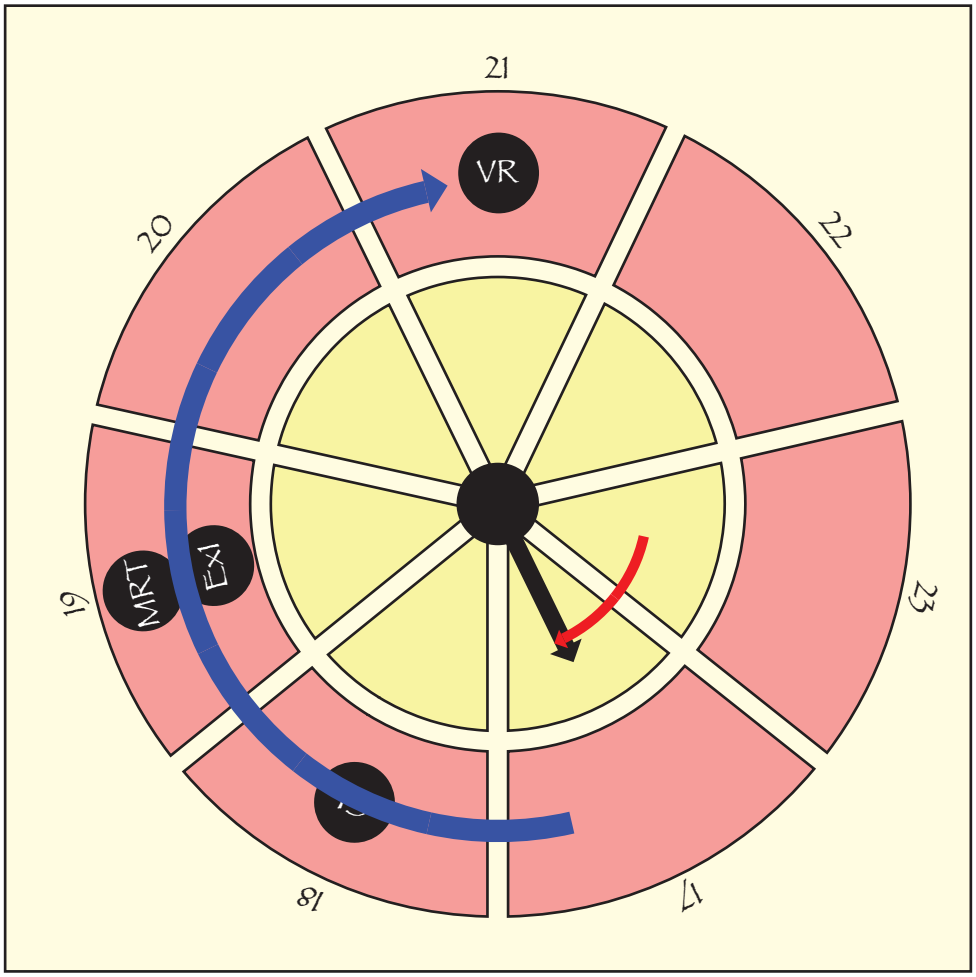
Exalted 2nd Edition Combat 201

By Kasumi



Incorporating Battlewheel Tutorial

By Bazzalisk

Document Version 1.1

The majority of the text in this document was written by the esteemed Kasumi, and originally presented at RPG.net[1]. It is used here with permission from the author to help illustrate the use of a Battlewheel in exalted combat.

Text in this colour and style has been added by Bazzalisk and serves to illustrate the use of the Battlwheel.

1 http://forum.rpg.net/showthread.php?t=252712

She vaulted through the window like a ghost, cutting off the starlight for no more than an instant. Landing in a sliding crouch, she passed silently over the polished marble floor of the Tri-Khan's most private of sanctuaries. It was an all-too typical tragedy of the age that such a legendary feat was entirely wasted.

"If only, sweet Peony, you had heeded my warning, then I would not have the tragedy of your death upon my conscience, and the stain of your blood upon my Lord's perfect floor." Her once-betrothed smiled bitterly down upon her, a small man, but fierce, and clad in violet-glass armour worth more than an oasis. He clicked his khatar together and shook his long braids in sorrow."

The woman stood slowly to her full height, gracefully drawing her sword, and looked meaningfully past him, through the stone columns and crimson hangings to the tattered and worn dress draped across an empty throne.

"Don't suppose you'd go halves?" she made a wry face. "I suppose not. Shall we get on with the tragedy, then? The poets are waiting."

Exalted Combat 201

Frost Peony
(Heroic Mortal)

Frost Peony is a master thief, who has sworn to recover the wedding dress of the [[Tri-Khan]]'s great-grandmother, the Desert Rose. She has successfully infiltrated the palace, but has been caught on the cusp of success.

Strength 2, Dexterity 5, Stamina 2, Wits 5, Melee (Swords +2) 3, Resistance 2, Athletics 5, Awareness 4, Dodge (Multiple Opponents +2) 5.

She is equipped with an *exceptional straight sword* **(Speed 4, Accuracy +3, Damage +3L, Defense +2, Rate 3)** and is wearing an *exceptional buff jacket* **(4L/5B soak, Mobility 0, Fatigue 2)**.

Frost Peony is an exceptionally skilled heroic mortal, possibly the greatest unExalted thief in the world.

Jamal Glassbreaker
(Heroic Mortal)

Jamal Glassbreaker is Peony's former betrothed, and sworn to the service of the Tri-Khan. Having anticipated his old lover's audacity, he has awaited her arrival and will now regretfully kill her.
Jamal, a heroic mortal, is one of the most deadly living humans. He is currently experiencing irreconcilable differenceds with Frost Peony.

Strength 4, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4, Wits 3, Martial Arts (Khatar +3) 5, Resistance 4, Athletics (Dashing +2) 3, Awareness 3, Dodge 3.

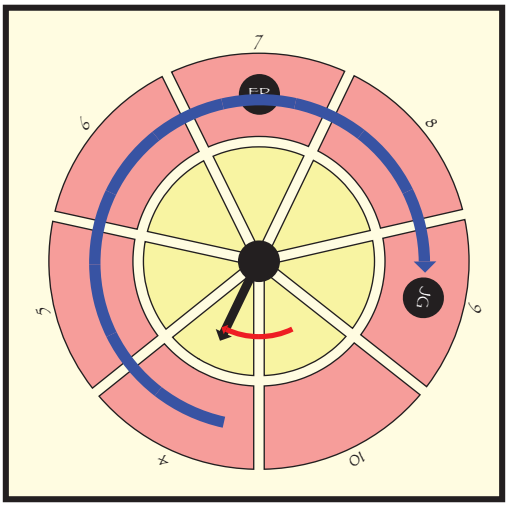
He wields *exceptional paired khatar* **(Speed 5, Accuracy +1, Damage +3L, Defense +4, Rate 3)** and wears a magnificent gift from his lord, *a suit of lamellar armour carved from Chiaroscuro glass* **(7L/9B soak, Mobility -2, Fatigue 0)**.

Join Battle

To begin a battle, the aggressor character takes a Join Battle action. At this point, anyone present who wishes to join the fight may also make a Join Battle action (so it's not really necessary to worry too much about who the aggressor is - for example, Frost Peony and Jamal are both voluntarily entering the fight, so they'll roll Join Battle together).

Exalted is a game with a strongly tactical element to its combat. Unlike some other games with strongly tactical combat, however, the tactics in Exalted are not tied to physical positioning, but instead to timing.

A Battlewheel is a device which allows us to visually display this timing information in the same way that a battlemap allows the visual display of tactical positioning.



This picture shows a battlewheel diagram like the ones we'll be using later in this tutorial. Each segment of the Battlewheel represents a "tick" -- one of the one-second long segments of time into which Exalted battles are broken. The Black arrow points at the segment representing the current tick. For convenience of following this tutorial the segments have been labeled with the numbers of the ticks they currently represent. On a real battlewheel this is unnecessary

The red arrow indicates that the black arrow has moved since the previous diagram.

The Small black circles in the outer circle represent characters involved in the combat. The diagram above shows two characters, one of whom will next act 3 ticks in the future (on tick 7), and the other of whom will next act 5 ticks in the future (on tick 9).

The Battlewheel only ever shows the future, never the past. To be precise it always shows when each character will act in the next six ticks after the current tick.

The blue arrow is used to indicate that a character marker has been moved on the wheel.

Join Battle is a reflexive Wits + Awareness roll. The character who rolls the most successes will act on Tick 0, the first tick of the combat. The successes they scored are considered the combat's Reaction Count. All other characters calculate their First Action (the first tick in which they act) by subtracting their successes from the Reaction Count.

Frost Peony has Wits 5 and Awareness 4, for a total of 9 dice. She rolls 2, 3, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 0 for a total of 5 successes (by default in Exalted, any dice that show a number 7 or higher are a success. For heroic characters, such as Frost Peony, 0 counts as two successes on most rolls).

Jamal has Wits 3 and Awareness 3, for a total of 6 dice. He rolls 1, 3, 3, 4, 6, 9 for a total of 1 success. Bad luck!

Frost Peony's 5 successes become the Reaction Count of the combat. She will act on tick 0.

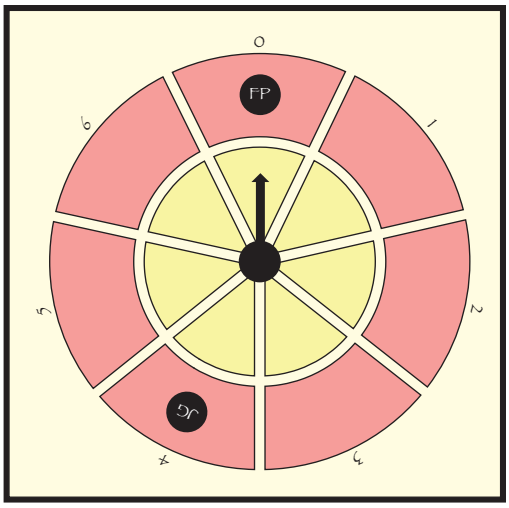
Jamal's First Action is 5 (Reaction Count) - 1 (his successes) = 4. He will act on tick 4.

We can now set up the battlewheel for this combat. We start by pointing the tick-counter at one of the segments of the wheel (in fact it doesn't matter which one, but in this example we've used the top segment. In this example the tick-counter is a black arrow, but you can easily use any kind of marker you like.

Since Frost Peony will get to act on tick 0 we place a counter representing her on the same segment as the counter points at.

Since Jamal won't get to act until tick 4 we place his counter four segments further round the wheel.

You can use anything distinctive as a character marker, miniatures work well, as do dice.



Actions and Speed

Their eyes locked for a long, terrible moment. Jamal's heart was perfectly calm, and as was his way, he counted its beats. He had counted but three when she exploded into motion.

How fast she was! Always, Jamal had been stronger than his wife-to-be, the greater warrior, but he had forgotten her speed was that of a viper. She had used three heartbeats to judge his stance, then launched herself from one of the marble columns, gleaming sword striking for his throat, long hair floating like a river of black silk…

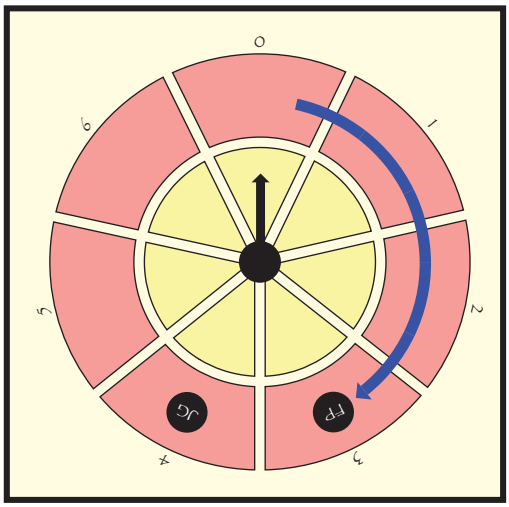
On your tick, you must choose an action. The list of actions include some, such as **Guard**, **Inactive** and **Aim** that serve for waiting, covering a target, or doing nothing but defending oneself, but they still fit into the mechanical framework of an action.

That framework is that each action has a *Speed* and a *Defense Penalty*. Speed is a tick counter - after your action, you must wait a number of ticks equal to the Speed of your action before you act again. The Defense Pen-

alty, as its name suggests, is a penalty applied to your defenses for taking the action. This penalty lasts until your next action.

Frost Peony acts on tick 0, and must choose an action. Knowing that she's much faster than Jamal, she invests that time in the Aim action. Aim has a Speed of 3 and a Defense Penalty of -1. This means she must wait 3 ticks before acting again (she will act on tick 3), and her Defense Values will be reduced by 1 during that time (we'll see what that means below - the basic principle is that acting compromises your defenses to an extent, meaning you need to be careful when choosing your action).

Since Frost Peony must now wait for 3 ticks before acting again we move her counter 3 segments around the Battlewheel to the segment corresponding to tick 3.



Aim has special rules for aborting to another action before the Speed in ticks has elapsed, but Frost Peony will wait the full three ticks. Aim grants a bonus die to attack for each tick spent aiming, and hence she will add 3 bonus dice to her attack.

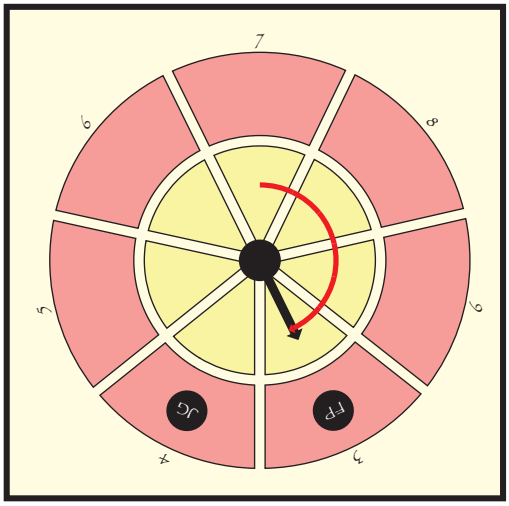
Since no more characters get to act on this tick we can advance the tick counter until we reach the next occupied segment, in this case that corresponds to tick 3, and Frost Peony gets to act again.

Move

On tick 3, Frost Peony acts again. She takes a **Move** action, allowing her to move her Dexterity (5) in yards. This is a reflexive action with a Speed of 0 and no defense penalty - it does not interfere with her attack. In fact, you can Move on each and every tick, provided that you are not prone or otherwise prevented from moving, even if you are still waiting for the next tick on which you can act to come up.

Another action named **Dash** allows faster movement, but is a normal action with a Speed and Defense Penalty.

You may only Move or Dash in any given tick, not both. You may only Move or Dash once per tick.



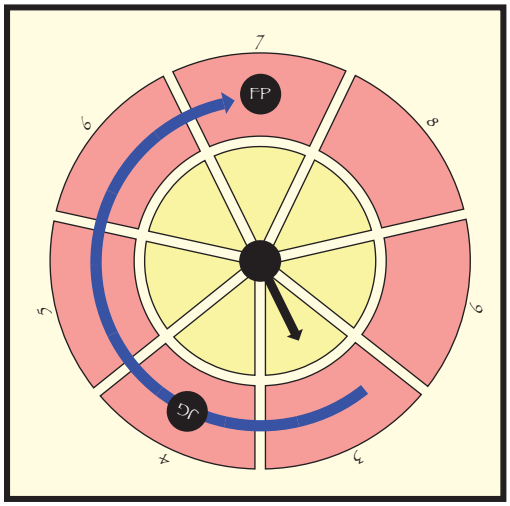
Notice that we have moved the tick counter, but because Move is a speed 0 action Frost Peony's counter has not moved, she may act again immediately.

