

Ashen Tears of Oblivion

Ashen Tears of Oblivion has the unearthly beauty of the recently dead, being tall, thin, and as pale as alabaster. Her long dark hair hangs seductively over her face, creating an air of mystery, danger, and smouldering sexuality. Her physical appearance is that of someone of around twenty, and her demeanour belies a far greater age. But her grace and archaic manners reveals her to be someone much older.

She holds court in her Citadel of Ashen Tears on an island off the north-west coast of the Realm that was once a part of Creation before her invasion two years ago. Recently, work has been completed to bring the Abyssal Manse from the Underworld into Creation itself, as well as the turning of the island into a new Shadowland. One could not happen without the other as the Manse reinforces the Shadowland while it, in turn, enables the Manse to reside within Creation without ill effect. The Citadel itself is made up of a central spire that rises needle-thin for four hundred meters with many smaller spires coming off from the base and walls. From a distance it appears as if it was made from dozens of long, thin thorns growing together in a thicket.

Ashen Tears of Oblivion is the eleventh Deathlord to reveal herself in the Underworld since the time of the Usurpation. She has her Citadel on the large island off the north-west coast of Stygia, near to where Eagle's Launch would be on the Blessed Isle in Creation (See map of the Blessed Isle in Exalted: the Dragon- Blooded). Like all Deathlords, she was once a Solar Exalted who ruled within the Solar Deliberative in the Old Realm before the Usurpation who sold her name to the Void shortly after her untimely death. For many centuries she secretly worked on gaining a cult following among the undead, creating the means necessary to make her move and reveal herself to be a powerful adversary to Creation.

Ashen Tears has not yet created many Deathknights, even though she has about a dozen Essences at her disposal. One Deathknight under her charge is The Priestess of Perfect Silence, notable for the fact that she was Exalted right under the nose of The Mask of Winters during his successful attack on the city of Thorns. She has so far Exalted four Deathknights, The Priestess being her favourite.

She is not openly antagonistic toward the other Deathlords, despite her meteoric rise to power that has shadowed even that of the Mask of Winters', as now she considers any move against them as a fool's errand at best, and potentially an unmitigated disaster at worst. At the moment she is consolidating her hold on power over the island, being so close to the Realm, and building up her forces for further attacks within Creation. Instead, she is busily plotting the downfall of Creation through the use of Death Cults and other covert methods, both in the Underworld and in Creation.

Two years ago she openly showed her hand for the first time. Her forces attacked the island off the coast of Eagle's Launch in Creation, and the massacre that followed turned the entire island into a Shadowland. Her attack was launched from the Underworld using Void Circle Necromancy to open a portal between the Underworld and Creation just off the coast of the island she now calls home. Many Imperial Triremes under her command, rowed by gigantic Spine Chains, descended upon the island in the middle of Calibration, landing undead troops and siege machinery of macabre construction. Within the third night of Calibration she had taken control of the island from the Realm and had massacred ninety per cent of the mortal population, pushing the island and the remainder of its inhabitants firmly into a Shadowland.

Since that event the island has been known as the Citadel of Ashen Tears, and the Realm has put out an edict that no one is to go anywhere near it. This doesn't stop outlaws and Anathema flocking to her banner. On the contrary, the Citadel of Ashen Tears has become a magnet for those who have heard the voice of the Void, mainly through the covert ministrations of The Priestess of Perfect Silence and other such agents.

The Citadel of Ashen Tears



The Citadel of Ashen Tears stands like a spun confection of obsidian sugar in the centre of the large island off the north-west coast of Eagle's Launch, a small prefecture of the Realm. Its ornate design belies its impenetrable strength as a fortress-manse. Some have likened it to a thicket of thorns reaching four hundred metres into the cold, overcast sky that seem to be growing unnaturally out of the obsidian rock beneath. Others decry it as the folly of a mad ghost hell-bent on the destruction of Creation. Both are equally correct.

