

Shyra (Shadow wraith) detailed

Arcanis Umbris (Scientific name)

Shyra (true name, Plural: Shyrae)

Shadow wraith (common name, regarded as an insensitive slur)

Physiology:

Shyrae do not have their own natural form, or at least that is skeptics will most often say, shapeshifters by nature they will generally have 1 or 2 preferred shapes that they take on. They are able to mimic new “shapes” by sampling dna through physical contact, their cellular structure is adaptive and able to run off the “instructions” of other species dna enough to mimic form and function however total body mass must remain the same, meaning mimicking a species with a dense muscle structure will tend to the shyra being on the smaller side, and imitating small species they end up being rather large by comparison.

Their metabolism is greatly affected by the natural traits of the species they mimic, to the point certain species are entirely impossible to imitate, such as adult cosmic dragons. Furthermore they cannot mimic unnaturally acquired traits that are not genetic, such as Aquitarian citizen’s cybernetic tampering, or prosthetic limbs, nor can they regrow whole limbs even if mimicking a species with that level of self regeneration.

Regardless of shape however they all share the same diet, white blood, and distinctive razor sharp teeth. In truth however they do have one form to call their own though due to their unfortunate and false reputation of being harbingers of chaos and the cause of empires falling they do not share it freely, most choose only to show with their closest friends, most often their mate alone unless in extreme situations that necessitate the advantages their true form holds. Physically they are most similar to anthropomorphic canines. Sporting pitch black fur that shimmers in the light, reflecting iridescent colors across their entire body. Their heads also resemble canine structure, with notably short broad snouts whose shape resembles a pit bull’s however their teeth are very distinct, roughly triangular with barb like serrations on the edges to prevent prey from escaping and are most commonly colored almost identically to black onyx gemstones, their teeth are slightly retractable thanks to a partially separated second jawbone, the inside of their mouths are snow white, the “whites” of the eyes are black at the edges fading to a pale icy blue just before the iris itself which can be different shades of blue, grey, white, green, or even a mottled or layered combination of the 4. Their ears are roughly even with the top of their head, pointing slightly backwards and opening to the sides when at rest, their hearing is incredibly sensitive and they have tight bundles of specialized nerves around the base of the outer ears which are able to pick up vibrations and automatically reorient the ears as a reflex, which makes the ears a particularly rough weak spot more so than others as even a light tap can severely disorient them, and light consistent scratching or rubs can cause a catatonic state. They can hear well into ultrasonic and infrasonic frequencies, and thus sonic weapons are their achilles heel. Along their back are 2 pairs of feathered wings, the upper pair have a wingspan of roughly double their height, and sport pitch black feathers that seem to absorb almost all spectrums of visible light, which fade very quickly to white at the last inch of the trailing edge with their iridescent fur covering the leading edges of the wings, and the lower set are roughly half the size of the top set and similarly colored, furred, and feathered. The wings lead to a greatly exaggerated set of musculature in the chest and abdomen/hips that lend to a surprisingly curvy silhouette though their fur being so thick greatly smoothes out the appearance despite

the muscular structure beneath.

Their tails are possibly the most mysterious of their features, being usually around the same length as the entire rest of their body and furred just like the rest of them the end of the tail will appear different based on their mood, when happy or neutral the tail ends in the same fur as their body, a scared Shyra's tail is fluffier and ends in a roughly 10 inch long, serrated, hook like spine for self defense. When sufficiently happy or excited, a subtle bioluminescent glow will start from the tail tip and pulse through their skin beneath their fur, changing color at a slow, reportedly calming pace which has a slight empathic property in that it makes those nearby feel a subtle version of whatever strong positive emotion the Shyra is feeling to cause this phenomenon. When sufficiently angered the Shyra's body seems to become incorporeal, emanating a dark wispy smoke which has a strange empathic ability to slowly overwhelm hostile creatures with what can only be described as the sensation that they are about to die, usually leading to terror and fleeing. Physically males are somewhat larger than females, and have noticeably broader shoulders and a deeper tone to their voice. However males are generally more submissive than females though some can be dominant. Females have subtly enlarged breasts though almost never larger than a cup size B, wider hips, noticeably softer fur, and are more likely to have multi colored eyes. In general Shyrae are highly resistant to G forces due to a bicardian organ layout, light strong skeletal structure, and rapid adaptability, and billions of years of space travel prior to and after the war with altrion scattering them across the cosmos.

Additionally there are Brightfur shyrae, with significantly smaller wings, much longer tails, and silvery iridescent fur, the tail spine is longer and they're physically stronger and marginally taller. Brightfurs are also noticeably less timid and more outgoing than the common darker furred shadefurs, and are less shy about their true forms which has likely caused their own scarcity

All Shyrae have a small degree of psionic attunement, though for most it is entirely instinctual, aiding in their defensive mechanisms and the empathic link that accompanies their bioluminescent displays. This does mean that some others that have a fully developed exocognital lobe are able to make use of telepathy, telekinesis, and other such talents more easily than species who more often lack an exocognital brain lobe. However it is more common for it to go unnoticed even in those individuals, perceiving this "sixth sense" as just a faster reaction time or stronger more attuned senses.