Also notice that the numbers above the segments which previously represented ticks 0-2 have changed. The Battlewheel only ever shows the future, never the past.

Attack and DV

Having moved, Frost Peony takes an Attack action. Attack has a Speed equal to that of the weapon being used (4 in this case, the speed of Peony's straight sword), and a Defense Penalty of -1.

Since her attack has speed 4 we move Frost Peony's counter 4 segments around the battlewheel to the segment representing tick 7.



To attack, a character rolls their Accuracy pool, usually equal to their Dexterity + Relevant Ability + Specialties + their weapon's Accuracy. For Peony, this is Dex 5 + Melee 3 + Swords 2 + Accuracy 3 = 13, plus 3 bonus dice from her Aim action, for a total of 16. We'll assume she scores an average roll, for 8 successes.

To see whether she's hit Jamal, we subtract his best Defense Value, or DV, from her successes. In combat, there are two types of DV, Dodge and Parry. Dodge DV is equal to half of (the character's Dexterity + Dodge + Specialties) - Armour Mobility Penalty. For Jamal, that's (5 + 3 + 0)/2 - 2 = 2. Parry DV is equal to half of the character's Dexterity + Ability + Specialties + their weapon's Defense. For Jamal, that's (Dex 5 + Martial Arts 5 + Khatar 3 + Defense 4)/2 = 8. Heroic mortals like Peony and Jamal always round down for DV.

Defense Penalties from actions are subtracted directly from DV - but since Jamal hasn't acted yet, he has no penalty.

Peony scored 8 successes. Jamal's best DV is 8.

8 - 8 = 0

Peony has 0 net successes. She's missed! If she'd rolled a single extra success, she would have hit (1 success above DV is a successful hit), but luck was not with her this time.

She won't act again until 4 ticks have passed.

The attack action has a defined 10-step process in which the timing of dice rolls, penalties and bonuses is strictly defined. However, the basic principle is very simple: attacker rolls their pool, and compares their successes to the best DV the defender has. If higher, they've hit. If equal or lower, they've missed.

Since no more characters get to act on this tick we can advance the tick counter until we reach the next occupied segment, in this case that corresponds to tick 4, and Jamal gets to act.

Flurries, Soak and Damage

A tiny bubble of blood welled at Jamal's throat where the sword had kissed him ever so lightly, stopped just in time between his khatar. Her lovely blue eyes widened in shock as her failure dawned upon her.

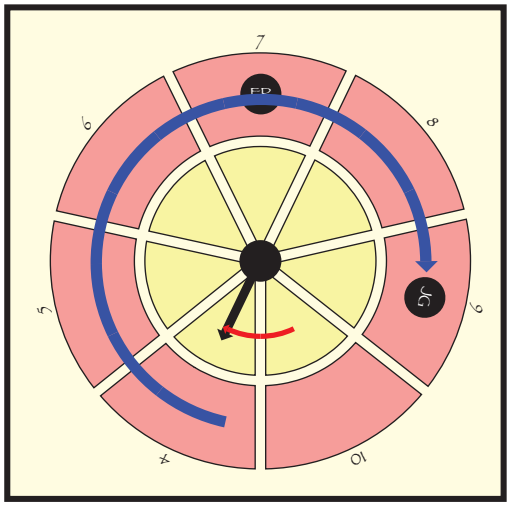
With a grunt of exertion, he lifted her by her sword in a magnificent arc that ended abruptly in the column behind him. Spinning on his heel, he unleashed a precise and measured series of blows, delivered with regret, but no hesitation…

Jamal is pleased that his superior skill turned aside her speed, but doubts that a cautious approach will earn him anything other than a slow, bloody death. On tick 4, he acts, and chooses to use a Flurry.

A Flurry is a special action combining multiple other actions. The Speed of the flurry is equal to the highest speed of the actions within it. The Defense Penalty is the combined Defense Penalty of all actions in the flurry. A weapon may not be used in a flurry more times than its rate.

Jamal's flurry is three attacks with his khatar. This is Speed 5, as normal for a khatar, but he will suffer a defense penalty of -3 (that is, -1 for each of his three attacks) until he acts again on tick 9.

We adjust the battlewheel to reflect Jamal's wait until his next action.



His accuracy pool is 14, but each action in a flurry also suffers a penalty in dice. For the first action, the penalty is equal to the number of actions in the flurry. For each subsequent action, the penalty increases by 1.

So on Jamal's first attack, his accuracy is 14 - 3 = 11
On his second attack, it's 14 - 4 = 10
On the third, 14 - 5 = 9

For the first attack, Jamal rolls his 11 dice and scores 5 successes.

Peony's best DV is her Parry, which is 6. However, she has -2 Defense Penalty from her actions: -1 from her Attack, and -1 from her Aim (Normally, your Defense Penalties reset to zero when your tick comes up, but this doesn't happen for Aim action). Her total DV is 4.

Jamal's attack successes (5) - Peony's DV (4) = 1 successes. Jamal has hit with his first attack.

Raw damage for a successful attack is equal to the Dam-

age of the weapon + the character's Strength + remaining successes. In this case, that's Str 4 + Damage 3L + 1 successes = 8L. The "L" stands for Lethal, which is the type of damage. Other types are Bashing and Aggravated, but Lethal is the most common.

This damage is compared to the defending character's Soak value of the same type. Peony's Stamina gives her a Bashing Soak of 2 but no Lethal soak (mortals cannot soak lethal damage with their stamina), while her armour adds 5 Bashing and 4 Lethal soak, for a total of 7B/4L. To get the final damage, we subtract Peony's soak from Jamal's raw damage.

8L Raw Damage - 4L Soak = 4 net damage.

The remaining damage is rolled as a dice pool. Unlike most pools, 0 only counts as one success for damage. Each success is marked as a health level of damage on the defending character's sheet, starting from the top.

Jamal rolls 3, 5, 6, 0 for one success. Peony loses her top health level (the -0 level).

Onslaught and Wound Penalties

Somehow, sliding upside-down towards the ground, her viper-quick blade deflected the worst of the first blow, earning her no more than a graze across her shoulder. But there were more blows, and the stars gleamed in Jamal's blood-slick khatar.

If you are attacked multiple times by the same character in a single tick, you suffer a cumulative -1 penalty to your DVs for each attack after the first. This is called the Onslaught penalty.

Jamal is making 3 attacks. Hence, Peony suffers a DV penalty of -1 on the second attack, and -2 on the third. However, this penalty only counts against Jamal - if someone else was attacking Peony in this tick, she could apply her DV to that attack without reference to Jamal's attacks.

On his second attack, Jamal rolls 10 dice, and Peony's Parry DV is reduced to 3: 6 - 2 (action penalties) -1 (onslaught). Jamal rolls 5 successes, for 2 net successes, and 9L raw damage. Peony's soak of 4L is unchanged, so 5 damage dice are rolled, for two successes. Peony loses her next two Health Levels (her -1 levels).

Normal mortal characters have seven health levels: -0, -1, -1, -2, -2, -4, Incapacitated. The number is the Wound Penalty the character suffers upon losing that health level. The penalties are not cumulative - you only suffer the worst. Wound penalties subtract dice from your actions, yards from your movement, and directly subtract from your DVs. This is very bad for Peony.

Jamal's third and final attack rolls 9 dice, and scores 4 successes. Peony's DV, however, is now 1: 6 - 2 (action penalties) - 2 (onslaught) - 1 (wound penalty). Her only consolation is it can't get much worse: DVs can be negative, but are counted as being 0 at worst when compared to attack rolls. 3 of Jamal's 4 successes thus contribute directly to damage, for 10L raw damage, or 6L after soak. Three damage successes are rolled, and Peony loses her next three health levels - both her -2s and her -4.

In a single savage series of blows, Jamal has effectively ended the fight. Peony is still conscious, but severely injured and in incredible pain - her wound penalties will prevent her offering a serious challenge to Jamal. She can act again on tick 7, but in her state is likely to achieve little.

From now on we remove Frost Peony's counter from the Battlewheel.

Such is combat for the unExalted.

But wait, it gets worse - for both of them.

Knockdown, Stunning, Bleeding and Infection

Frost Peony's perfect silence was broken, much like her body. She slammed into the ground with an audible tearing sound as the bones broken by Jamal's attacks tore at her flesh and organs. Unsurprisingly, she began to scream.

Jamal's eyes filled with tears for the first time in memory, and he reflected that the poets would not care for this ending.

Losing your health levels is not pleasant, but it's not the only bad thing that happens to you when you're successfully hit in combat.

If you suffer more raw (pre-soak) damage than your Stamina + Resistance, you will suffer Knockdown - being knocked prone - unless you succeed on a reflexive {Dexterity or Stamina} + {Athletics or Resistance} roll of difficulty 2 (that is, requiring 2 or more successes to succeed). Being prone incurs penalties to most actions and DV, and it requires a Rising From Prone action to get up. Knockdown is applied at the end of the attack action.

Peony's Stamina + Resistance is only 4, so she would have potentially been knocked down on each of Jamal's

attacks, all of which did 8 or more raw damage. However, her Dexterity + Athletics is 10, so she'd easily make the difficulty 2 roll, even with wound penalties. The check should have been made at the end of each of Jamal's attacks, but we left it out for simplicity's sake, since failure was so unlikely. In practice, many GMs may do the same.

A character who suffers more health levels of damage in a blow than their Stamina may be stunned. The character makes a reflexive Stamina + Resistance roll at a difficulty of (damage - Stamina). Failure levies a 2 dice penalty on all non-reflexive actions until the tick when the attacker next acts.

Peony suffered 3 levels of damage on Jamal's third hit, and thus needs to check for stunning, since her Stamina is only 2. The difficulty of her roll is 1 (3 damage - 2 Stamina), but with her wound penalties, Peony has a Stamina + Resistance pool of zero. Hence, she is stunned until Jamal's next action, on tick 9. Note that stunning penalizes rolls, not static totals, so Peony's miserable DV won't get any worse.

Any character who has taken lethal or aggravated injuries will bleed. A bleeding character will suffer an unsoakable lethal health level of damage every (Stamina) in minutes. Peony has a Stamina of 2, and hence will lose a health level every 2 minutes. Stopping bleeding requires a Wits + Medicine action for each wound, at a difficulty of the number of health levels inflicted in the wound. So to stop Peony bleeding, three separate Wits + Medicine actions - at difficulty 1, 2 and 3 respectively since she took 1L, 2L and 3L damage from Jamal's three attacks - are required. Peony herself has no Medicine. If Jamal does not finish her off, or if expert medical attention does not soon arrive, she will bleed to death.

While outside the scope of this combat example, any open wound will also risk infection. Even if by some miracle Peony is saved, she will very likely die from infection.

For mortals, combat is brutal and supremely dangerous. So let us turn, by contrast, to the Exalted.

Joining a Battle In Progress

Jamal sorrowfully raised his hands, ready to end the pain of his beloved Peony, whose blood ran freely over the slick marble floor beneath the great dome. Yet he paused, for while he could hear nothing over her screams, his eyes were sharp enough to see a reflection in her wine-dark blood.

A young man had followed behind her, carelessly tearing curtains where she had passed like a ghost, standing in moonlight when she had skulked in shadows. He was a pretty youth, red hair streaked with gold, clean-shaven face, white desert robes flowing over a red-and-gold buff jacket. A tattoo of gold ink extended out onto his throat, and his fists coiled in heavy gloves. He was brash, furious, and utterly without fear. Jamal pitied and envied him at once.

"Moments ago, I saw the most beautiful woman I have ever beheld, and you have dared to snatch her from me before I could even learn her name. You will answer for this travesty!"

"Her name was Frost Peony, boy, and I suffer, for she was my beloved. Get ye gone, for as I did not hesitate with my once-betrothed, I shall spare no mercy for a child unknown to me."

Where Peony's strike had been like a viper, the boy's was like a bull. His swiftness was that of thunder.

Mukhtar Red Thunder
(Dawn Caste)

Mukhtar is a headstrong young man with a rash temper and the destiny of a God-King. He is a newly Exalted Chosen of the Unconquered Sun, and a member of the Dawn Caste, though nothing about his appearance is currently betraying that fact, and Jamal's consequent doom.

Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 3, Wits 3, Martial Arts (Cestus +2) 5, Resistance 3, Athletics 3, Awareness 3, Dodge (Multiple Oponents +3) 5.

He is armed with paired *exceptional cesti* **(Speed 5, Accuracy +1, Damage +3B, Defense +3, Rate 4)**, and wearing an *Orichalcum Reinforced Buff Jacket* **(9L/12B Soak, 6L/6B Hardness, -1 Mobility, 0 Fatigue)**.

Essence 2, a **Personal Essence Pool of 12 motes**, and a **Peripheral Essence Pool of 29 motes**. *He currently has 3 motes of Peripheral Essence committed to his armour, and 6 motes of Personal Essence committed to the Solar Hero Form charm, leaving him with 6 motes Personal, 26 motes Peripheral available.*

Relevant Charms:
First Martial Arts Excellency, Fists of Iron Technique, Dragon Coil Technique, Solar Hero Form, Striking Cobra Technique, Thunderclap Rush Attack, Graceful Crane Stance and Shadow Over Water.

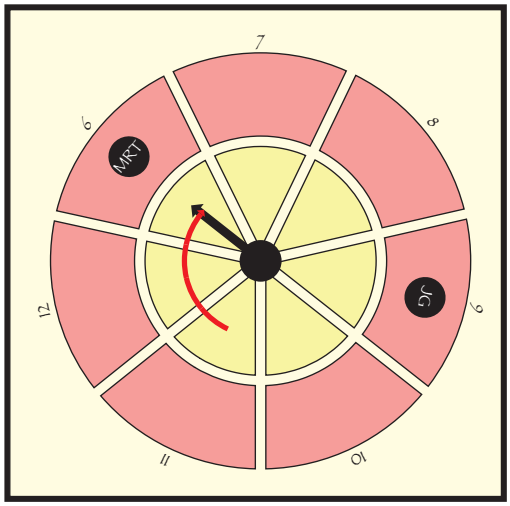
He is fairly representative of a combat-focused starting character.

When a character, voluntarily or otherwise, becomes involved in a battle already in progress, they make a Join Battle (Wits + Awareness, as normal) roll as a miscellaneous action with a DV penalty of 0 and a Speed determined by their successes on the roll. Here is where we see the Reaction Count return - which for this battle was the 5 successes rolled by Peony. The successes rolled by the joining character are subtracted from the Reaction

Count to derive the Speed, with a minimum of 0 and a maximum of 6.

In this instance, Mukhtar joins the battle on Tick 6 and activates the charm Striking Cobra Technique at a cost of 3 motes of Personal Essence. This charm supplements his Join Battle action, adding his Martial Arts (5) in successes to his roll. He rolls his Wits + Awareness (6) for 3 successes, and adds 5 from the charm for a total of 8 successes. 5 (the battle's Reaction Count) - 8 (his successes) = -3. Since the Speed of the action can't be less than 0, Mukhtar's Join Battle Speed is 0. He therefore waits 0 ticks before he can act again, and may act immediately.