Not much is known about the layout of the citadel. Savants who have studied the Deathlords and their Abyssal Exalts would surmise that the lower dungeons of the citadel would either link with the Labyrinth that leads to the Well of the Void, or be an actual part of it. Such savants are correct, though no mortal has ever been down there and returned alive or unchanged. What secret rooms and torture chambers Ashen Tears of Oblivion keeps within the higher dungeon levels no one knows, but whatever she has down there will be full of various unfathomable evils.

Guests of Ashen Tears and envoys sent from various factions speak of a great Main Hall that would even dwarf the Imperial Manse. The great doors swing open on command to those with the authority on gigantic hinges greased with the fat of behemoths, although by which mechanism the doors are actually activated by is still unknown. Some rumours talk of two giant Spine-Chains locked out of sight within the walls of the Great Hall that pull ropes linked to chains and pulleys. Other rumours speak of far worse necromantic magics.

The Great Hall itself is panelled in polished black haematite around all five walls with Soulsteel accents and motifs that channel Abyssal Essence to some private chamber behind the Dais at the far end. Skulls, claws, and twisting ley-lines feature most heavily here. What, exactly, is contained within this chamber is again unknown, but Savants would agree that it is probably where whatever perverse Hearth Stones the Deathlord desires are formed.

At the end of the Great Hall is a dais, upon which the throne that Ashen Tears sits when holding court. To either side are two smaller thrones reserved for her two most trusted Deathknights, The Princess of Perfect Silence and The Mistress of Blighted Lives. Both are ethereal and deadly beauties, much like their mistress. Her whole attitude is geared toward celebrating beauty in death and destruction, and this is reflected in those she has so far chosen to Exalt.

Behind the thrones is a small, nondescript door leading into the private chamber where many suppose that the Hearth Stones of the Manse are formed. Whether this is so, or whether it merely leads towards that chamber is neither here nor there. Only those who are most trusted ever pass that way, and some never return.

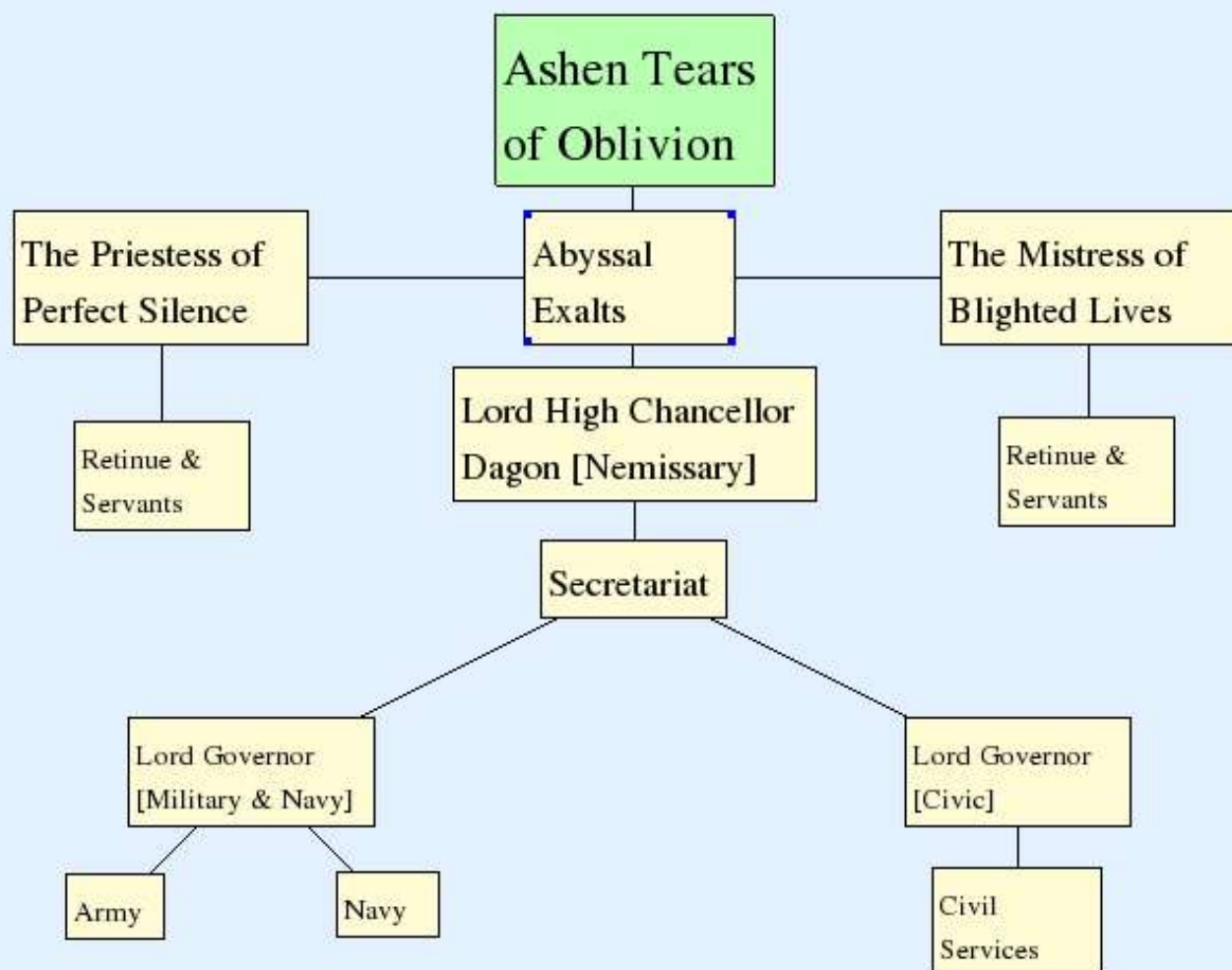
Just before the Great Hall is a lesser hall that contains the main stairwells of the manse – the ones that lead to guest chambers and the such like. Several corridors also lead off from this lesser hall, but none of them lead to anywhere very important. Most places of any import are only reached through certain passages hidden from most visitors and lesser servants.

