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CLASSES OF NEOEXODUS: EXANEUS HIGH GUARD



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CLASSES OF NEOXODUS: CANEUS HIGH GUARD

The Caneus High Guards are among the world of Exodus' craftiest fighters, concentrating on defensive maneuvers combined with a style of fighting that induces their opponents to defeat themselves. The High Guard are the personal defenders of the Queen of the Empire, trained rigorously to defend her person and resist all efforts to be duped or magically enchanted. A single member of the High Guard can be the lynchpin of an elite unit, a whole legion of them can overcome any army in the known world.

The primary duties of the High Guard, however, are to protect the lives and interests of those nobles the Queen has commanded them to protect. A minor member of royalty or a favored functionary might be assigned a single High Guard, while a regional Imperial governor or influential noble may be assigned as many as a dozen. Of course since the loyalty of the High Guard is first and foremost to the Queen of the empire, having them nearby important officials also allows her to keep an eye on those who might wish to betray her. A legionnaire of the High Guard is a warrior, but also a tactician, spy, and confidant. Since the High Guard was established, only one royal of the Caneus Empire has been assassinated while under the High Guard's protection.

High Guard legionnaires make excellent bodyguards and soldiers, but their abilities can also be turned toward shadier pursuits, and many retired High Guard work as smugglers and spies in service to the Empire. The High Guards aren't ashamed of such illicit activities, although they don't go to any extremes to shout them to the world. Similar to underground spies, older High Guards are the shadows in the court, gathering information and protecting Caneus' interests through whatever means are necessary. If something is needed, the High Guards can find it. If there's a shipment that must get through, there's a High Guard willing to take it there. Let courtiers and diplomats use their skills to hide any political repercussions; the Caneus High Guards are willing to do what must be done, for the sake of the Empire.

While most characters in the Caneus High Guard school are fighters, a few rogues also train in the school and adopt the High Guard prestige class.

Caneus High Guards, as the name suggests, are most commonly found serving as bodyguards to Caneus nobles and other important members of the Empire's society. As long as they are members of the High Guard, they must obey orders given directly from the Queen. Those that retire are given more latitude, though they must remain loyal to their homeland or

lose much of the conviction that makes them such formidable foes.

COMBAT

While the abilities of the High Guard are focused on detecting danger and protecting a nearby creature (*generally a noble the High Guard legionnaire is guarding*), these abilities also make the High Guard one of the most dangerous fighting forces in the World of Exodus. A line of High Guard legionnaires can defend one another, preventing foes from flanking or getting past them and taking a wound for one another to ensure all legionnaires are wounded before a single of the number falls, making it difficult to whittle down their numbers. Foes are often demoralized during a fight with the High Guard, and surprised when the High Guard fights more viciously as its members approach death.

TRAINING

The training required to become a member of the High Guard takes a minimum of two months, and is normally undertaken in the coldest months in the lands of Nas to minimize disruption to military operations. This training has physical, mental and spiritual components. The physical training consists of tests, exercises and intense sparing to instill the fighting techniques unique to the High Guard. Similarly the mental training is largely introduction to spycraft – ways to ferret out an assassin or traitor and alertness exercises.

The spiritual training is more secretive, and more brutal. The trainee is professionally and painfully broken, all traces of belief, faith, and self-worth removed by means that would be considered torture if the trainee hadn't volunteered. As the trainee's personality is broken down he is freed of distractions, and the ability to learn other skills accelerates. However, the main function of this cult-like reprogramming of the mind is to replace all precious beliefs with the thought that Caneus in general, and the Queen in particular, are important and deserve to be served. By the time the trainee is done his loyalty to Queen and country is absolute and unwavering, and much of the High Guard's abilities are drawn from this extreme devotion.

REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a Caneus High Guard, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

CANEUS HIGH GUARD

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+1	+2	+0	+2	Danger sense, Dedicated +1
2	+2	+3	+1	+3	Piercing Gaze
3	+3	+3	+1	+3	Take the Blow
4	+4	+4	+1	+4	Dedicated +2, Tenacity
5	+5	+4	+2	+4	Hold the Line
6	+6	+5	+2	+5	Evasive Push
7	+7	+5	+2	+5	Dedicated +3, Control Zone
8	+8	+6	+3	+6	Uncanny Dodge
9	+9	+6	+3	+6	Hostile Spirit
10	+10	+7	+3	+7	Dedicated +4, Fight On

Alignment: Any lawful

Base Attack Bonus: +5

Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative, Iron Will

Skills: Listen +4, Sense Motive +4

Special: Must be trained by senior High Guard member. Must remain loyal to the Queen of the Empire. Failure to remain loyal means a character no longer qualifies for this class, and loses its special benefits.

CLASS INFORMATION

The following information pertains to the Caneus High Guard prestige class.

HIT DICE

A Caneus High Guard member gains 1d10 plus constitution modifier hit points per level.

CLASS SKILLS

The Caneus High Guard's class skills (*and the key ability for each skill*) are Bluff (*Cha*), Climb (*Str*), Craft (*Int*), Diplomacy (*Cha*), Disguise (*Cha*), Forgery (*Int*), Gather Information (*Cha*), Hide (*Dex*), Jump (*Str*), Intimidate (*Cha*), Knowledge (*nobility & royalty*) (*Int*), Listen (*Wis*), Move Silently (*Dex*), Ride (*Dex*), Search (*Int*), Sense Motive (*Wis*), and Spot (*Wis*).

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the Caneus High Guard.

WEAPON AND ARMOR PROFICIENCY

Caneus High Guards are proficient with all simple and martial weapons and with all armor and shields.

DANGER SENSE-EX

At 1st level a High Guard legionnaire gains a preternatural ability to detect danger. Any time there is a surprise round, you may make a DC 15 Sense Motive check to act in the surprise round, even if you failed the Listen or Spot check needed to be aware of the threat. If you make a DC 20 check, you have a basic idea of what threat initiated the surprise round.

DEDICATED-EX

The extreme dedication of a Caneus High Guard member grants bonuses to alertness, quick action, pressuring others to obey you and resisting attempts at coercion. You gain a +1 morale bonus to all Listen and Spot skill checks, as well as to initiative checks and Will saves against mind-affecting spells. You also add this to the number of attacks of opportunity you may take in a round.

This bonus increases to +2 at 4th level, +3 at 7th level, and +4 at 10th level.

PIERCING GAZE-EX

At 2nd level a High Guard member learns to analyze everything as a threat, be in a dark corridor, a friendly-sounding barkeep or a locked door. This piercing gaze cuts through many guises and subtleties, and often unnerves those examined under it.

You may make a Spot check in place of any Intimidate, Search or Sense Motive check. Most High

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Guard members buy maximum ranks of spot for this reason.

FAKE THE BLOW-EX

At 3rd level a High Guard member may attempt to take an attack aimed at any one target in an adjacent square. This requires a Reflex save (*DC 15*) and counts as one of your attacks of opportunity for the round. On a successful check you are the target of this attack rather than its original victim. An attack roll is still made, but you are not allowed your Dexterity bonus against this attack.

If you are allowed multiple attacks of opportunity a round, you may use this ability multiple times. Each attempt uses one of your attacks of opportunity.

TENACITY-EX

At 4th level a High Guard legionnaire becomes able to fight with renewed vigor when others would collapse. If you have 25% or fewer of your total hit points remaining, you gain a +2 morale bonus to all attack and weapon damage rolls. Additionally, you are considered disabled (*but conscious*) from 0 hit points to a number of negative hit points equal to half your High Guard class level. You also add your High Guard class level to the number of negative hit points you may reach before being dead.

HOLD THE LINE-EX

At 5th level a High Guard member can prevent foes from moving past him. Whenever you make an attack of opportunity against an opponent, you make a special grapple check. You receive a bonus to this check equal to your High Guard class levels (*though this bonus does not apply to any other grapple check*). If you win the grapple check, the foe must stop movement in the space he provoked the attack of opportunity (*and not move again until his next round*). If the foe wins, it may continue to move normally. In neither case are either you or the foe actually ever grappled.