We place a counter for Mukhtar on the Battlewheel.



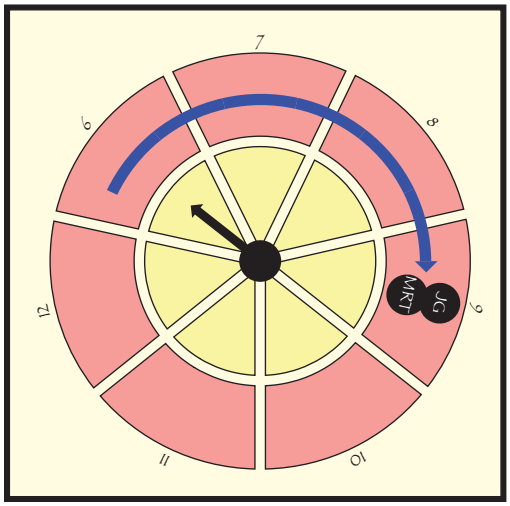
Charm Use, Minimum Damage and Stunts

Jamal never saw the fist striking, but he felt the shockwave erupt from his chest where it landed, and heard mirrors shattering behind him. Acting from unthinking instinct, he stabbed a khatar into the column behind him, bracing himself even as his ears rang with the sound of stone and steel screaming against each other.

For his action, Mukhtar takes a Move action, and then chooses to activate a Simple charm, Thunderclap Rush Attack. Activating a charm is an action in its own right, with special rules based on the type of charm. Simple Charms have a default Speed of 6 and DV penalty of 0. However, many Simple Charms alter those values. Simple Charms cannot normally be included in Flurries.

In this case, Thunderclap Rush Attack has a Speed of 3 and a DV penalty of 0. It allows Mukhtar to make a single Martial Arts attack (and hence benefit from the superior Speed and DV of the charm to a normal attack). He will act again on tick 9. It costs him 3 motes, which he spends out of his Personal Essence, leaving him with 0 Personal Essence.

We update the Battlwheel to reflect this.



Notice that Both Jamal and Mukhtar's counters are placed in the same segment on the Battlewheel. WQe'll see what this means shortly.

Once a character has used a charm, they may not use any other charm until they are next able to act. However, they can use that same charm whenever it's applicable during that time. Since you may only use a Simple charm as your action, in Mukhtar's case he can't use Thunderclap Rush Attack again until his next action, and won't be able to use any other charms either.

The Storyteller decides Mukhtar's description of his attack was interesting enough to count as a Stunt, in this case a 2 dice stunt (technically, stunts are very easy to earn, and everything Peony and Jamal have done up to this point would have earned stunt dice). Stunt dice benefit all actions described by the stunt, which in this case is a single action.

Mukhtar's accuracy pool is Dex 5 + Martial Arts 5 + Specialties 2 + Accuracy 1 + Stunt 2 = 15. He rolls 8 successes.

Jamal's best DV is still his Parry DV of 8, but it has been reduced to 5 by the DV penalty of the flurry that defeated Peony. Jamal tries to stunt himself, describing a dramatic defense, and is awarded a 2 dice stunt for his efforts. However, Heroic Mortals do not receive the full benefits of stunting - they only get the benefits of a stunt one step down, in this case a 1 die stunt. Stunt dice for defense are rolled, and any successes added to DV. Jamal doesn't roll a success, and hence his DV remains 5, and Mukhtar has hit with 3 successes.

Normally, Mukhtar's raw damage would be 9B: Strength 3 + Damage 3B + 3 successes. However, his Solar Hero Form charm allows him to spend a mote of Essence during the raw damage calculation to count each success twice for the purposes of damage. He spends a single mote of peripheral Essence, causing a faint shimmer on his forehead, increasing the damage to 12B: Strength 3 + Damage 3B + (3 x 2) successes.

Note this isn't Mukhtar using the Solar Hero Form charm - he can't use any charms other than Thunderclap Rush Attack until his next action. However, Mukhtar already had Solar Hero Form active before the start of battle, and its duration is a scene. Enjoying a benefit of an already active charm does not count as using a Charm. For this reason, Solar warriors frequently activate charms with long durations before battle.

Jamal's Bashing soak is 13, more than Mukhtar's damage (the Solar shouldn't have bothered wasting that mote!). However, soak cannot entirely cancel damage - attacks inflict a minimum number of dice damage no matter how much soak is applied. This minimum is the Permanent Essence of the attacker, or the minimum damage rating of the weapon, whichever is higher (most weapons do not have a minimum damage, and hence Essence is almost always the trait used).

Mukhtar's Permanent Essence is 2, so he rolls 2 damage dice, scoring one success. Jamal loses his first health level (his -0 level) to bashing damage. His ribs are bruised under that armour, but he's not bleeding, and the wound will heal much faster.

If an action enhanced by a stunt succeeds, the character regains motes of Essence equal to twice the die rating of the stunt, or alternatively a point of Willpower for 2 and 3 dice stunts. As you would expect, these motes can only replace spent, uncommitted Essence. Mukhtar gains 4 motes from his successful stunt action, and puts those motes in his Personal pool, leaving him with space for 2 motes in his Personal pool and 1 in his Peripheral. He can't regain the motes invested in Solar Hero Form until he releases the charm.

Note that a flurry, though it has multiple component actions, is still a single action in its own right, so you only get the stunt reward for it once (whether launching the flurry or defending against it). Broadly, you shouldn't count on stunting more than once per tick.

Simultaneous Actions, Excellencies and Knockback

The young Exalt winced slightly. "That's rather good armour."

A wistful, sorrowful smile spread over the face of his opponent. "And that is truly amazing swiftness. How tragic for you that on this day it seems Heaven wishes me to show speed to be no match for power." The column cracked ominously as Jamal wrenched his khatar out and spun low, slicing powerfully at Mukhtar's knees.

Suddenly sheathed in gold flame, Mukhtar's left hand smashed the khatar into the floor with an awful shriek of metal on stone. Jamal, trapped awkwardly mid-spin, heard the boy's voice whisper in his ear as sunlight exploded all about him.

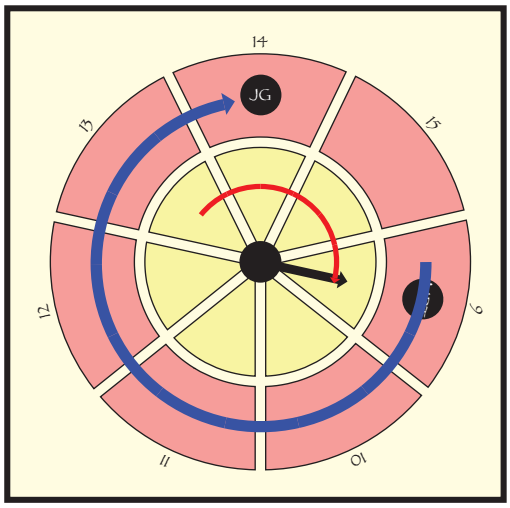
"Consider the lesson learned."

Jamal was hurled through the first column, smashed the back of the throne off with his passage, and then widened a window considerably on his way out. Tumbling across the starlit balcony, he came to a rest on its very edge, half his body dangling above the courtyard oasis far below.

When multiple characters act on the same tick, the results of their actions are applied simultaneously at the end of the tick. This means that two warriors can strike and kill each other on the same tick. Since DV refreshes at the beginning of the tick, and DV penalties for actions apply at the end of the tick, you will also be able to apply your full DV against any attacks against you during the tick. However, motes spent to fuel charms are considered to be spent when the charm is activated, for simplicity's sake.

On tick 9, Jamal chooses to use a three-attack flurry, much as he did to defeat Peony, and Mukhtar chooses to make a single attack. Both have Speed 5, so they will act again on tick 14.

We update the Battlwheel to reflect Jamal's Action.



The mortal's description is assessed as a one-die stunt (meaning he gets nothing), while the Exalt's is assessed as a two dice stunt. Mukhtar rolls his two dice to see what his DV bonus will be for the round, and scores a single success. The ST determines Jamal's attacks will

be rolled out first. We will assume he does this because Mukhtar is a PC and Jamal isn't (for a start, if Mukhtar is the PC, then we're probably learning some interesting things about his character, such as his willingness to kill over beauty; if Jamal is the PC, the ST is just being a jerk). It's useful to the Solar to have his attacks resolved later, since he'll have more information when making decisions about charm use.

Jamal declares his first attack, with 11 dice as before. The Exalt declares his use of a charm, First Martial Arts Excellency. Excellencies are very useful basic charms, and every ability has the same Excellencies. The First Excellency adds dice to rolls. The second adds automatic successes. The third allows re-rolls. All three are Reflexive charms. The first and second charms each allow for a variable amount of motes to be spent on them, for variable amounts of dice and successes respectively.

Mukhtar must declare how much he is spending on the charm now, before Jamal rolls. He must actually use the charm, so he'll need to spend 1 mote. He spends 2 motes from his personal pool, which will give him two dice. When used on the defensive, the dice granted by the First Excellency (or dice-adding charms in general) are rolled, and successes added to DV, very much like stunt dice. The difference is that the First Excellency only contributes dice to a single defense, and thus the dice are rolled when the DV is applied, after the attacker's roll.

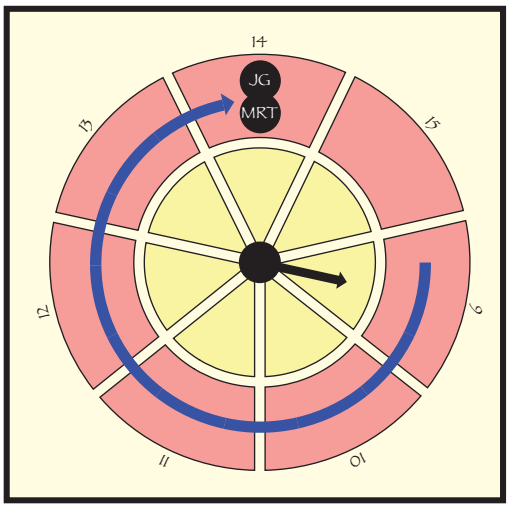
Jamal rolls his 11 dice, and scores 6 successes. Mukhtar's Parry DV is his best: (Dex 5 + MA 5 + Specialties 2 + Defense 3)/2 = 8 + 1 from the stunt. Exalts always round up for DV. Jamal has missed anyway, but Mukhtar still rolls the two dice he bought with the First Excellency, and scores a success, raising his DV to 10.

Jamal declares his second attack, and Mukhtar once again uses his charm, spending two motes personal. The Solar can't use any charm other than First Melee Excellency until tick 14, but he can use it whenever it's applicable until then. The mortal's luck is with him on his second attack - he rolls a solid 7 successes on 10 dice! However, even with Onslaught this isn't going to be enough, as Mukhtar will have a DV of 8 before rolling his Excellency dice. The Solar rolls them anyway - he won't be refunded the motes, after all!

On the third attack, the Solar chooses not to use the charm. Jamal's roll is average, luckily - 4 successes on 9 dice. With a DV of 7, Mukhtar is fine.

Now, Red Thunder's attack is resolved, though it's important to remember it's happening simultaneously in-game to Jamal's failed attacks.

We update the Battlwheel to reflect Mukhtar's Action.



The Solar declares he will be spending 10 motes of peripheral Essence on the First Martial Arts Excellency for his attack. This is the maximum he can spend, because the First Excellency gives one die per mote spent to an action, and Solar Exalted may not add more than their Attribute + Ability in dice (in this case, Dex + Martial Arts = 10) to a roll, or half that in automatic successes (which count as adding two dice), with any combination of charms. He needs to declare his use of the charm when he declares his attack, including the number of dice he will be adding with it, and spends the motes then.

The Solar's Accuracy pool is 15 (as before) + 10 (from his charm) = 25. He rolls well above average, scoring 16 successes. Jamal's DV is 8 (as before). The mortal has been hit with 8 successes! Mukhtar spends a mote of peripheral in order to enjoy Solar Hero Form's doubling property, causing 22B raw bashing damage. Jamal's soak is 13B, so the Solar rolls 9 damage dice, scoring 4 successes. The mortal loses all of his -1 and -2 health levels to bashing damage.

Given the resounding nature of the blow, the ST invokes an optional replacement for knockdown checks, knockback. This knocks the defender back a yard for each three dice of raw damage, and leaves them prone. The ST rounds up for 8 yards, and narrates Jamal being smashed through a number of stone objects and landing outside on the balcony. All this smashing is purely cosmetic, however - knockback in of itself causes no damage.

Having rolled out all actions, the effects are now actually applied - Mukhtar's successful parries and Jamal's sudden and painful moment of being airborne occurring at effectively the same moment. Having succeeded on the flurry described by his two-die stunt, the Solar collects

4 motes of Essence, which he uses to replace the personal motes spent on defense. He has 4 personal motes and 14 peripheral motes remaining - and of course, at this point having spent 12 peripheral motes his anima is burning like a golden bonfire.

Tactical Note: *In Exalted's first edition, it was very difficult to have charms benefit both your attack and defense - it typically required persistent defenses or combos. As a result, offensive charm use was usually not tactically wise. Exalted Second Edition has explicitly addressed this factor with the Excellencies, since they cheerfully help your attack and defense, as just demonstrated by Mukhtar. This makes getting started in combat much less fraught with danger, and should be appreciated by those who don't like to be forced to make complex charm-use choices! It should be noted that the mote efficiency of these charms is still not great, though obviously successful stunting helps.*

Incapacitation, Damage Overflow, Death and Aborting Flurries

A Forsaken. Of all the terrible fates, Jamal had angered a Forsaken who had caught a glimpse of Frost Peony's beauty. Dazed, he groggily hauled himself up, feet scrabbling on the balcony's edge, and began to run as best as he was able. If Heaven was merciful, he might escape.

Heaven, apparently, was miserly with its mercy. A hand seized Jamal from behind.

"No. You will NOT destroy such beauty and then live. There will be justice in this world, of a kind."

Down in the garden, the ground shook as each one of Mukhtar's blows landed, leaves rattling as clouds of stone-dust settled on them, and cracks raced down the walls.

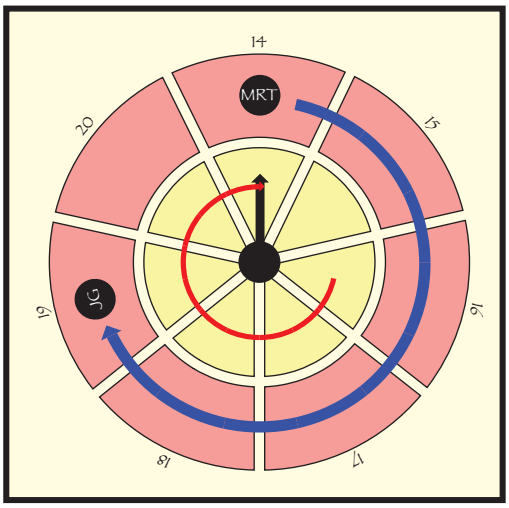
Jamal has been hurled only 8 yards, which is twice Mukhtar's Move distance of (Dex 5 - 1 Armour Mobility penalty) = 4. The Solar can easily close the distance by taking the Move action on any two ticks, which he can do at leisure, since Jamal isn't going anywhere until he takes a Rise From Prone (Speed 5/DV -1) action.