The citadel and the island are synonymous with each other, as the power of the Abyssal Manse extends throughout the whole island. Its defences are also woven within the fabric of the land it inhabits, as the citizens of the land make up the vast majority of Ashen Tears of Oblivion's standing forces. Before its invasion, most of the citizens of the island were seafaring merchants and their crews, as well as stevedores, fishermen, and the such like.

Such citizens (the ones who survived, or who remained useful once dead) have been “enlisted” in Ashen Tears of Oblivion's navy. The bodies of those that died had their corpses animated and moulded into Spine Chains. The higher spirits (the hun) of those that didn't carry on into Lethe (and that was the vast majority of them) were also enlisted where they were most suitable. Any lower spirits (the po) that remained were either destroyed as being useless, or herded together into packs of hungry ghosts. As for those who remained alive, they were given menial tasks within the fleet that could not be done by ghosts.

Other citizens, who were not connected with the sea, became indentured slaves working the now-ruinous lands around the citadel. Some of the more fortunate became soldiers, both living and dead, while those that sided with Ashen Tears either maintained their former status, or were elevated to a higher one as reward for their treachery against the Realm.

The Organisation Of Ashen Tear's Kingdom



Immediately after the invasion of the Isle two years ago, Ashen Tears of Oblivion transplanted her whole Manse into the newly formed Shadowland using Void Circle Necromancy spells that were so esoteric that only the Deathlords and Malfeans themselves are privy to them, or even, are capable of working them. Along with her Manse came the governance of her Underworld kingdom into the newly formed Shadowland, which duly set about the task of bringing the inhabitants of the island under her authority.

Ashen Tears of Oblivion uses a two-tiered pyramid structure in order to rule her kingdom by. The upper pyramid is made up of her Deathknights and their immediate subordinates, while the lower pyramid is headed by the Lord High Chancellor, Dagon – a very old and powerful Nemissary that has served Ashen Tears for countless centuries, and one of the few dead that she in any way trusts. Below him are the Lord Governors of the military, and of the civilian population, with their respective areas of authority under them in turn. Between the Lord High Chancellor and the Lord Governors are the Secretariat – a body of ghosts that micro-manage all those under the Lord High Chancellor.