Diet:

Their diet itself to other species is mostly a mystery, all that is known is they live off of consuming other living creatures in some way. In truth they will bite their prey and rapidly consume their life force, and they favor corrupt or generally evil life force as their main source of food. Due to this they rely on consuming primarily sentient species, though if preferable food is scarce they will consume good natured species or even animals life force to survive though this is a rare occurrence in both cases.

The method of digesting vitality has very little official documentation, primarily due to the lack of desire or necessity to analyze the feeding process. What is known is that the extracted energy is absorbed using a specialized enzyme in their saliva both in the mouth and esophagus, the enzymes gradually turn the energy into a water soluble and digestible substance. As it reaches the chest cavity the liquid immediately begins to be processed through the intestinal tract. Shyrae lack a stomach in its

entirety and thus consuming solid food is dangerous, thankfully the esophagus has a sophisticated network of nerve endings and specially developed muscular structure that prevents Solid food from reaching the intestinal tract without triggering the Gag reflex. In the intestines the enzymes are processed by the cells within the wall of the intestinal system, and in a process that seems peculiarly similar to photosynthesis processes the energy within the enzymes alongside fluid intake and even some of the nutrients contained within the victim's blood. These cells are able to use the strangely large amount of energy now bound to the enzymes to produce glucose as well as a protein that stores the excess energy between meals. The digestive systems are extremely efficient at regulating the use of the reserve energy and the metabolic rate is extremely fluid depending on the supply and demand in a given situation.

The experience of being fed on by a Shyra is something well documented and unfortunately overly demonized. Regardless of this there is some important notes to glean from both sides of the scenario. As mentioned before Evil or generally corrupt life force is vastly preferable for Shyrae both on a mental and strangely nutritional standpoint. The rate at which Shyrae are able to process the energy and the equivalent calorie count is entirely dependent on this factor. Feeding on a good natured individual seems extremely difficult and slow, and the sensation is a bit like having the skin on your shoulder being tugged on and chilled simultaneously, it's not entirely painful and has been described to be more of a discomfort. The victims of such a feeding almost always survive and often explain the experience to be more somber and emotional than scary. It also seems that Shyrae involved tend to develop self starvation tendencies if they are unable to feed from more preferable sources for prolonged periods of time. This can lead to moderate or even severe developmental and mental health problems for young Shyrae. Known possible outcomes include severe separation anxiety, Social anxiety, slowed or halted development of instincts necessary for independent living, depression, and self harm tendencies. Typically the bite involved in such a feeding is shallow and does not cover the first set of barbs on the teeth of the shyrae, allowing clean and easy release.

When more preferable food is available, Shyrae are peculiarly good at finding and identifying subtle differences between "pure" and "corrupted" individuals based solely on scent. The "corruption" of one's life essence seems to trigger an olfactory sensation for Shyrae nearby. It's been described as delicious and even intoxicating, drawing the Shyra towards the individual. In many cases the Shyra will begin to produce more saliva with higher concentrations of enzymes and their teeth will reveal themselves almost involuntarily. When feeding on such prey the Shyra will bite down hard on the shoulder or even the neck though the latter is only with particularly severely corrupted individuals. This sinks the barbs into the prey and prevents them from getting away. When the feeding begins the Shyra's salivary glands continue to produce significantly higher concentrations of their enzymes and then begin to add a secondary set of proteins that acts as a metabolic accelerator, clot preventer and immunosuppressant in the victim, ensuring a rapid death once they've had their fill. There are very few survivor accounts from such feedings, but all of them have described the experience as "more painful than anything they have ever even experienced in nightmares." Aside from the piercing pain of the teeth and any further damage due to struggling, a burning and stinging sensation comes first, followed by numbness beginning in the extremities and spreading through the body towards the bite, the burning and stinging ramp up as the numbness spreads, and while the Feeding only lasts at most 15 seconds, it's been described to feel like hours are passing due to the metabolic acceleration occurring within the body affecting their perception of external stimuli. Shyrae are able to process the energy from such

feedings quickly and thus draining their prey and storing up their reserves takes only about a minute.

As they lack a stomach where food can dilute intoxicating beverages, Shyrae are very susceptible to alcohol. Strangely however beyond that most known poisons are near useless in their ability to harm Shyrae. The only two effective toxins known to date are Abyss viper venom, which causes rapid clot formation and thus halts blood circulation, and the juice of tealberries, which react with the enzymes in the saliva and solidify in the digestive system. This prevents the absorption of nutrients and starves the Shyra to death.

Courtship Habits:

Both males and females will initiate courtship with potential mates, generally following the customs of the culture they're located in.