EVASIVE PUSH-EX

At 6th level a High Guard member gains the ability to push any one character in an adjacent square out of an area affect attack. If an attack allows a Reflex save, and you successfully make yours, you may chose to fail your save and push someone in an adjacent space into a safe area. (*The character in the adjacent space doesn't actually move to a different space, you find a safe position within their space, or shield them from the attack with your body.*) This has the effect of the person pushed making their save.

CONTROL ZONE-EX

At 7th level a High Guard member can control an area in battle with such skill it is extremely difficult for anyone to pass through it without provoking an attack of opportunity, even if they normally do not provoke when moving.

Any time a target leaves a space you threaten, you have a chance of taking an attack of opportunity against them. If they try to avoid your Attack of Opportunity by using the Tumble skill, you get an attack but your attack roll must exceed both the target's AC and its Tumble check. If the target has a special ability or uses a maneuver that allows it to not provoke an Attack of Opportunity from leaving a space you threaten (*such as Spring Attack or withdraw*), you make a Reflex save opposed by your target's Reflex save. If you win the opposed check, you may make an Attack of Opportunity. If your foe wins the opposed check, you are not allowed an Attack of Opportunity, but lose one Attack of Opportunity for the round as if you had taken one.

UNCANNY DODGE-EX

At 8th level, a High Guard member can move to avoid attacks he can't perceive. You retain your Dexterity bonus to Armor Class (*if any*) even if you are caught flat-footed or struck by an invisible attacker. However, you still lose your Dexterity bonus to Armor Class if immobilized. If you already have uncanny dodge from a different class, you automatically gains improved uncanny dodge instead.

HOSTILE SPIRIT-EX

At 9th level a High Guard is so hardened against mind-affecting magics, it can actually damage spell-casters to attempt to affect him. His spirit instinctively hurls such magic back at the creature that cast it in the form of a simple mental bolt of pain.

If you make a saving throw against a mind-affecting spell or ability, the creature that targeted you must make a Will save (*DC 10 + your High Guard class level + your Wisdom modifier*). On a failed save, that counts as their full-round action, that creature takes 2d6 hit points of damage.

FIGHT ON-EX

By 10th level, even death may not be enough to stop a High Guard from his sworn duty.

When performing an act you have been ordered to undertake (*usually to keep an individual safe*), you can keep fighting after you reach negative hit points.

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You can fight, taking full actions and not counting as disabled, until you reach a number of negative hp equal to your Constitution score (*not modifier*) plus your Wisdom score (*not modifier*). You do not need to make a check to see if you have stabilized, and do not lose 1 hp for taking strenuous actions.

However, if you reach the number of negative hit points that would normally mean you have died, you can only maintain this activity for a number of rounds equal to 10 plus your Constitution modifier. At the end of that time, if you are still in negative hit points, you die. If you are healed into positive hit points, you fall unconscious at the end of this ability, and can't be roused for 1d4 hours.

FEATS

The following feats are common among members of the Caneus High Guard, though anyone who qualifies for them may take them.

BLOOD FOCUS - GENERAL

You can use pain to overcome mind-affecting magics.

Prerequisites: Constitution 13, Wisdom 13, Iron Will

Benefits: If you fail a save against a mind-affecting or fear-based spell or ability, you may choose to attempt to focus past it on your next round, even if the spell would normally prevent you from doing so. You must deal hit point damage to yourself (*minimum 1d6*) to create a sensation of pain you may concentrate on, allowing you to ignore the mind-affecting spell. You may make a second saving throw against the spell, with a +1 circumstance bonus for every 2 hp of damage you deal to yourself to activate this ability.

INTIMIDATING AURA - GENERAL

You can frighten lesser mortals with ease.

Prerequisites: Charisma 13, Intimidate +8

Benefits: You may make one Intimidate check per round as a free action to demoralize an opponent (*see the Intimidate skill*). If the target you chose to demoralize has fewer hit dice/levels than you, you gain a bonus to this Intimidate check equal to the difference in the target's hit dice/levels and your own.

SHIELD EXPERTISE - GENERAL

You can use your own body to protect someone else in combat.

Prerequisites: Combat Expertise, Shield proficiency

Benefits: When you use Combat Expertise to reduce your attack bonus and increase your Armor Class, and you have a shield, you may extend the additional Armor Class to one target in an adjacent space. Both you and the additional target receive the bonus to Armor Class.