The Priestess of Perfect Silence

Prelude:

Before her dark Exaltation, the Priestess spent a solitary childhood within the city of Thorns before it became a shadowland when The Mask of Winters invaded. She was a spooky child, and all the other children in the city avoided her. This suited her fine, as she preferred her own company, as well as the company of the few ghosts that lived in Thorns before the invasion. For some reason she could always see ghosts, even when they were not corporeal. She never shared the knowledge that she could see ghosts openly, as the Immaculate Order would have branded her a heretic, or worse, but her immediate family all knew of her ability to communicate with the dead. She blossomed into adulthood with little incident until The Mask of Winters came.

When the city was invaded, the Priestess walked through the maelstrom of battle unmolested, as she had already learned how to command the dead enough to prevent them attacking her. She walked straight up to where The Mask of Winters stood, and looked up at him perched upon the back of the Juggernaut, watching the battle unfurl beneath him. Suddenly he looked straight at her, or more accurately, straight into her, and saw something in her that was both useful to his purposes and distinctly unholy, but it was not he who would offer her the dark Exaltation that she, in the innermost secret place, desired. So she walked on past The Mask of Winters and out of Thorns.

Just outside Thorns another Deathlord was watching. Whether The Mask of Winters was aware of this or not is still a mystery, but there was another Deathlord abroad that day around Thorns. She kept a very low profile regardless, as she was only just beginning to create a power base within the Underworld. Never-the-less, when the Priestess of Perfect Silence was quite alone, Ashen Tears of Oblivion revealed herself to her, and offered her the dark exaltation she so craved. The Priestess saw a worthy mistress and potential lover in the Deathlord, and consented to sell her name into the Void for eternal life and power.

At that moment she consented, weary and contemptuous of mortal life as she saw it: She desired power amongst the living as well as amongst the dead, and Ashen Tears of Oblivion offered it to her. In that instant she was Exalted as a Midnight Caste Abyssal, and was taken to the mouth of the Abyss to meet her Malfean masters. What transpired there, apart from what savants have already deduced about Abyssal Exaltation, no one knows. What is known is that her name was eaten by the Void, removing her from Creation's eternal cycle of reincarnation, and that she was taught many dark secrets by her new masters.

Since her Exaltation, The Priestess of Perfect Silence has been working stealthily to engender Death Cults in towns, cities, and hamlets around the few Shadowlands that Ashen Tears of Oblivion controls in order to increase her power base amongst the living, and to secretly raise militias that would cause mass uprisings when Ashen Tears of Oblivion chooses to invade these places. She has a fairly free reign to run her own missions, and reports back to her mistress intermittently as and when she requests a progress report. She has also been given equipment and a retinue by Ashen Tears of Oblivion to better further her aims, and amongst her Deathknights is considered to be one of her most loyal favourites.

Character Sheet

Caste: Midnight

Concept: Death Cult Leader

Nature: Paragon

Anima Banner: When fully lit up, she is surrounded by complete darkness with ethereal serpents coming out from behind her. They cannot attack or do any form of damage, but are there purely for dramatic effect.

Attributes

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, and Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Abilities

- Melee 4
- Endurance 2
- Occult 4
- Awareness 3
- Socialize 3
- Performance 3
- Dodge 2
- Stealth 3
- Presence 5
- Resistance 2
- Survival 2

Advantages

Abyssal Command 3

Necromancy 3

Whispers 3

Artifact 3

Resources 3

Liege 3

Underworld Manse 2

Willpower 7

Compassion 2, Temperance 2, Conviction 4, Valour 3

Essence 3 [Personal 16, Peripheral 39, Committed 5]

Health: -0 -1 -1 -1 -2 -2 -2 -2 -4 Incapacitated

Charms:

Ox Body Technique (E:tA P174)

Furious Blade (E:tA P165)

Slashing Ghost Talon (E:tA P166-167)

Shadowlands Circle Sorcery (E:tA P197)

Haunting Inflection Trick (E:tA P176)

Withering Dirge (E:tA P176)

Elegant Tyrant's Majesty (E:tA P179)

Irresistible Succubus Style (E:tA P180)