Shyrae females generally go into heat twice in a standard year, once during mid spring and once more at the end of fall, although living in space can make that seasonal line extremely blurry. When 3 or more Shyrae females live in close proximity to each other for prolonged periods their cycles may even change based on outside stimuli, the frequent presence of a compatible male or alternatively a familial group causes the cycles to sync up, while being isolated or with ever changing non shyra companions can cause their cycles to be staggered. This seems to be a defensive instinct, those off cycle can protect those in cycle. As for symptoms there are two primary tells for the start of an estrus cycle, the first being the near immediate appearance of mood swings, often weighted toward the extreme, and then a few days later as the hormones start to build up the individuals are likely to behave in odd ways. Common examples are:

- preferring to sleep in more confined spaces
- Further and more extreme mood swings
- Piling up blankets/pillows in corners or on couches to cozy up in.
- Extreme clinginess and playfulness, especially with their mate.
- Isolating from visitors outside their closest friends and family.

After these behaviors pop up the female is liable to develop severe aches in and around the area of the uterus, in addition to:

- extreme sensitivity to touch of any kind.
- Heightened sexual arousal/urges
- Clingy and cuddly tendencies
- A habit of licking and gnawing on small areas of their body, such as the back of their hand or digits, often developing into a motor tick through the duration of estrus. Licking of the genital area is not normally among these "compulsive oral hyperfixations"
- A compulsion to groom themselves and/or their partner.

These symptoms continue for the duration of their heat, which lasts until satisfied by natural means (mating) or artificial, such as intake of special liquid hormone supplements. If unable to use such methods their heat ends on its own after 30 standard days, though the aches and touch sensitivity can grow quite painful until 15 days, then peter off after that. During this time they may have difficulty sleeping or relaxing and struggle to sit still.

Shyrae mate for life and are known to reproduce by 2 different methods, strangely the primary method is by mating with other species, generally taking on the shape of their partner's species to do so or their own true form if they are comfortable enough with their partner, the children range in number based on the other species involved, and will generally prefer the shape of their non Shyra parental species for much of their lives and will imitate that species growth cycle until mature. Despite this the children are not hybrids and are still pure blooded Shyrae in almost all cases, only under extremely rare circumstances such as very rare recessive genetic traits or disorders do the children become a true hybrid, losing much of their shape shifting ability but retaining their diet. These hybrids while Rare are more likely to be accepted into their non Shyra parental societies as they do not have as obvious traits of Shyrae, and blend in much more easily. The second method involves two Shyrae mating with each other, generally the children will number between 2-4 and males will take on their mother's preferred shape while females will be split 50/50 between the parents and are more likely to have multiple preferred shapes than males.

If their mate dies it is extremely rare for a Shyra to take another mate. Usually only doing so if they grow exceedingly close with a new individual. However a shyra who loses their mate is often left emotionally fragile and has a very hard time recovering from the loss, as they tend to be extremely loyal and protective of their mate and children, far more so than most sentient species

Medical Concerns:

Shyrae live to between 125-150 years old though some have reached 200+ in areas with more advanced health care tech. They generally are very healthy and have very strong immune systems. They have a fairly normal anatomy for mammals though they lack traditional digestive organs, due to their diet. However they notably have 2 hearts which beat in unison allowing for faster and stronger adrenaline response when in stressful situations and a noticeably lower resting heart rate per heart which reduces cardiovascular fatigue. Each heart is capable of supporting the body's circulation under extreme circumstances but generally do tire out faster when operating solo leading to an increase in sleep required. While death from any sickness is rarer than many other species the most common life threatening conditions are autoimmune disorders in which the immune system attacks their own body, and some viral or bacterial diseases can be fatal under extreme circumstances. Past 120 years old however Shyrae become more and more vulnerable as they age, and heart issues become more likely, most commonly the hearts may lose synchronization and lead to fatigue and dizziness, and in rare circumstances death. This can be avoided by bypassing or removing one of the hearts, though as mentioned it will cause an increase in sleep required.

Young shyrae who lose their parents extremely early on may "forget" their preferred shape. This leaves them in their true form alone and due to the emotional trauma they struggle to connect with others, if they do find parents who bond well with them they may either "remember" their old preferred shape or more often they will pick up their new parent's shape and adapt into it.

Species Origin: the origin of Shyrae is largely unknown, though many theories do exist as to their ancestors but none have been confirmed true. However it is certain that they are of very ancient origins predating many other species. They are known to have at one point held significant power in the

universe, and that power led them to subjugate the Altrion species, which later sparked the Altrion regime's rise and the shyra empire's eventual defeat and scattering, hence why shyrae have been present in most habitable systems often for millions of years despite originating elsewhere.

Society: Shyrae generally don't have their own societies or communities. They generally try to blend in with whichever species they grew up with. However many cultures see the presence of a Shyra as a bad omen or a curse, meaning the doom of cities or even empires due to their diet. This leads to the misunderstood Shyrae being hunted down and exterminated. Some cultures however welcome them as a ward against evil and will generally protect and provide sanctuary for them.

In the few instances where they do have significant numbers and adequate safety they fall into a family and pack oriented society, where the families act almost like self governing bodies in a large collective pack, the rarity of this makes the phenomenon diverse but most often the hierarchy is almost nonexistent. The family includes the non shyrae Mates if present.