Being prone isn't much fun - it levies a -1 external penalty on all non-reflexive physical actions. In Exalted Second Edition, Internal Penalties are those that impair a character's ability to take actions, and they are a dice penalty to actions. External penalties are those that make the actions themselves harder, and they subtract successes, not dice, from rolls. On the plus side, being prone doesn't change Jamal's DV.

Mukhtar closes the distance on ticks 12 and 13, and then both characters act on tick 14. This is a little different to the description given above - the ST is fine with shifting around the purely aesthetic outcomes of the mechanical results!

Jamal knows that he's doomed fighting against an invincible Forsaken (the Immaculate term for the Dawn Caste), and thus chooses a flurry of two actions - Rise From Prone (Speed 5/DV - 1) and Dash (Speed 3/DV - 2). The flurry thus has a Speed of 5 (the worst Speed in the flurry) and a DV penalty of -3 (the total of the DV penalties). Mukhtar declares he will make four attacks.

We update the Battlwheel to reflect Jamal's Flurry.



Rise From Prone is an automatic action that succeeds without a roll under ordinary circumstances, so Jamal will rise without problems. The Dash action allows him to move Dexterity + 6 - wound penalties - armour mobility penalties per tick, which is currently 7 yards for Jamal. If he survives Mukhtar's attacks, he will move 7 yards away this tick, then will continue to Dash on each tick until his next action. Dash, however, prevents parrying without a stunt or magical assistance, which could be a bit of a problem for the Tri-Khan's greatest warrior.

For the bit about the clouds of dust and the shaking garden, Mukhtar is awarded a two dice stunt. We know from before that his accuracy pool is normally 15 with a two dice stunt, but this time he's using an attacking flurry, and thus will suffer multiple action penalties. On each attack, Red Thunder is planning on activating the Fists of Iron charm, which amongst other things adds a die of accuracy. He doesn't actually need to declare the use of the charm until he initiates each individual attack, but we'll include it here for the purposes of calculating his pools:

First attack: 15 - 4 (for the first of four actions) + 1 = 12
Second attack: 15 - 5 (for the second of four actions) +1 = 11
Third attack: 15 - 6 + 1 = 10
Fourth attack: 15 - 7 + 1 = 9

On the first attack, the Solar rolls 6 successes after spending 1 mote personal for Fists of Iron (it's a very cheap charm compared to an Excellency, but it's a purely offensive charm - he better hope no-one else joins the battle before tick 19!). Jamal can't use his Parry DV because he's Dashing, and is forced to use his Dodge DV. That DV is (Dex 5 + Dodge 3)/2 - armour mobility 2 - wound penalty 2 = 0. The Exalt hits with 6 successes, and spends a mote of personal to double those successes for the purposes of damage (with Solar Hero Form). Fists of Iron adds +2 damage, and makes the attack lethal, for a total of 20L raw damage.

Jamal has 7L soak, leaving 13 damage to be rolled. Mukhtar rolls 5 successes, so the mortal takes 5 lethal damage. This is a good time for us to look at what happens when someone who has already taken bashing damage takes lethal damage, and what happens when a character takes more damage than they have health levels!

Incoming damage pushes lesser damage down the track. Jamal's top five health levels (-0, -1, -1, -2, -2) are filled with bashing damage, and he has suffered 5 levels of lethal damage. Each level of lethal damage pushes the bashing damage down one level - so for the first, the -0 level fills with lethal, and the bashing shifts down to occupy the -1, -1, -2, -2, -4 levels. The second fills the first -1 with lethal, and the bashing is pushed down into the -1, -2, -2, -4, Incapacitated levels.

When a character's Incapacitated level is filled with bashing damage, they are unconscious. They must choose the Inactive (Speed 5/DV = 0) action whenever their tick comes up. So much for Jamal getting away!

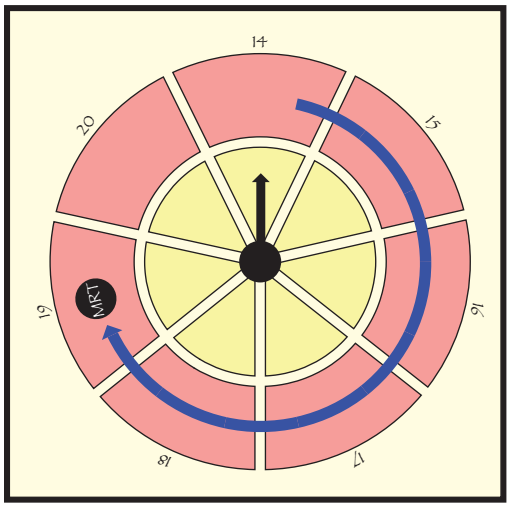
But Jamal has three more lethal levels coming in, and nowhere for the bashing levels to be pushed down into! When bashing levels are pushed past Incapacitated, they loop around, and start converting the top most bashing levels into Lethal. So when the third level is applied, the second -1 fills with the lethal level inflicted, and the five bashing levels are pushed down one. The bashing level that was in Incapacitated loops around, and converts the top bashing level (currently in the first -2) to lethal. The fourth fills the second -2, and pushes the bashing around to convert the -4 to lethal.

Now we have another problem - there's nowhere for the last bashing level to go when the fifth lethal level pushes it out of Incapacitated! Well, actually there is - when a character has their Incapacitated level filled with lethal, they are unconscious and Inactive as with bashing, but they are on the verge of death. Once this occurs, damage can push into the Dying levels beyond incapacitated - each character has a number of such levels equal to their Stamina. Further bashing or lethal damage is always pushed into these levels as lethal damage (aggravated damage remains aggravated). Hence, the last Bashing level fills Jamal's first Dying level with lethal.

If Jamal were to survive the next three attacks, he would be forced to take the Inactive action on tick 19, his next tick. However, because his Incapacitated level is filled with lethal damage, he takes one unsoakable lethal level of damage each time he takes the Inactive action. His condition is far worse than Frost Peony's, and there would be little hope for him even if Mukhtar was not about to crush his skull like a soft melon.

The Solar's second, merciless attack (on which he spends a mote of personal for Fists of Iron) rolls 5 successes. Of course, Jamal has no DV, so the blow hits. Mukhtar, keen to finish the job, spends a mote of personal for Solar Hero Form, and does a total of 18L raw damage, 11 above the mortal's lethal soak. Four successes are rolled. Jamal's three remaining Dying levels are filled, killing him instantly (when the last level fills, that's it). The remaining level of damage is entirely moot.

Mukhtar's action is speed 5, and Jamal's counter is removed from the Battlewheel.



On the first and second blows, Jamal would have suffered bleeding, knockback and stunning normally, but the ST obviously didn't bother since they were entirely moot.

Mukhtar's remaining two attacks no longer have a target. If, when resolving a flurry, you encounter a declared action that has become inapplicable, you may choose to cancel the remainder of the flurry. The flurry ends instantly, with its Speed unchanged, but you only take DV penalties for actions you actually took. In this case, Mukhtar does so, and his DV penalty will only be -2.

His stunt successful, the Solar gains 4 motes of Essence, which he puts in personal. He could of course choose to regain willpower instead, but as of yet he hasn't spent any!

A Forked Battle

A trail of blood stretched in the opposite direction to the trail of destruction left by the Forsaken's rage. Peony had crawled painfully towards the window from which she'd entered, and was attempting to haul herself through when a familiar hand touched hers.

The Outcaste Dragon Blood Venomous Rose smiled at her from outside, before springing lightly over her into the room. Her long red hair was filled with both the thorns and flowers of her namesake, betraying her Wood-Aspected nature more than even her green jade armour and ornate powerbow.

"Oh, my dear Peony, what have you done to yourself? Hush, your sister is on her way, and already in a towering rage. If she finds you bleeding, it won't be pleasant for the Tri-Khan. Let me tend you - I can have you patched up in moments if we're not…" Rose winced at the sound of iron-shod boots marching into the chamber "…interrupted."

In the garden far below, Cathak Ironheart caught a glimpse of fire in her tea and looked up with sudden fury. She had heard the screams and curses, but paid little mind to the diversions of mortals. That golden fire, though, spreading the light of the dawn and bleaching the very stone - that she had seen once before, on the night her husband, sisters and father had died.

"Anathema!" she bellowed, seizing her treasured daiklave Swift Eagle from its resting place beside her.

Venomous Rose
(Wood Aspect)

Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2, Wits 3, Archery (Powerbow +3) 5, Resistance 2, Medicine (Mortals +2) 5, Awareness 4, Athletics (Balance + ?) 4, Dodge (Whilst Using Bows +3) 5.

She is armed with *Infinitely Wicked Thorn*, a *jade short powerbow* **(Speed 5, Accuracy 2, Damage +2, Rate 2, Range 300 yards)**, and is wearing *jade Hearthstone Bracers* **(+3 dodge dice, -1 Speed to attacks)** and a *jade reinforced breastplate* **(10L/9B soak, 8L/8B hardness, -1 Mobility, 0 Fatigue)**.

Venomous Rose is a Wood-Aspected Outcaste Dragon-Blood, and apparently and acquaintance of Frost Peony's. She has also been an Exalt longer than Mukhtar

Essence 3, Willpower 6, a **Personal Essence Pool of 11 motes**, and a **Peripheral Essence Pool of 28 motes**. *She currently has 11 motes of Peripheral Essence committed to her artifacts leaving her with 17 motes Peripheral available.*

Relevant Charms:
First Archery Excellency, Second Dodge Excellency, Second Medicine Excellency, Third Medicine Excellency, Third Athletics Excellency.

She has a Hearthstone, but for simplicity we'll assume it has a non-combat effect

The soldiers charging into the room with Rose and Peony are six Elite Troops. They have *chopping swords* (with which their summarized totals are **Speed 4, Accuracy 8, Damage 8L (minimum 2 dice), DV 3, Rate 2**) and *chain hauberks* **(6L/7B soak, -3 mobility**. This gives them a total soak of **6L/11B)**. They are Extras.

Cathak Ironheart
(Fire Aspect)

Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Wits 3, Melee 4 (Daiklave +3), Martial Arts 2 (Grappling +?), Resistance 3, Awareness 2, Athletics 3 (Leaping +?), Dodge 4.

She is armed with *Swift Eagle*, a *jade daiklave* **(Speed 4, Accuracy +3, Damage +7L, Defense +2, Rate 3)**, and is wearing *jade articulated plate* **(12L/14B soak, 8L/8B hardness, -2 Mobility, 0 Fatigue)**.

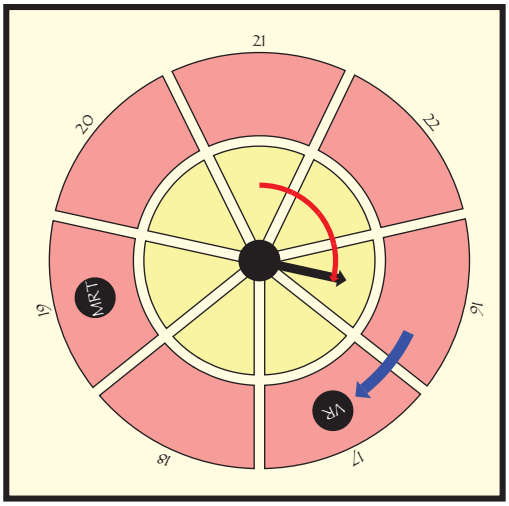
Cathak Ironheart is a Fire-Aspected Outcaste Dragon-Blood who has a specific grudge against the Solars above and beyond the normal hatred for the "Anathema".

Essence 3, Willpower 6, **Personal Essence 11, Peripheral Essence 28**. *She has 11 motes committed to her artifacts, leaving her with 17 motes.*

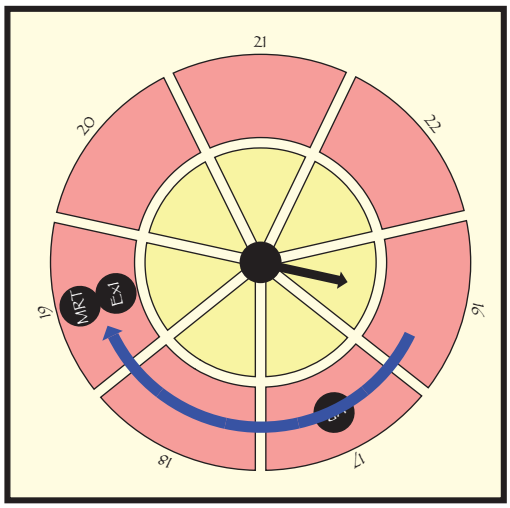
Relevant Charms:
First Melee Excellency, Third Melee Excellency, Second Dodge Excellency, Second Athletics Excellency and Ox Body Technique.

All of these actors enter the battle on tick 16, two seconds after Jamal's grisly death. As before, they all make Join Battle actions, against the Reaction Count set by Frost Peony: 5.

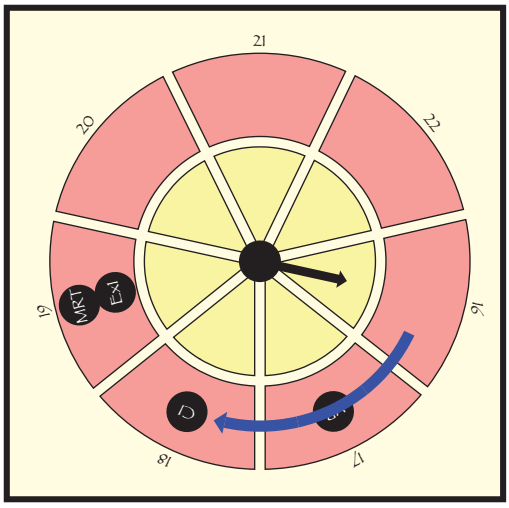
Rose rolls her Join Battle of 7 and scores 4 successes. She will act again in one tick.



In the interests of sanity, the ST rolls the soldiers' Join Battle (which is, incidentally, 6) as a single unit. They score two successes (they roll 1, 4, 4, 6, 8, 0 but not being heroic, they only get a single success on a 0) and will act in three ticks.



Ironheart rolls her Join Battle of 5 and scores three successes. She'll act in two ticks, on tick 18.



Morale, Readying a Weapon, Piercing Damage and Extras

A curse not normally fit for the Tri-Khan's palace escaped Rose's lips as she struggled to bring her bow up quickly enough to defend her dying friend. She was, however, pleased to note that the soldiers were looking appropriately fearful to see her hair and her jade. It was nice to know that somebody respected the power of the Exalted.

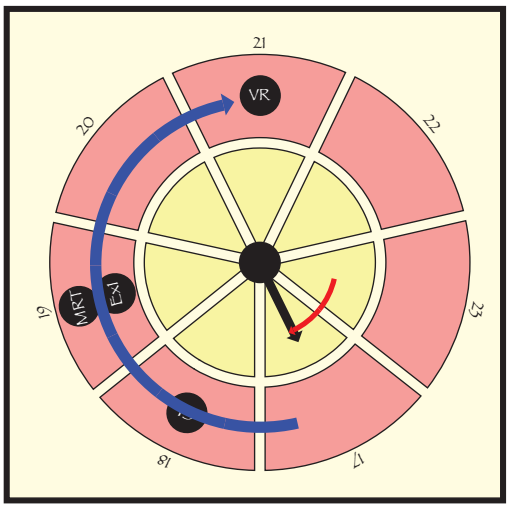
The soldier's fears were all too well confirmed when Rose brought the powerbow to bear, and sent two arrows through the two closest with all the force of harpoons.

