party it will appear as if the character has vanished into the shadows. When the character is released from the Mistress's embrace after 1-6 rounds, the DM would immediately grant the character all the benefits of a first-level Tear, and the adventure would continue.

#### **[SideBar] Shunning the Embrace:**

Once embraced, a Tear can simply decide to stop walking the Twilight Path and leave the sisterhood. This act does not anger the Shadow Mistress. She treats this lapse as a short rest, a repose for her Tear to regain her strength before continuing her journeys. In truth, the Tear cannot just decide to leave the "Twilight Path." Only the Mistress can cast a Tear from its silvery surface. A Tear that too frequently averts her eyes when a swan is in peril may incur the ire of the Mistress's un-embraced. Once un-embraced, a fallen Tear will lose all special class abilities and spells. She will only retain her Sneak Attack abilities. To the Mistress, the character is now nothing more than one of the nameless masses – her fate is of no consequence and absolution is never given. Moreover, if a Tear ever begins to prey on the swans she is sworn to protect, the Mistress's wrath is absolute and unyielding – the fallen lady is branded a jackal and hunted relentlessly by her former sisters.

#### **[SideBar] Symbol of the Shadow Mistress:**

During a Tear's initial embrace, she is permanently marked with the pitch-black symbol of the Shadow Mistress. The symbol (see above) is about the size of the Tear's clenched fist and is always found in the center of her lower back. Its meaning and purpose are hidden to the uninitiated. The black brand cannot be removed by non-magical means and even a *Wish* spell will only cause the symbol to disappear until twilight of the next sunset. A few of the more expressive and confrontational members of the sisterhood have also begun to tattoo a stylized black or red tear just below their left eye. It is unknown if this is the start of a sub-sect of the Tears' or just a sign of simple personal choice – like most aspects of the Tears and their mistress, time doesn't always tell: but their actions do.



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