**gardásìrkoi**

Seeing his opportunity, the young recruit presses his swordsmanship master, attacking furiously in a series of manoeuvres. Just when he figures for certain that victory is his (and has stretched far forward to land the victorious blow) does he realise that it was a trap. He feels the flat of his master’s blade slap hard against his neck.

In his head, the agent counts up the number of men he has killed. There were the two while he was in the legion, both defeated in *Qadárni* battles. But since leaving the army, since getting involved with Lord *Qorumá hiRi'inyússa’s* “private network”, the number had swelled. Interrupting his calculations the agent steps forward and strikes; the number has swelled again, he notes.

His backhand blow having carried his sword-axe away to the right, the *Shén* lashes his knobby tail low and left. It catches his human opponent in the right calf – a painful blow that surprises and stuns its recipient just enough to get his returning forehand strike well into meat. A tug on the sword-axe and a hammer-blow with his beak to his foe’s forehead settles it, and dinner too.

Unlike the Dungeons and Dragons Fighter, the *Empire of the Petal Throne* combat specialist isn’t characterised by broad-stroke variety. A *Gardásìr-koi* is a certain kind of character – someone who has sacrificed family, clan, social status, and security to battle the empire’s secret enemies. In *Tsolyánu*, this usually, but never always, means a veteran of the army who has left his legion in order to take up this vital but thankless work. He might fight for the political arm of the Omnipotent Azure Legion, or a semi-official unit under the command of *Qorumá hiRi'inyússa*, or a private group funded by the Provost of the High Chancery at *Avanthár*, Lord *Chaimíra hiSsánmirin*, or even the completely illegal force of someone outside the Imperial Party in the capital.

**Expert, but Excluded**

The *Gardásìrkoi* is defined by their exclusion from ordinary life-events and their expertise with a variety of deadly weapons. Today, we would call such a soldier a paramilitary. *Empire of the Petal Throne* knows them as *nakomé*, an insult meaning clanless and therefore worthless. There is nothing worthless about what these men and non-humans do, however; it’s just that society does not know how to acknowledge their deeds. The victorious general receives rank and fiefs. The administrator receives offices. What is given to the secret warrior who assassinates an imperial prince, thus saving the nation? Everyone knows the answer to this question – ‘nothing’.

*Empire of the Petal Throne* depicts this action hero with the *Gardásìrkoi* class, and borrows from ranger, monk and paladin to do so.

**The Reward of Knowing**

The *Gardásìrkoi* is a paramilitary fighter who completes missions for the Petal Throne, missions that cannot be completed by regular forces such as legion troops or even officers of the Imperium. Obviously, an empire the size of *Tsolyánu*, beset on all sides by hostile powers, has certain things that must be done, but that must never be openly admitted to – if international and even domestic objectives are to be achieved. The kind of man that is tasked with such a mission must be disciplined and closed-mouthed. He must sacrifice a public or ordinary life in return for little more than knowing his nation is safer.

The man willing to accept this kind of life, if he has indeed made his nation safer, is a hero.

The *Gardásìrkoi* enters into citizen alliances to complete official and unofficial missions. They are expected to build a network of allies on their own, completely unconnected to the Imperium.

**Your Concept**

As you build your *Gardásìrkoi*, think about two related elements of your character concept: where you got your martial training, and what you expect to get from working as an irregular. What exact legion oversaw your initial training? What provincial or protectorate garrison force? Perhaps you are of high clan and trained at an expensive martial academy such as the House of Blades in *Bey Sǘ*. Alternatively, perhaps you are *Shén* or low clan or a former gladiator.

Work with your DM to figure out how answers to these questions give substance to your acting, your roleplaying.

If you choose to have come from a high clan background, how do you feel about not being able to enjoy the perks of your clan status?

If you choose to have come from a very ordinary background how does the fact that you can never reveal what you have done make you feel? Perhaps you entertain ideas of rising in clan-status as a reward for your secret service: how realistic is that aspiration?

If you choose to have come from a foreign, non-human, or *Hirilákte* Arena background, how do you feel? Have you been promised citizenship and membership in a *Tsolyáni* clan? Are you certain your superiors will come through with their vows? Are you completely loyal or willing to consider a better deal?

**Class Features**

As a *Gardásìrkoi*, your get the following class features.