On making a Join Battle roll to engage an opponent that's obviously a serious threat, non-Exalted need to make a morale check. This involves rolling their valor score in dice against a difficulty set by the nature of the threat. Failure levies a -2 linternal penalty for fear on all actions, while a botch (rolling no successes at all and rolling one or more 1s) forces the character to flee. If a character's valour is higher than the difficulty, they do not need to roll.

The soldiers can clearly see they're facing an overwhelming opponent - an Exalted of the Elemental Dragons - which is a difficulty four roll. They are exceedingly brave - valour 4 - but not so brave as to shake that off! The ST once again rolls for them as a single unit (the rules suggest rolling for Extras in groups, but don't mandate a specific method), and achieves two successes - not good enough. The soldiers will suffer a -2 internal penalty.

Non-extras may substitute another virtue for valour for morale purposes, if appropriate.

Unlike everyone else who has Joined Battle so far, neither of the Dragon Blooded began with their weapon readied (Peony did so before the Join Battle roll, permitted by Jamal's courtesy). Therefore, Rose needs to take the Draw/Ready Weapon (Speed 5/DV -1) action when she acts on tick 17, and incorporates it into a flurry with two attacks. A special rule of Draw/Ready Weapon is that if it is incorporated into a Flurry with attacks, the Speed of the Draw/Ready Weapon action is ignored. The Speed of Rose's flurry is thus 4, her normal Speed with her bow, but she'll still take the DV penalty, for a total DV penalty of -3. She'll act again on tick 21.



Rose's description earns a one-die stunt.

Draw Weapon is an unrolled automatic action, so Rose draws her bow. It is NOT reflexive, however, so it still counts for the purpose of multiple action penalties.

Rose declares her first attack, and spends two personal motes on First Archery Excellency. This gives her four extra dice, since for Dragon Blooded, each mote spent gives two dice, not one. However, their die cap is Abil-

ity + Specialties, not Attribute + Ability. She also needs to declare the type of ammunition she's using before rolling her attack - seeing that the soldiers are wearing heavy armour, she uses a target arrow, a type of arrow that does no bonus damage, but converts the shot's damage to piercing - the effects of which we'll see below.

Her total accuracy pool is thus Dex 4 + Archery 5 + Specialties 3 + Accuracy 2 + Stunt 1 + Charm 4 - multiple actions 4 = 15. She rolls 9 successes. The soldiers are using their Parry DV of 3 (their dodge DV is so bad that they've little choice), so she hits for six net successes.

Her raw damage is equal to her strength 2 + weapon damage 2 + ammunition damage 0L + successes 6 = 10L. The soldiers have 6L soak, but piercing damage halves the soak contributed by armour (rounding down) - in this case, that's the only soak they have! The net damage is 7 dice.

However, damage against extras is not rolled. They suffer 1 level of damage for each 3 dice of post-soak damage, rounded up (yes, the minimum damage rule means hitting an extra ALWAYS results in at least one level of damage). In this case, 7/3 rounded up is 3 levels. Extras only have three health levels, -1, -3, Incapacitated, so Rose has put one of the soldiers directly into Incapacitated. He's not actually dead - it takes a single lethal level past Incapacitated to kill an extra - but since he's just an extra, the ST doesn't bother tracking his progress from this point on.

Rose's second attack is a virtual replica of her first, with the same result. Having succeeded at her flurry, she gains two motes personal back.

The soldiers themselves take the Move action on this tick. They only have Dex 3, so with their mobility penalty you'd assume they wouldn't get anywhere, but Move rate cannot be reduced below 1 yard/tick.

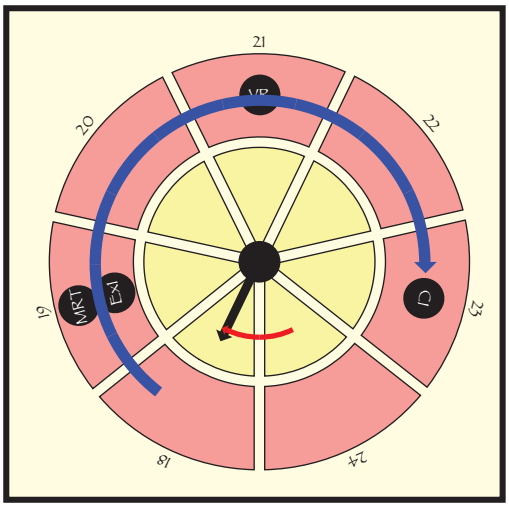
Jumping, Willpower and Unstable Footing

Mukhtar, just about to turn and see if anything could be done for the dying woman, heard another female voice scream the Realm's name for his kind. Looking down into the garden, he saw a furious woman, steam rising from her body, her daiklave pointed directly at his heart.

"Go home, Dragon-Blood! Chiaroscuro has no need of you!" Red Thunder almost turned away, but it seemed the woman had no intention of heeding his advice - in an explosion of smoke and fire, she leapt into the foliage, scaling the narrow branches of the garden as if they were a sturdy ladder! It seemed this was a complication he couldn't escape…

On tick 18, Ironheart finds herself a good 20 yards beneath her enemy, with her weapon unready. This does not satisfy her lust for instant vengeance!

She chooses a two action flurry, consisting of two miscellaneous actions: Ready Weapon (Speed 5/DV -1) and Jump (Speed 5/DV -1). She knows she's not likely to actually leap all the way up the wall in her heavy armour, so she doesn't bother declaring an attack - she just wants to get close enough to induce Mukhtar to engage. She will act again on tick 23, and will carry a -2 DV penalty until then.



Her stunt is assessed at two dice.

As before, Ready Weapon is an unrolled automatic action, so it succeeds. Jump is automatic and unrolled, but the total yards jumped need to be calculated. Normally, characters can jump their Strength + Athletics yards vertically. Wound and armour mobility penalties subtract from this number. Anything that would add dice adds yards directly to this total. The total is doubled if the character wishes to jump horizontally instead.

For Ironheart, that total is Str 3 + Athletics 3 + Specialty 1 + Stunt 2 - mobility 2 = 7 yards. She wants to go further than that, however! She has two ways of adding yet more yards: charms, and channeling willpower.

Ironheart has the Second Athletics Excellency. This normally adds automatic successes to a roll, but in cases such as this, it counts as adding 2 per "success" to her Strength + Athletics total, up to a maximum of her Ability + Specialties. In this case, she buys two "successes", adding four yards to her total, for a cost of 4 peripheral motes.

Outside of combat, you may spend a point of willpower before rolling to add an automatic success to a roll OR you may spend a point of willpower to add the rating of an appropriate virtue in dice to the roll. You may do the latter no more times in a story than the rating of the virtue in question. In combat, you may only spend willpower for these purposes once per tick. Ironheart

has a valour of 4, and she believes that it's appropriate to channel it for rushing to battle, so she spends a willpower and adds her valour in "dice" to the total - meaning she gets another four yards. Her total leaping distance is 15 yards!

You can use a movement action (Move or Dash) in the same tick as a jump.
Having succeeded on her stunt (not tough - both actions were unrolled!) Ironheart chooses to regain her spent Willpower rather than the motes.

She does have some problems, though. The Storyteller rules that the thin, swaying branches are Unstable Terrain, with an instability rating of 4. When on terrain with an instability rating, all attack pools and DVs are calculated with the character's combat abilities reduced to the value of their Athletics score if higher. If the character's Athletics is less than the instability rating (as Ironheart's is), then they must include a Dexterity + Athletics roll into a flurry in order to do anything other than keep their balance, and must make a reflexive Dexterity + Athletics roll if hit by an attack. In both cases, the difficulty of the roll is the instability rating, and if failed, the character falls.

Ironheart won't need to make an Athletics check this tick, since she doesn't do anything after reaching the unstable terrain. If she'd had any other actions planned, she would have had to include the athletics check into her flurry.

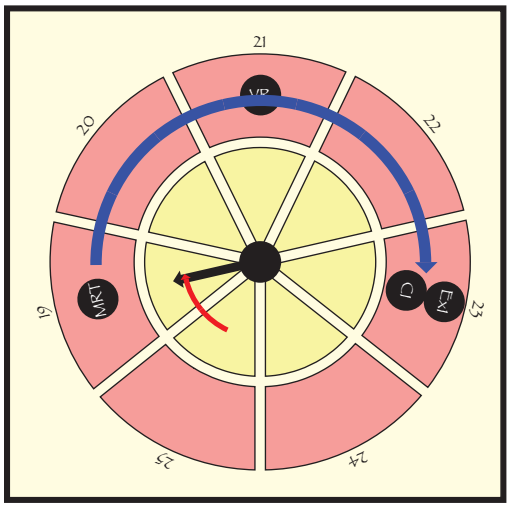
Multiple Opponents, Essence-Users Dodging, and Automatic Miss

With a fierce yell to fortify their courage, the Tri-Khan's best charged across the marble floor, their heavy scimitars reflecting the sunlight of Mukhtar's anima, still shining into the chamber.

Rose did not hesitate. She spun into a sweeping kick, which had no chance of hitting the soldiers, but swept up a cloud of stone dust from the destruction into their faces. She sprang like a cat once her kick had turned full circle, flying between their swinging blades to stand with a foot braced against the chests of two, and a drawn arrow aimed at the top of a third's skull.

The soldiers are still a way off, so on tick 19 they choose a flurry of Dash and Attack. This flurry is Speed 4, DV -3: they'll act again on tick 23. Their Dash distance is 6 yards (6 + Dex 3 - mobility 3), which is enough to close the distance.

Rose stunts her defense, and receives two dice. She rolls them, gaining a success.



The first of the four extras attacks. His accuracy pool is 8 - 2 morale - 3 multiple actions = 3 dice. Not good!

Rose chooses to use her Dodge DV. Up till now, you haven't seen a Dodge DV used (excepting Jamal's ill-fated Dash), because Parry has always been higher. You can't easily parry with a bow, so Rose is an expert dodger. This isn't a bad strategy for her for a number of reasons, the first being that anyone with a permanent Essence of 2 or higher adds their permanent Essence in "dice" to their Dodge DV calculation. She's also equipped with Hearthstone Bracers, which add another three "dice". Hence, her DV is (Dex 4 + Dodge 5 + Specialties 3 + Essence 3 + Bracers 3)/2 - 1 mobility - 3 action penalty + 1 stunt = 6.

Another reason why dodging is a good strategy for Rose is that Dragon Blooded may use Reflexive charms regardless of what other charms they've used since their last action. Hence, Rose could use a Dodge Excellency to boost her DV even higher, despite having used First Archery Excellency not long before!

She won't need to in this case, however, as her DV is higher than the accuracy pool of her attacker. In that case, the attacker automatically misses.

The story doesn't get any better for the remaining three attackers. Multiple opponents do not inherently compromise defense unless a character is surrounded - i.e. being attacked by the maximum number of attackers allowed by the physical space available. Normally, that's five attackers, and the Tri-Khan's soldiers are one short. They'd need to back Rose up against a wall to compromise her defense.

If Rose hadn't incapacitated their friends, they'd be able to fit five attackers around her. In that case, she'd be unable to take a Move or Dash action. She'd suffer -2 dodge DV unless she could somehow stunt her dodge to make up for not being able to give ground. Finally, she'd have to choose one opponent to expose her back

to - they'd get the benefits of an unexpected attack (see below).

Of course, Rose did take out two soldiers, and their friends are out of luck. All four miss automatically.

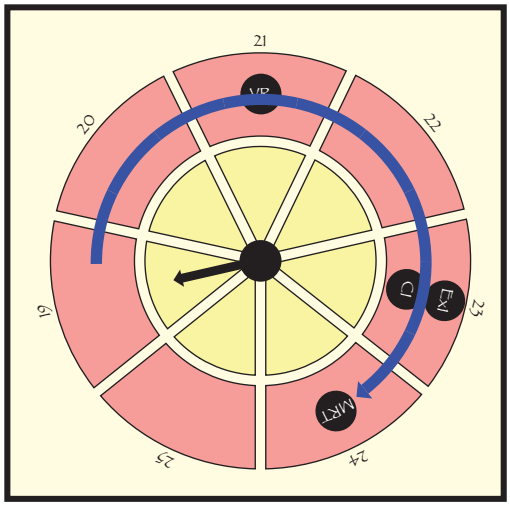
Height Penalties, More Unsteady Terrain, Hardness

Looking warily at the thin, swaying branches beneath Ironheart's feet, the young Solar took a moment to reinforce his poise and balance before hopping down onto a nearby branch, leaving his feet at her eyelevel. Where she struggled to maintain her footing, his was as firm and certain as if he stood upon solid ground.

"Dragonling, you have chosen a bad spot to duel." Red Thunder grinned suddenly, shaking the tree they shared violently with his feet, before kneeling to slam a fist into her face. "It's only right of me to escort you back to where you belong."

Snarling, Ironheart expressed Essence from her body in a cloud of smoke and steam, forming almost a solid wall in the air with which to brace herself against as her faithful blade leapt to ward off the blow."

Also on tick 19, Mukhtar has to decide what to do with this irritating Dragon-Blood. It's obvious that he'll be no help to Peony while fending off a crazed Cathak, so he resigns himself to defeating her. Noting her position, he activates the reflexive charm Graceful Crane Stance, at a cost of 3 committed motes peripheral, which causes him to automatically succeed any Athletics rolls and treat anything with at least the width of a human hair as a sturdy three-foot stone ledge, for the remainder of the scene. He then uses a Move action to hop down (which the GM rules is fine given the effects of his charm), and declares an attack against Ironheart. He will act again on tick 24 (remembering his speed for attacking is 5).



The GM rates both stunts at two dice. The Dragon Blood rolls her dice and scores one success.

Mukhtar is considered to be on perfectly level ground. Thus, his accuracy pool is perfectly normal - 15 with a two dice stunt, as we know. He's not using any charms (and in fact he can't, having used Graceful Crane Stance). Ironheart declares she's using First Melee Excellency - it's a Reflexive charm, and thus as a Dragon-Blood she can use it freely no matter what other charms she's used. She's keen not to fall, and thus she buys six dice at a cost of 3 motes peripheral.

It's important to note that Ironheart can buy dice up to her Ability + Specialties in dice, which is Melee 4 + Specialties 3, or 7 dice. Her Melee is effectively 3 (i.e. capped at her Athletics rating) due to the unstable terrain for attacks and defense ONLY. It does not cap her magical potential, or anything else. She does however only buy six dice, since you can't spend a half mote, and thus it'd cost four motes for 7 dice.

Mukhtar really wants to knock Ironheart down, and thus spends a point of willpower to channel his valour (of 3) for 3 dice. This gives him a total accuracy of 18, and he rolls 8 successes.