Additionally, you may designate one target in an adjacent space to gain the shield bonus to Armor Class from your shield. In this case, you do not gain the shield bonus to Armor Class.

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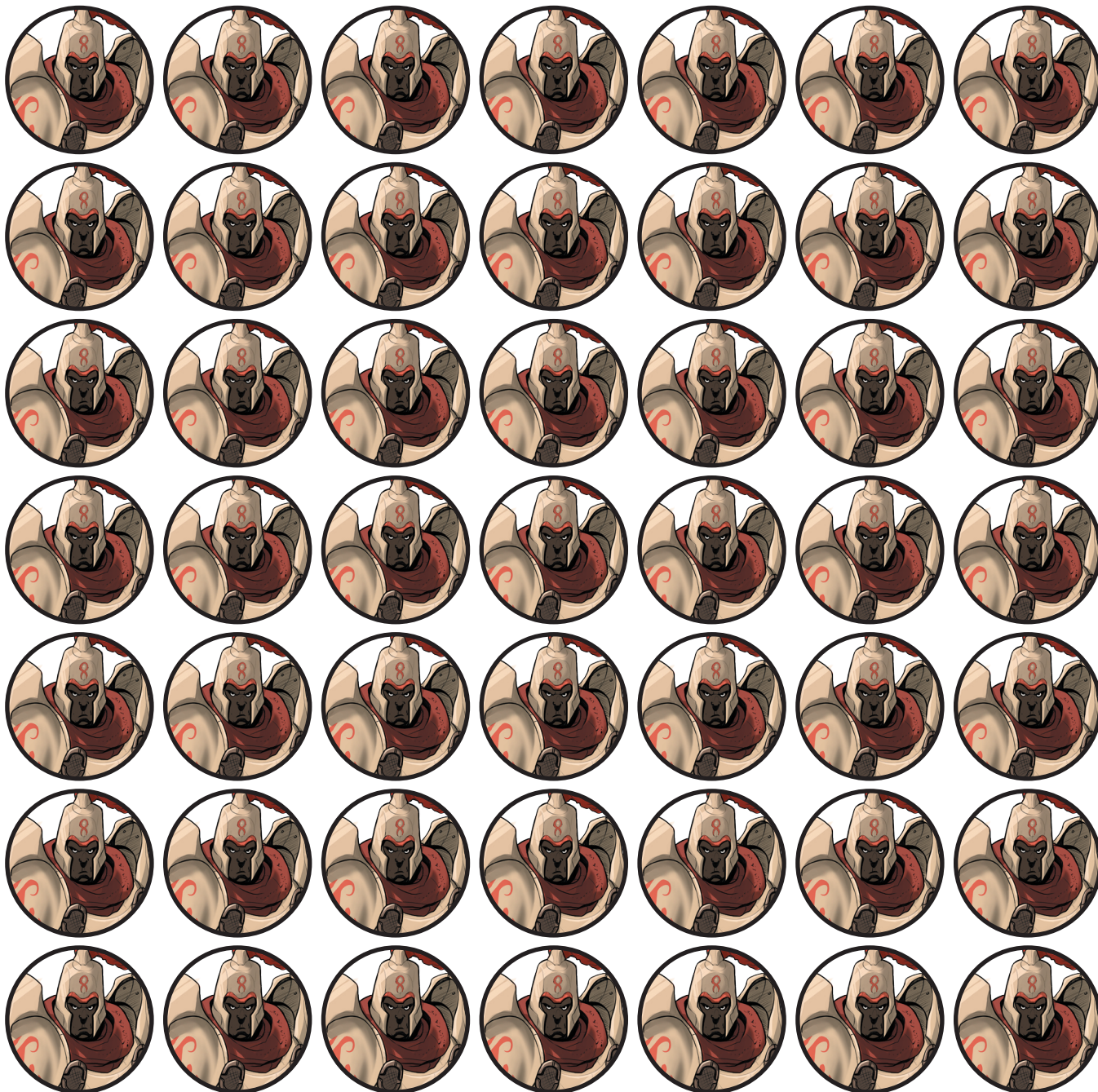
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