**Hit Points**

**Hit Dice:** 1d12 per *Gardásìrkoi* level.

**Hit Points at 1st Level:** 12 + your Constitution modifier.

**Hit Points at Higher Levels:** 1d12 (or 7) + your Constitution modifier per *Gardásìrkoi* level after 1st.

**Proficiencies**

**Armour:** All armour, shields

**Weapons:** Simple weapons, martial weapons

**Tools:** Thief

**Saving Throws:** Dexterity, Constitution

**Skills:** Choose two skills from Acrobatics, Athletics, Etiquette, History, Insight, Intimidation, Perception, Survival.

**Equipment**

You start with the following equipment, in addition to the equipment granted by your background:

* medium armour (mail shirt of steel)
* two martial weapons of steel
* a medium crossbow and 20 bolts or a short bow and 20 arrows
* dungeoneer’s pack or explorer’s pack

**Fighting Style**

Fighting in *Tsolyánu* and its neighbouring empires is extremely ritualistic and stylised. You, however, have no time for this. You specialise in brutal and no-nonsense killing.

Choose 1 of the styles below at first level, and another 1 at tenth level:

**Archery**

You gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls you make with ranged weapons.

**Cut-and-Thrust**

You gain a +2 bonus to damage rolls you make if armed with short-sword and small shield.

**Down-and-Dirty Fighting**

When you roll a 1 or 2 on a damage die, you can reroll the die. If the new roll is also a 1 or 2, add the two rolls together.

**Medium Armour Mastery**

Wearing medium armour doesn’t impose penalties (disadvantage) to Dexterity ability checks. If your Dexterity is 16 or higher, you can add 3 to AC, not the usual 2.

**Protection**

When a creature you can see attacks a target other than you that is within 5 feet of you, as a reaction you can impose a disadvantage on that attack (if you have a shield in hand).

**Two-Weapon Fighting**

When you engage in two-weapon fighting you may add your Dexterity ability modifier to the second attack.

**Unarmed Combat**

Knowing the basics of *dedarátl*, *hu'ón* and *charagé* (*Tsolyáni* martial arts and wrestling), you are able to do lethal damage with your bare hands – but a weapon is better.

You’re proficient with improvised weapons and unarmed strikes (which do d4 damage).

When you hit a creature while unarmed or with only an improvised weapon, you can use a bonus action to grapple the target.

**Second Wind**

You have a limited well of stamina that you can draw on to protect yourself from harm. On your turn, you can use a bonus action to regain hit points equal to 1d10 + your *Gardásìrkoi* level.

Once you use this feature, you must complete a rest before using it again.

**Action Surge**

Beginning at second level, you can push yourself beyond your normal limits for a moment. On your turn, you can take 1 additional action in addition to your regular action.

You must complete a rest before using this fine feature again. At level seventeen, the number of action surges usable between rests is two, but they cannot both be taken on the same turn.

**Combat Superiority**

At third level, you learn combat manoeuvers that are fuelled by special dice called superiority dice.

You learn 3 manoeuvers, which are detailed as follows:

**Commander’s Strike**

When you take an attack action on your turn, you can forgo one of your attacks and use a bonus action to get one of your allies to strike. Your ally makes an attack, and you roll 1 superiority die, spending it and adding its result to your ally’s damage.

**Disarming Attack**

When you hit a creature with a weapon attack, you can expend 1 superiority die and the result of that roll is the number of feet away from your target its disarmed weapon has landed.

**Distracting Strike**

When you hit a creature with a weapon attack, you can expend 1 superiority die and the result of that roll is subtracted from your target’s AC until the end of your next turn.

**Evasive Footwork**

When you take a Move action on your turn, you can expend 1 superiority die, adding its result to your AC until you stop moving.

**Feinting Attack**

You can expend 1 superiority die to feint a target out of position, adding its result to all of *your* attacks against that target until the start of your next turn.

**Lunging Attack**

When you take a melee weapon attack on your turn, you can expend 1 superiority die to increase your reach by 5 feet, also adding the roll’s result to damage.

**Manoeuvring Attack**

When you hit a creature with a melee weapon attack, you can expend 1 superiority die to move your target a number of feet equal to that die’s roll (minimum 5). The creature can be moved in any direction.

**Parry**

When a creature damages you with a melee attack, you can use your reaction to expend 1 superiority die to parry. The roll’s result + your Dexterity modifier is subtracted from the attack’s damage.