Ironheart's Parry DV would normally be (Dex 4 + Melee 3 (capped due to unstable terrain) + Specialties 3 + Defense 2)/2 + Stunt 1 - action penalties 2 = 5, plus whatever she rolls on her 6 Excellency dice. However, you take a penalty to DV when the opponent has the higher ground - either -1, -2 or -3 depending on how steep the height difference is. The ST rules in this case that the penalty is -2. The Cathak rolls 4 successes on her dice, for a total Parry DV of 7. Mukhtar hits with one success!

Ironheart would like to use yet another reflexive charm - the Third Melee Excellency - a charm that can be used after calculating the result of an action to either reroll that action (when the character makes it themselves) or add a bonus to an unrolled Attribute + Ability total equal to the ability (in this case, that would add 4 to her Dex + Melee for DV). However, you can't use the Third Excellency on a roll if the First or Second Excellency have been applied to it, so she's out of luck.

Raw damage is his normal 6B + 1 success. Mukhtar doesn't bother doubling the success, since he knows what's about to happen. Before comparing soak, if the defender has a Hardness rating of the appropriate type, it is checked against the damage, and if equal or greater, the damage is ignored. Ironheart's articulated plate gives her a hardness of 8B/8L, and that 8B Hardness is greater than Mukhtar's 7B raw damage. The damage is ignored, and does NOT do minimum damage.

However, the Solar was primarily trying to unbalance the Dragon Blooded, and having hit her, he may well

succeed! Having been hit, despite ignoring the damage, Ironheart must make a reflexive Dexterity + Athletics roll at a difficulty of the instability rating - 4. Her pool is only 5 (Dexterity 4 + Athletics 3 - mobility 2), so she uses Second Athletics Excellency to buy two successes at a cost of four motes peripheral. She rolls two more successes, and just keeps her balance.

The ST rules Mukhtar's stunt was successful and Ironheart's a failure. Mukhtar takes the motes, refilling his personal pool and claiming two more points of peripheral.

The Dragon-Blooded's ability to freely use Reflexive charms is really helping her, but it's also worth remembering she's spending a great deal of Essence from relatively smaller pools. She'll be in great danger if she runs low on motes while fighting a Solar!

Dragon Blooded anima displays do damage to their surroundings depending on their level. Having spent 11 motes peripheral, Ironheart is surrounded by a corona of flames doing 1L die damage to everything in contact with her once every nine ticks. If she reaches the 16+ mote level, that rate will increase to every tick. Of course, Mukhtar's armour has hardness, so he will be ignoring that damage.

Coordinated Attack (Action) and Guard

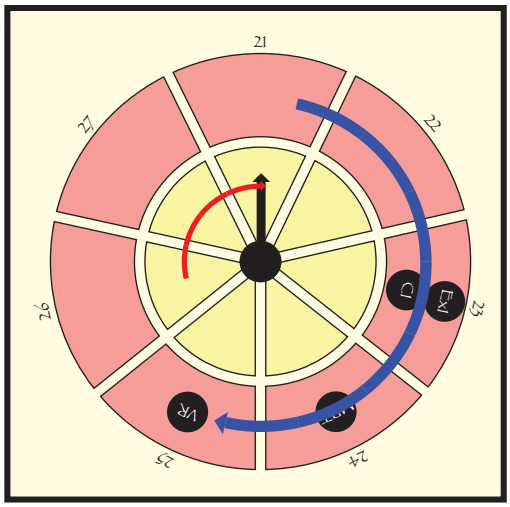
Smiling sweetly, Rose fires arrows into two of the soldiers' skulls, still standing with feet braced on the chests of two more.

"Now, now, do you see what happens when you try to delay prompt medical attention to the sister of…" The lovely Dragon Blood aborted the witticism she was about to launch into as an enormous Delzahn warrior swept into the room, followed by six more soldiers. "For the love of the Dragons, will you mortals PLEASE stop breeding? There's too damned many of you!"

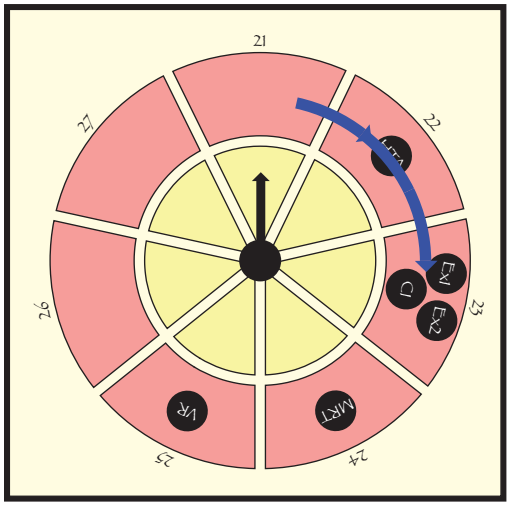
Coolly assessing the situation, Hasim the Axe judged with care that he might just survive at the cost of only seven of the remaining eight men, and took cover behind one of the columns as he planned the attack…

On tick 21, Rose kills two more extras in a Speed 4,

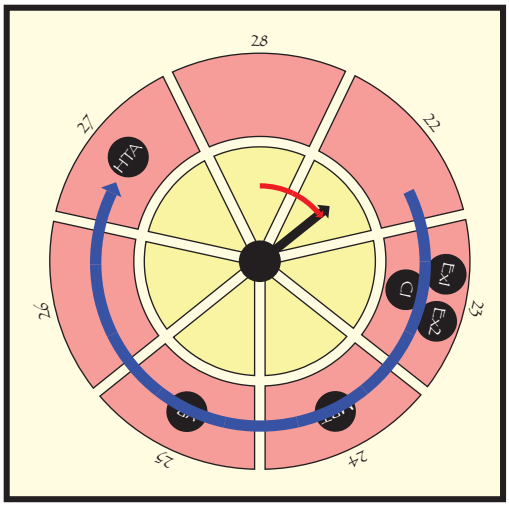
> Hasim the Axe has Join Battle 7, Dodge DV 2, an *exceptional great axe* **(totals Speed 6, Accuracy 11, Damage 13L (min 2), Parry DV 4, Rate 2)** and soak 6L/13B (from *lamellar armour*: **6L/8B, -2 mobility**). He has Valour 4 and is an excellent leader, with a Charisma + War total of 8.



-2 flurry (acting again on tick 25), but she does have a problem, a problem that runs in on the same tick.
Once again, Hasim and his six friends will roll Join Battle against the Reaction Count of 5. Hasim rolls 4 successes and will act on tick 22. The extras roll three successes and will act on tick 23. All the newcomers take Morale checks for engaging a Dragon Blood and fail, gaining a -2 internal penalty.

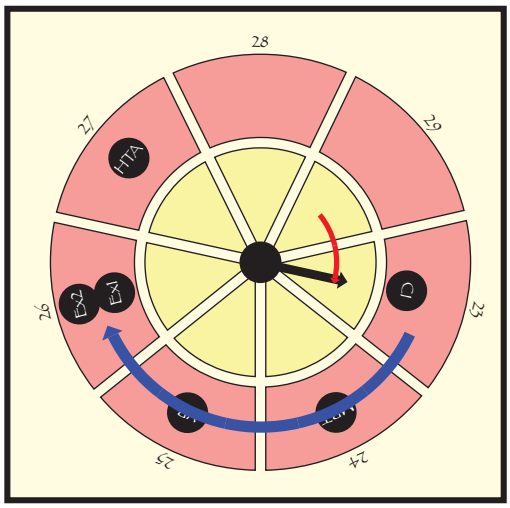


On tick 22, Hasim uses Move to get behind cover (this will give him a DV bonus when Rose shoots at him later, as we'll see), and takes the Coordinating Attack miscellaneous action (Speed 5/DV -0: he'll act again on tick 27).



This action lets him coordinate the attacks of a group of individuals, so that they are all launched at the same moment. This causes severe penalties to the DV of the attacked individual, but the attacks must be launched on the tick on which the commanding character next acts (in this case, 27). The acting character chooses the group he wants to unite in this fashion (including himself if desired), and rolls Charisma + War at a difficulty of half the number of characters in the group, rounded down. Hasim chooses the eight living extras as his group, for a difficulty of four, and indeed rolls four successes. This was something of a risk - he could easily have failed, but he wants to make sure there are five living members of the attacking group when his tick comes up, knowing Rose will certainly kill some in the meantime.

On tick 23, all the extras act (by coincidence!). They need to be available to attack on tick 27, so they choose the Guard action (Speed 3, DV -0). They will act again on tick 26, but while Guarding, you may abort your Guard and act normally on any tick. This does not refresh your DV - mechanically it just lets you spend a few ticks waiting while keeping your DV up.



We'll rejoin them on tick 25 for Rose's action.

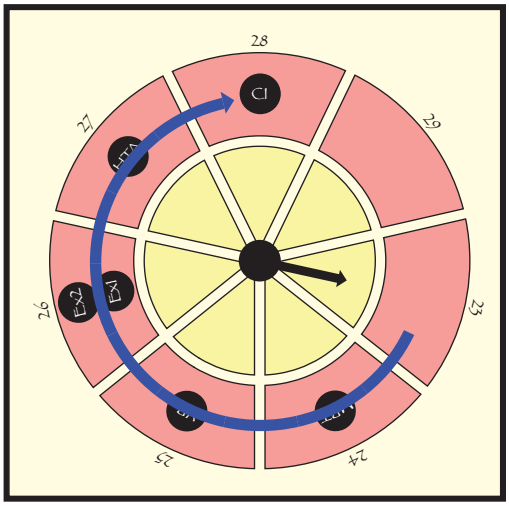
Yet More Unstable Terrain, Exalted Bleeding

"I will never suffer Anathema to live within my sight!" shouted Ironheart as she vaulted again, soaring up to stand beside Mukhtar and cutting at him with a storm of blows that left the stone wall behind him rent apart, and a long slash, bleeding profusely, down his face and neck.

Mukhtar, standing completely still, caught the last blow and rammed the daiklave into the ruined wall, holding it utterly steady there even as the tree shook with the fury of a thunderstorm. Looking the Cathak directly in the eye, a cold fury overtook him as his wound sealed of its own accord.

"You will regret that."

On tick 23, Ironheart wants to close the vertical gap, since it's crippling her DV (and will provide an equal and opposite bonus to the Solar's DV if she attacks from her current position). She chooses a flurry of balance, Jump, Attack, Attack, for a total Speed of 5 and a DV of -3.



The ST rates both stunts at two dice. Mukhtar rolls his to calculate his DV, and gets one success.

To do anything other than fall, Ironheart needs to make her difficulty 4 (the instability rating) Dex + Athletics roll. Her pool is Dex 4 + Athletics 3 + Stunt 2 - mobility 2 - multiple action 4 = 3 dice. She spends a willpower to buy an automatic success, and the Second Athletics Excellence to buy two more at a cost of four peripheral motes (leaving her with 2 peripheral Essence). She rolls a single success, and thus makes her balance roll.

Her jump action of course automatically succeeds, and the distance is not great - she'll make it easily.

On her attack, the Cathak declares she'll be using the First Melee Excellency for 6 dice, at a cost of 2 motes peripheral, 1 mote personal. This will bring her accuracy to a total of (Dex 4 + Melee (capped) 3 + Specialties 3 + Accuracy 3 + Stunt 2 + Excellency 6) - multiple action 6 = 13. Mukhtar declares he's using his Parry DV, and would declare any charms now, but he is unable to, since he used Graceful Crane Stance on his last action, and may not use any other charm until his next action tick.

Ironheart rolls an above average 9 successes. The Solar's DV is 8 - 1 action penalty + 1 stunt, or 8 total. The Dragon Blood hits by one! Her raw damage is Str 3 + Damage 7L + success 1 = 11L. This is more than Mukhtar's hardness of 6L. Subtracting his soak of 10L, we have 1L net damage, which increases to her minimum damage of 3 dice (her Essence). She rolls one success, filling Mukhtar's -0 level with lethal damage.

Mukhtar is of course now bleeding, but for Exalts that's not so big a problem, as we'll see in a moment. The

Solar of course automatically passes his Knockdown check due to Graceful Crane Stance.

On her second attack, Ironheart uses First Melee Excellency again for six dice, at a cost of 3 personal motes. Her accuracy is 12, and she rolls 6 successes. Even with onslaught penalty, Mukhtar's Parry DV is still 7, so she misses.

The ST decides that despite each character failing once in their stunt-described rolls, overall both were successful. Both collect 4 motes, and add them to their peripheral pools.

Having reached the 16+ mote stage, Ironheart's anima is now doing 1L every tick to anything in contact with her (obviously, the tree is on fire). As with all anima banners, it will fade back to the 11-15 level if on the next tick on which she can act she spends no peripheral Essence. Either way, Mukhtar avoids it due to hardness.

On any tick upon which they can act (or every five seconds outside of combat), Exalted may make a reflexive difficulty 2 Stamina + Resistance roll to close any and all wounds, stopping them from bleeding. Mukhtar does so on tick 24, and rolls two successes, stemming the bleeding instantly.

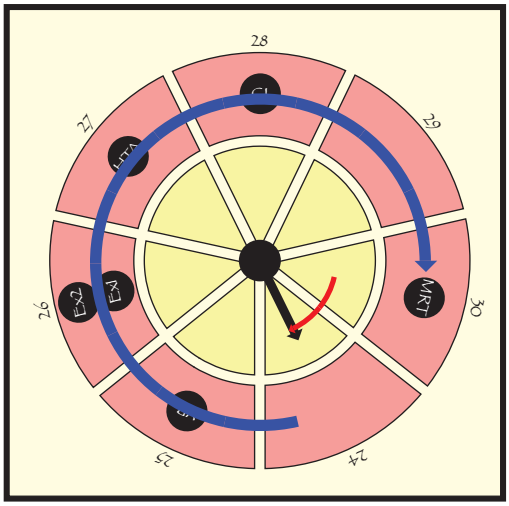
Grappling and Anima Effects

Ignoring the flames, Red Thunder's hands seized the Dragon Blood by the wrist holding her daiklave and by her throat. The golden fire of his anima took a totemic form, towering above him in the shape of a rage-filled, armoured minotaur, visible throughout Chiaroscuro. The strength of the Unconquered Sun flowed in his veins, and he smashed the Dragon Blood against the wall over and over again, shattering the stone and revealing the palace within. Startled soldiers, servants and nobles looked up in fear and awe, some fleeing, some falling to their knees.

Having closed his wound on tick 24, Mukhtar launches a single attack - an attempted grapple with the Clinch maneuver. A Clinch is considered a weapon with Speed 6, Accuracy 0 and Rate 1 (clinches can be used in a flurry, but obviously it's not easy to make multiple clinches in a flurry, owing to the Rate). He will act again on tick 30.

The ST rates his stunt at 2 dice.

On declaring his attack, the Solar declares his use of the Dragon Coil Technique charm, at a cost of 3 motes personal (it's a Reflexive charm). This adds his Essence in dice to the accuracy pool, or two dice. Really wanting to make the clinch, he also channels his Valour again



At this point we consider an important design concern in the Battlewheel. Mukhtar's Action was Speed 6, placing him on the segment behind the current one.

It is obvious to ask what would happen if his speed had been 7? Surely that would mean that one segment would have to represent two different ticks at once, that could be very confusing.

In fact it never happens. No action in the game has a speed greater than 6, and no matter how bad a character's join-battle roll they never act in more than six ticks.