Passion Unveiling Glance (E:tA P222)

Intimations of Mortality (E:tA P222-223)

Sorceries:

(three free spells from Necromancy background)

Hungry Creeping Shadow (E:tA P224-225)

Piercing the Shroud (E:tA P225)

Raise the Skeletal Horde (E:tA P225)

Artifact: Grand Diaklaive

Weapons: Slashing Sword

Armour: Buff Jacket

The Mistress of Blighted Lives

Prelude:

Before her dark Exaltation, The Mistress of Blighted Lives hailed from Nexus, the Whore of the Three Rivers and City of a Thousand Vices. She grew up on the streets of the Nighthammer District, stealing scrap metals and food in order to make her subsistence. As a girl she was somewhat unremarkable – she slept where she could, stole to eat, and kept well out of the way of the Council of Entities.

When she reached adolescence she began selling herself on the streets as it was far more lucrative than stealing and dealing in scrap, even though it was considerably more dangerous, especially since she was not within the Guild and had no redress against violent customers. For the next five years she survived in this manner until one fateful night when a Tom got too amorous with his particular brand of perversions and strangled her to the point of death before leaving her body slumped in an alley for the rats to pick over.

As she felt her life finally ebbing away, a female voice came to her that was not her own, and made her an offer that she could not refuse – either die there and then in that filthy back alley, or accept the gift of eternal life that this mysterious female was offering her. Needless to say, she accepted the offer, and was Exalted as a Day Caste Abyssal.

Since that night, The Mistress of Blighted Lives has been working as Ashen Tears of Oblivion's free-roaming agent within creation, forming death cults devoted to the worship of Oblivion and taking on military duties whenever necessary. She was the deathknight who was central in opening up a portal to the island that later became Ashen Tears' personal domain using her death cults to make massive blood sacrifices that acted as an anchor to the portal.

Recently, she has been working closely with The Priestess of Perfect Silence in their joint-ventures to engender death cults across the Threshold and the Scavenger Lands. She has a moderate cult following in Nexus amongst prostitutes, who, at her behest, have started a killing spree amongst Toms in the Nighthammer District. The Council of Entities are likely to act, as this is bad for trade, and the Guild are also investigating. The Mistress of Blighted Lives has therefore decided to lay low in that region while her “acolytes” carry out their function, just so that the ritual murders are never connected to her directly.

Character Sheet:

Caste: Day

Concept: Demon Princess

Nature: Conniver

Anima Banner:

Metallic-black cloud with purple flashes of lightening within.

Attributes:

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, and Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Abilities:

- Melee 3
- Endurance 3
- Lore 2
- Athletics 2
- Socialize 3
- Performance 2
- Occult 3
- Awareness 3
- Dodge 1
- Presence 3
- Larceny 2
- Stealth 3
- Survival 1

Advantages:

Abyssal Command 3

Liege 3

Underworld Manse 2

Artifact 3

Necromancy 2

Whispers 3

Willpower 5

Compassion 2, Temperance 2, Conviction 3, Valour 2

Essence 3 [Personal 14, Peripheral 35, Committed 0]

Health: -0 -1 -1 -1 -2 -2 -2 -2 -4 Incapacitated

Charms:

Ox Body Technique (E:tA P174)

Ghost Armor Prana (E:tA P174)

Shadowlands Circle Necromancy (E:tA P197)

Spirit Sensing Technique (E:tA P198)

Furious Blade (E:tA P165)

Slashing Ghost Talon (E:tA P166)

Five Shadow Feint (E:tA P167)

Raiton's Nimble Perch (E:tA P200)

Spider Pounce Technique (E:tA P200)

Fivefold Sensory Exercise (E:tA P204)

Combo:

Demon Princess Combat Prana [Ghost Armor Prana; Furious Blade; Raiton's Nimble Perch]

Sorceries:

(two free spells from Necromancy background)

Hungry Creeping Shadow (E:tA P224)

Rune of Sweet Passing (E:tA P225)

Artifact: Grand Daiklave

Weapons: Slashing Sword

Armour: Buff; Light Plate (can choose to don either)