**Precision Attack**

When you make a weapon attack, you can expend 1 superiority die to improve the attack. The improvement is equal to the superiority die result.

**Pushing Attack**

When you hit a creature with a weapon attack, you can expend 1 superiority die to knock the target back away from you.

The die result is the number of yards the target flies back, but halve this number if the target is Medium and halve it again if Large.

**Rally**

On your turn, you may use a bonus action and expend 1 superiority die to bolster the resolve of your allies. All citizen allies that can see or hear you get a boost to AC equal to your Charisma modifier for a number of turns equal to the die’s result.

**Riposte**

When a creature misses you with a melee attack, you can use your reaction to expend 1 superiority die to get a riposte attack in on that creature. If successful, add the die’s result to your damage.

**Trip Attack**

When you hit a creature with a melee weapon attack, you can expend 1 superiority die to knock prone your opponent. Their saving throw DC = your Strength mod-ifier + the die’s result. If the target fails, they fall flat and you gain a bonus action.

**Terrifying Glare**

Before making an attack action on a creature, you can expend 1 superiority die to menace it into a condition of fright. The die’s result is the number of turns the target remains frightened if it fails to make its saving throw.

**Whirlwind Attack**

On your turn, you may use your attack action to expend 1 superiority die, the result of which is the number of enemies within reach of your weapon you can attack, so long as each successive attack succeeds. Once an attack roll is failed, the Whirlwind Attack stops.

**Notes:** You may only execute 1 manoeuver per attack. You gain a two further manoeuvers at seventh, tenth, and fifteenth levels. You begin with 4 superiority dice (recharged via a long rest), but gain an additional die at seventh level and also at fifteenth level.

The dice begin as d8s, but eventually become d10s and then d12s.

The saving throw DC for many manoeuvers is 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Dexterity modi-fier.

**Improved Critical**

Beginning at third level, your weapon attacks are critical hits if the die lands on 19 or 20.

**Ability Score Improvement**

When you reach fourth level, and again at eighth, twelfth, sixteenth and eighteenth levels, you may increase one ability score of your choice by 2, or two ability scores of your choice by 1. You cannot increase an ability score above 20 with the use of this feature.

**Extra Attack**

Beginning at fifth level, you can attack twice, not just once, whenever you take an attack action on your turn. The number of attacks jumps to three at eleventh level, and to four at twentieth level (as a *Gardásìrkoi*).

**First Aid**

Beginning at sixth level, your experience far away from aid gains for you the ability to heal yourself. As an action, you can regain hit points equal to 3x your *Gardásìrkoi* level. You must complete a long rest before you can use this feature again.

**Mission Awareness**

Beginning at seventh level, you can use an action and expend a superiority die to focus on the needs of the mission. You can determine by subtle clues whether the immediate objective of your mission is nearby and in which direction it lies. Awareness such as this never reveals exact information, just a general sense.

**Relentless**

Beginning at fourteenth level, whenever you find yourself entering combat without any superiority dice (because they’ve been expended), you gain 1 superiority die.

**Superior Critical**

Beginning at fifteenth level, your weapon attacks are critical hits if the die lands on 18 – 20.

**Combat Supremacy**

As stated in the manoeuver notes, at level ten your superiority dice become d10s and at eighteenth level they become d12s.

**The Emperor’s Right Arm**

At twentieth level, you become an implacable foe of the emperor’s enemies. Once on each of your turns, you can add your Strength modifier to your attack roll. You can choose to do this after seeing whether you have scored a hit or not (i.e. to alter the result of a near miss).

**Access to Avanthár**

Starting at seventh level, the *Gardásìrkoi* gains access to borrowed imperial equipment. This is handled like divine intervention. During a break in action realistic for signalling special equipment requests to *Avanthár*, you may roll percentile dice. If you roll a number equal to or lower than your *Gardásìrkoi* level + your Charisma modifier, the High Chancery at *Avanthár* grants you, for the time it takes to complete the current scenario only, the steel, technological, or magical equipment or weapon that you need. The chancery retrieves the equipment after the scenario is over.

An example of such a request might be your knowing that you must unearth something from an underworld full of undead. You make a request to the chancery for a technological device of the Ancients called an Eye. *The Abominable Eye of Detestation* is the one you want, which causes the undead to be repelled. Two days after your request a disguised courier appears and hands over the requested equipment.