There is one effect in Exalted which might cause a piece to "wrap round" on the Battlewheel. That effect is the "Water Graced" property of certain Dragon-blooded charms. Most Storytellers choose to rule that this effect is capped at a maximum of a 6 tick penalty, but the book doesn't say that explicitely.

Also at this point we remove Cathak Ironheart's counter from the Battlewheel. She'll get a chance to act again on Mukhtar's next action.

for three dice (for the cost of 1 willpower). Ironheart doesn't want to get clinched, and uses First Melee Excellency for 6 dice, spending 3 personal.

Mukhtar's total is Dex 5 + Martial Arts 5 + Stunt 2 + Essence 2 + Valour 3 = 17 dice. Characters may choose to use Strength instead of Dexterity when clinching, but for Red Thunder that's no good! Luck is with the Solar, and he rolls 10 successes. Ironheart's Parry DV is (Dex 4 + Melee (capped) 3 + Specialties 3 + Defense 2)/2 - action penalties 3 = 3, and she rolls 3 successes on her Excellency dice. She's seized with four successes.

When you successfully clinch an opponent, they immediately shift to the Inactive action, no matter what

they were doing before, and you are considered to be in control of the clinch. Upon gaining control (or retaining on subsequent actions), you may choose one of three things to do: Hold (simply retaining the clinch without inflicting injury), Break Hold (either hurling the opponent Strength yards away, or simply directly to the ground) or Crush (doing damage).

Mukhtar chooses Crush. Crush normally does Strength + successes piercing bashing damage. Dragon Coil, however, adds Essence to damage, and makes it lethal. Clinching is a Martial Arts attack like any other, so the Solar also cheerfully spends one mote from personal to double his successes for damage with Solar Hero Form. His total raw damage is Strength 3 + Essence 2 + successes 8 for 13L. After halving her armour soak, Ironheart is left with 7L soak, and takes 6 dice damage. The Solar rolls two successes, filling her 0 and first -1 with lethal damage.

Technically, Ironheart has been hit with an attack, and the ST could ask her to make an Athletics roll. However, she rules that Ironheart isn't going anywhere while in the clinch, so balance will be ignored owing to Mukhtar's Graceful-Crane powered stability. The Solar's stunt has also been successful, so he takes another four motes.

Finally, some mortals have seen Mukhtar with his anima flaring, and hence it's worth talking about his anima effect. Each Solar caste has a special power that they can either activate at any appropriate time for a cost in motes, or that activates automatically when their banner flares to the 11+ mote level. For the Dawn caste, this adds +2 DV against any mortal creature whose Valour is equal to or lower than the character's Essence. All mortals must also make a difficulty 1 valour roll when engaging a Dawn using this power or flee. With Red Thunder's low Essence, the fierce warrior Jamal wouldn't have been affected, and as an Exalt, Ironheart is of course immune, so it wasn't worth mentioning up to this point!

Dragon Blooded Aspects each have a similar power that also activates automatically in the 11+ range. For Fire Aspects, such as Ironheart, their power inflicts their Essence in lethal damage against anyone who attacks them with a bare-handed or grappling attack, and adds their Essence to the damage of their own bare-handed or grappling attacks. Of course, Mukhtar would have had such inflicted on him several times, but would have ignored it due to his armour's Hardness.

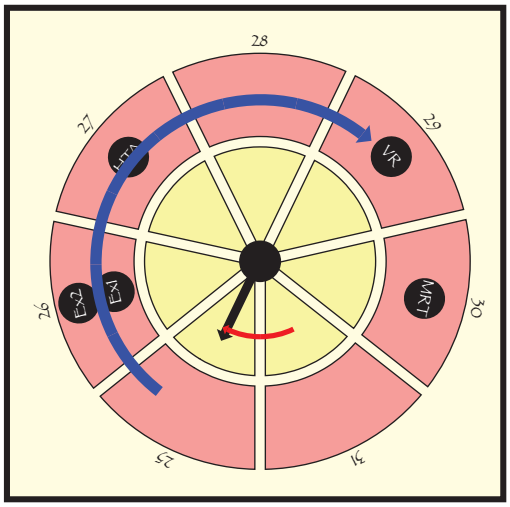
Well see how a clinch is continued on tick 30. For the time being, we'll return to Rose and Hasim!

Cover, Coordinated Attacks, Unexpected Attacks

Seeing the well-coordinated charge heading in towards her, Rose sighed and hopped off the poor soldiers who had been supporting her. She'd need to kill their damned hero, or matters could become awkward for her indeed. He was in excellent cover behind one of the stone columns, but a man of such bulk couldn't hide perfectly…smiling, she tore at the red hangings, sending them cascading down all across the chamber…and revealing a shoulder and knee that had previously been well hidden.

Hasim screamed as pain such as he'd never felt lanced through his shoulder and knee. He slumped down the column, but as his vision clears, and through the agony he realized that he was alive, the screams turned to commands.

The coordinated soldiers closed around Rose like a steel trap, chopping swords hacking down at her from all angles. Desperately, she skipped up onto the swords as they came down, her anima unfolding in thorny glory all about her, but even as she danced towards the roof a blade crashed fully into her back…



Rose has one certain conviction - Hasim needs to die before tick 27. Hence, on tick 25, she launches a two attack flurry (Speed 4, DV -2: acting again on tick 29). The ST rates her stunt at 2.

On her first attack, she uses First Archery Excellency for eight dice, at a cost of four peripheral motes, and a target arrow. Hasim chooses his Parry DV. Her accuracy is (Dex 4 + Archery 5 + Specialties 3 + Accuracy 2 + Stunt 2 + Excellency 8) - multiple actions 2 = 22. She scores 11 successes - looking bad for Hasim! However, he has one advantage - cover. Cover acts as a DV bonus (equivalent to an external penalty for the attacker), and it usually works better against ranged attacks than melee. For instance, Hasim is enjoying 90% cover, which gives him +2 DV against hand-to-hand attacks, and +4 DV against ranged. His total DV is thus 4 + 4 = 8, mean-

ing he's hit with only three successes.

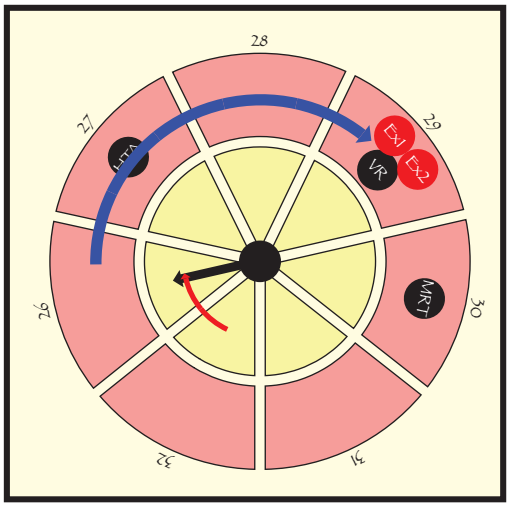
Shields and cover perform the same function - only the better of the two bonuses applies. If Hasim had a shield, it would be superseded by his excellent cover.

Rose's raw damage is 7L, and Hasim's soak against piercing is 3L. Rose rolls two successes, and fills his -0 and -1 levels with lethal damage.

On her second attack, Rose repeats the process, including the charm, and attacks with 21 accuracy. However, she's furious enough, and desperate enough to save Peony, that she can justify channeling her Compassion of 4 with a Willpower expenditure. Her total accuracy is thus 24, and she rolls 13 successes. Hasim's DV is 7 after onslaught, and thus Rose hits with 6 successes. Her raw damage is 10L vs. 3L soak, and she rolls 7 damage dice and scores 4 levels of damage! Hasim's second -1, both -2s and -4 are filled with lethal damage. Roses' stunt is successful and regains 4 motes of peripheral.

However, Hasim is still alive.

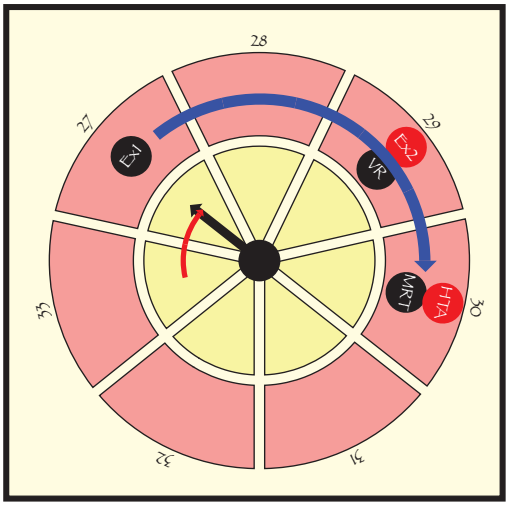
On tick 26, the extras act again, and Guard (those not in hand-to-hand with Rose have been using Move actions to get there).



When a character is guarding, aiming or taking a similar action you might want to put some kind of marker next to their counter to indicate that they can abort on any tick prior to their next action.

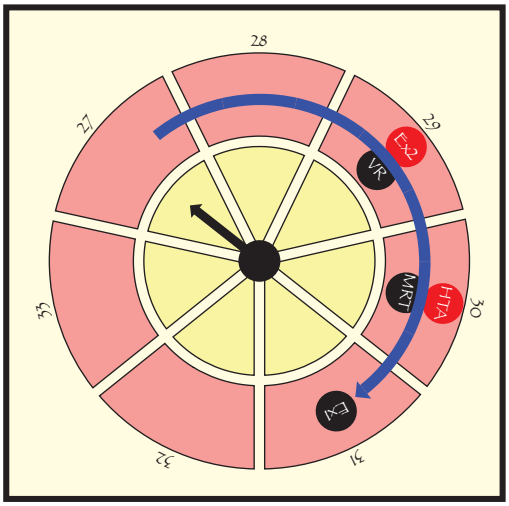
Here we've coloured the appropriate markers red.

On tick 27, Hasim acts again, and Guards himself (acting again on tick 30). However, since his tick has come up, the Coordinated Attack he arranged can be launched, and five of the eight extras (the maximum that can fit around Rose) abort their Guard to attack.



The above wheel shows that Hassam has taken the guard action, and one group of extras has aborted their guard.

For convenience sake Ex1 will now denote the five extras that aborted, whilst Ex2 will denote the remaining 3 extras.



The ST grants Rose a single stunt die for her defense description, but rules it will allow her to avoid the -2 Dodge DV penalty for not being able to give ground. She rolls the die and scores a success.

Each extra makes a single attack. Rose chooses to expose her back to the last one making an attack. The first attacker has an accuracy pool of 6 (8 - 2 morale), and Rose chooses to use her Dodge DV, and to buy 2 points of DV with the Second Dodge Excellency at a cost of 4 motes peripheral. The attacker rolls 3 successes. Rose's DV would normally be (Dex 4 + Dodge 5 + Specialty 3 + Essence 3 + Bracers 3)/2 - mobility 1 - action penalties 2 + Excellency 2 + stunt 1 = 9, but when attacked by a Coordinated Attack, the target suffers a DV penalty equal to the number of successes rolled on the Coordinate Attack roll, with a maximum of the number of attackers. In this case, Hasim rolled 4 successes, so Rose

is at DV -5. If he'd rolled 5 or more successes, she'd be at -4, since there's only 5 attackers, and thus the penalty couldn't exceed 5.

In this case, that still leaves her at one above the attack, on DV 5.

For each of the next three attacks, Rose buys a single extra point of DV at a cost of 2 motes peripheral, and will successfully avoid the attacks (they don't roll more than 3 successes, we'll spare you the math).

It's the fifth attack that is problematic for her. Against an unexpected attack, unless you have magic that allows you to defend against the attack, your Dodge and Parry DVs are set to 0. Rose doesn't have such a charm, so when her attacker rolls 3 successes, she's forced to apply a DV of 0 to it. The attack does 11L raw damage, above the Hardness of her armour, though her 11L soak will take that down to minimum damage, or one die. The ST rolls the die, and scores a success - Rose's -0 level is filled with lethal damage, and she's bleeding.

The ST rules Roses' stunt a success nonetheless, and she collects 2 peripheral motes.

On the downside for the soldiers, the vast shower of Essence spent by the Wood Aspect while trying to avoid their blows has pushed her into the 16+ level, meaning all in contact with her take 1L damage every tick. All five of her attackers immediately take a lethal level of damage, and another on tick 28 as they use their slow Move actions to escape. That's basically it for the extras - the ST rules they leave as best they can.

At this point we remove the counters representing the extras from the Battlewheel.

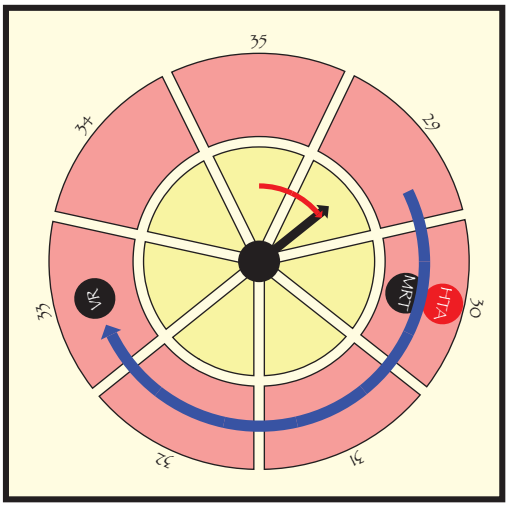
Maiming

As Hasim heard his troops fleeing in terror, he knew full well that his calculations were in error. Even with the pain of his wounds tearing at him, he could hear Rose's light steps stalking methodically towards him. He looked up into her beautiful green eyes, and saw a peculiar mercy there.

"I will not kill you, Hasim the Axe" she smiled wistfully "But I think I shall ruin your name." She pulled back her bow and loosed two arrows into him, each one striking near the shaft already buried in his left shoulder, and a wrenching scream of agony escaped him as the last shot destroyed the joint entirely, tearing the limb from his body.

"Now I have two patients in need of tending…" Rose observed pleasantly, before noting with a scowl the thrashing aura of thorns about her "...that I'll kill if I draw too near. Oh dear."

On tick 29, Rose closes the distance with Hasim and declares a flurry of two shots (Speed 4 as normal, so she'll act again on tick 33). With his wound penalties, Hasim's DV will be 0 no matter what he does, and Rose can simply step around the column to ignore his cover. He's in trouble.



The first shot causes 4 lethal levels of damage, pushing Hasim into Incapacitated and filling 3 of his 5 Dying levels.

On the second shot, she elects to maim instead of kill. Attempting to maim can normally only be done with a heavy bladed or crushing weapon, but a stunt is sufficient to do it with any weapon, or even unarmed. Maiming imposes a -1 external penalty on the attack, which is otherwise resolved normally until rolled damage is applied. If the damage would normally kill the target, the character may choose to do any amount of damage she pleases, and maim or sever a limb or appendage of her choice. The Drama chapter lists the effects of doing so to particular limbs.

Rose's second shot does four levels of rolled damage, and hence would kill Hasim, but she reduces that damage to zero and severs his right arm.

At this point we remove the counter representing Hasim from the Battlewheel.

More Clinching, Falling Damage

With a death-grip on her daiklave's haft, and her other hand wrenching at the Solar's own grip about her throat, Ironheart struggled vainly to break free. She heard the horrified gasps of the mortals thronging in the palace rooms below, but there was no sign of help. Finally, her feet found purchase against a remnant of the wall, and cursing the mortals, she kicked off on it, sending stone debris tumbling down to ruin the dinner of a fat Delzahn below. Sensing the force of her motion,

Mukhtar smiled and snapped her about in a throw, smashing her face into a wall perpendicular to the one she pushed from. Her armour, far harder than the stone of the wall, tore through it as she plunged towards the ground.

Ironheart is Inactive as a result of the clinch. Red Thunder can take no action other than to renew the clinch. While clinching, neither character can dodge or parry without magic or a stunt. The characters may only use reflexive charms, or charms that explicitly function in a clinch.

On tick 30, the tick upon which the character in control of the clinch (Mukhtar in this case) acts, the acting character must renew the clinch. Both characters must use the clinch maneuver on each other (Speed 6, Accuracy 0, Rate 1: the winner will act again on tick 36). This is an opposed roll. The character with the most successes is the winner, and takes control of the clinch. If that character opts to Crush, the successes they rolled in excess of their opponent are added to damage.

The ST awards both characters a one-die stunt. Mukhtar chooses not to reactivate Dragon Coil - he thinks he'll beat Ironheart outright. Ironheart has no applicable charms. The Solar's pool is 11 (Dex 5 + Martial Arts 5 + stunt 1 = 11), the Dragon-Blood's is 7 (Dex 4 + Martial Arts 2 + Specialty: grappling 1? + stunt 1 - wound penalty 1 = 7). Mukhtar rolls 6 successes, Ironheart 4. The Dawn has won control!

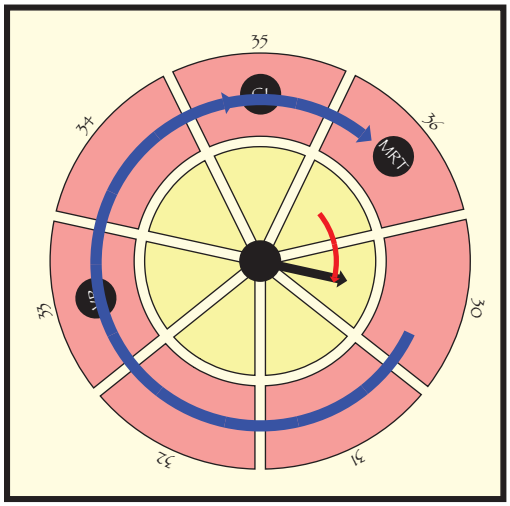
He chooses to Break Hold, allowing him to throw the Dragon Blood his Strength (3) in yards. Of course, at their height, this means a fall for the young Cathak. Normally a heroic character might be allowed a reflexive Wits + Athletics roll to avoid falling, but in this case the ST doesn't think one is appropriate.

The ST rules that Ironheart has fallen about eighteen yards. Falling damage is piercing bashing levels (NOT dice) damage equal to half the distance in yards fallen, or in this case 9B. This is above her hardness of 8B, so she does take damage. Falling damage can be soaked, but if it is completely soaked, it becomes a single die of damage. Her bashing soak against piercing damage is still 10B, so indeed that's what happens. The single die is rolled, scoring a success, and the Cathak's second -1 health level is filled with bashing damage (damage only pushes other damage down if it's more severe, so bashing never pushes anything down!). Falling, unsurprisingly, also leaves you prone.

The Solar's stunt was successful, and he regains two peripheral motes.

When Mukhtar won control of the clinch, Ironheart shifted to Inactive, a Speed 5 action. Since she's been released from the clinch, she'll actually be able to choose something other than Inactive on her next action tick, and thus we'll look at her again on tick 35 when she can act.

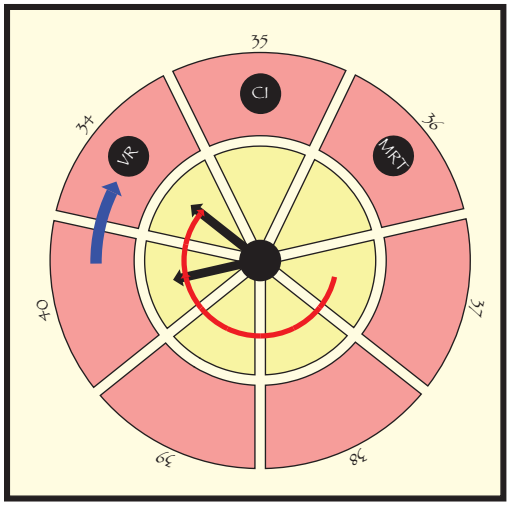
Since Mukhtar won the clinch he takes a speed 6 action. Since she lost, but is no longer in the clinch Cathak Ironheart is forced to immediately take the Speed 5 Innactive action.



Miscellaneous Non-Combat Actions and the Third Excellency

Rose stood quietly for a few moments, taking deep, slow breaths until her anima calmed enough to tend to Peony. Carefully, she tore makeshift bandages from some random old dress lying amongst the rubble, and then hit Frost Peony like a hurricane, so fast did she move.

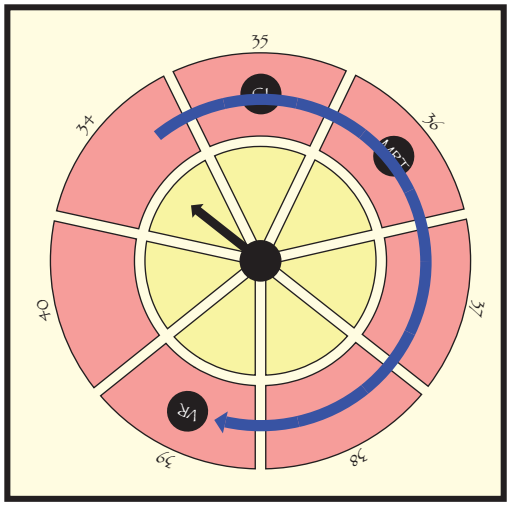
"What are you doing?" shrieked the fallen thief, but the Dragon Blooded did not answer. Medicine at such a speed left no time for words!"



On tick 33, Rose chooses the Guard action. Since she spends an action tick not spending peripheral Essence, her anima drops back to the 11-15 mote level. On tick

34, she aborts her guard, Moves to Peony, and attempts to stanch her bleeding.

A non-combat action, like tending to the wounded, is a miscellaneous action of Speed 5. Any non-combat action that would take longer than 5 ticks should be broken down into smaller, 5 tick components. The DV penalty of this action depends on how intently the character concentrates on it - if they concentrate entirely on it, their DV is set to zero (if positive), and they roll their action without penalty. If they pay some attention to the battle around them, or if they wish to include the action in a flurry (assuming the ST thinks it's reasonable to do so), then they take a DV penalty of -1 (the ST may rule a greater penalty is appropriate). If so, the action takes a -2 internal penalty if it's not in a flurry, or normal multiple action penalties if it is.



Again notice that since longer actions are broken into multiple Speed 5 actions the counters will never wrap-around on the Battlewheel.

Not wanting to harm Peony with her anima, Rose needs to stanch these wounds NOW. The ST allows her to make a Medicine flurry, and Rose declares three stanch bleeding actions (for a Speed of 5 and a total DV penalty of -3: she'll act again on tick 34). Remembering back, Peony took three wounds: 3L, 2L and 1L. Thus Rose needs to make a difficulty 3, difficulty 2 and difficulty 1 Wits + Medicine roll. Her pool is Wits 3 + Medicine 5 + Specialties 2 = 10. With multiple action penalties, that will be pools of 7, 6 and 5 on the three actions respectively. She chooses to do the rolls in order of hardest to easiest.

On the first, she rolls 3 successes, and stanches the wound!

On the second, however, she somehow rolls a mere 1 success, and fails! This is precisely why she learned the Third Medicine Excellency: Medicine rolls can fail at the worst times (indeed, a failed Medicine roll is what often makes the worst times). The Third Excellency allows her to reroll the entire dice pool, and take whichever roll she prefers, at a cost of three motes. She does so, and scores three successes. Unsurprisingly, she takes the second roll.

On the third roll, she scores two successes! Peony's bleeding has been stopped. Now we'll just have to see if she survives the seemingly limitless escalation of the battle she started.

Riding and Basic Defense Charms

Rather disappointed at Ironheart's failure to crack open like a lobster from the fall, Mukhtar sighed and followed after her, running down the cracks in the walls, skipping over leaves, using the slightest bump in a tree's bark as if it were a sturdy ladder-rung. Within moments, he had reached the ground, and watched as she dragged herself up from the small, flaming crater she had left in a flower-bed.

What he could not quite deduce was why she was smiling as she did so, until the iron-shod hooves burst open the great double-doors at the opposite side of the garden, and a warrior in black jade rode in upon a large and disagreeable looking horse. A slighter figure in blue jade flickered through the door not long after, leaping between shadows and difficult to follow with the eyes.

"Three?" Red Thunder asked no-one in particular, kicking part of a (formerly) priceless statue out of his way. "Very well then…three!"

Then the storm hit him. Two javelins flitted from the shadows, the horse charged him as its rider swung down to clobber him with a black-jade wrapped fist, and Swift Eagle, Ironheart's beloved blade, cut at him from his side, leaving smoke trails in the air of the garden. Using the javelins as a makeshift ladder, the Solar sprang up, running along the rider's arm, and finally rolling down the red jade daiklave to land beside its wielder.

Mukhtar has decided he needs to get down into the garden. He stunts to convince the ST to let him use his Move distance vertically while under the effects of Graceful Crane Stance, and gets his way - this time.

As it turns out, that may not have been wise.

Both new Dragon-Blooded roll Join Battle on tick 35. Feizi uses First Awareness Excellency to buy 4 more dice, and rolls 6 successes. Crashing Wave spends a willpower for an automatic success, and then rolls 4 more, for a total of 5. As you will recall, we subtract these successes from the battle's Reaction Count (of 5, set by Frost Peony 35 ticks ago) to determine the Speed of their Join Battle action, with a minimum of 0. In this case, they both end up with a Speed of 0, and will act in

Peleps Crashing Wave
(Water Aspected)

Peleps Crashing Wave is a Water-Aspected Dragon-Blood, and a horseman, of all things. He is angling for a marriage with Ironheart (not out of any personal feeling, of course), and is relishing the chance to rescue her from the Anathema.

Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Wits 4, Martial Arts 4 (Smashfists +2), Resistance 4, Awareness 4, Athletics 2, Dodge 2, Ride 5.

He is armed with *Eagle's Perch*, an oddly named set of *jade smashfists* **(Speed 4, Accuracy 0, Damage +8B piercing, Defense +2, Rate 2, total accuracy 10, total damage 11B, Parry DV 6)**, and is wearing *jade articulated plate* **(12L/14B soak, 8L/8B hardness, -2 Mobility, 0 Fatigue, total soak 13L/17B)**. He has a Join Battle of 8.

Essence 3, Willpower 6, **Personal Essence 11, Peripheral Essence 28**. *He has 12 motes committed to his artifacts, leaving him with 16 motes.*

Relevant Charms:
First Martial Arts Excellency, Third Martial Arts Excellency, Third Ride Excellency, and two Ox Body Techniques.

Ledaal Feizi
(Air Aspected)

Ledaal Feizi is an Air-Aspected Dragon-Blood who is looking to gain the Cathak family's support against the Deathlord Mask of Winters. Dutifully, he throws himself into battle with the Solar to further his family's aims.

Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2, Wits 4, Thrown 5 (Javelins +3), Resistance 2, Stealth 5, Awareness 4, Athletics 4 (Balance +'''?'''), Dodge 5.

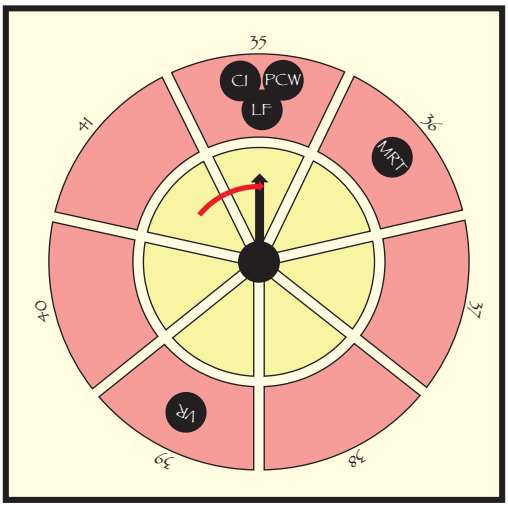
He is armed with *exceptional javelins* **(Speed 4, Accuracy 2, Damage +4L piercing, Rate 3, Range 30 yards, total Speed 3, total accuracy 14, total damage 6L)**, and is wearing *jade Hearthstone Bracers* **(+3 dodge dice, -1 Speed to attacks)** and a *jade reinforced breastplate* **(10L/9B soak, 8L/8B hardness, -1 Mobility, 0 Fatigue)**. His Dodge DV is 7, his Join Battle 8.

Essence 3, Willpower 6, **Personal Essence 11, Peripheral Essence 28**. *He has 7 motes committed to his artifacts, leaving him with 21 motes.*

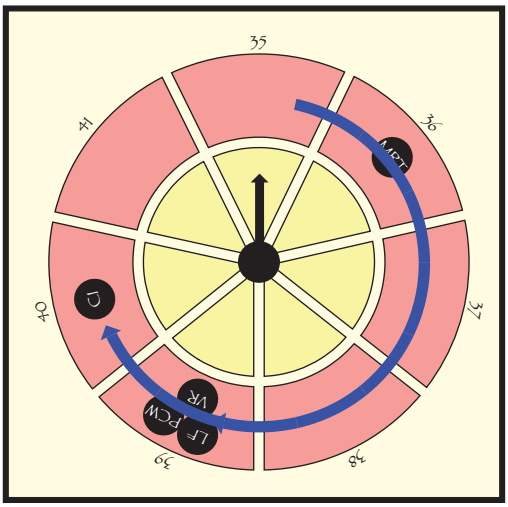
Relevant Charms:
First Thrown Excellency, First Dodge Excellency, First Stealth Excellency, Third Stealth Excellency, First Awareness Excellency.

He has a Hearthstone, but for simplicity we'll assume it has a non-combat effect.

this tick. As Exalted, they do not make morale checks.



That's rather bad for Mukhtar, as it means Ironheart, Crashing Wave and Feizi will all act on this tick. Ironheart declares a flurry of Rise From Prone/Attack/Attack/Attack (Speed 5, DV-4: acts on tick 40). Crashing Wave would normally require a Dash action to reach the Solar, but his mount will take it for him. He declares a flurry of two Attacks (Speed 4, DV -2: acts on tick 39). Feizi doesn't need to Dash, since he's using ranged weapons, and declares a flurry of Ready Weapon/Attack/Attack (Speed 4, DV -3: acts on tick 39).



The ST awards the Solar two stunt dice, which he rolls, scoring a single success to add to his DV.

Crashing Wave's attacks are resolved first. Riding a mount is very much like unstable terrain: your abilities are capped at the value of your Ride for the purposes of attack and defense, and your mount has a control rating, which works exactly like instability rating. If your Ride is equal to or greater than the control rating, you can act normally while riding. Otherwise, you must make a Ride roll as a miscellaneous action, or include a Ride roll into any flurry you perform. Both rolls have a difficulty of the control rating, and failure doesn't mean a fall - it means the animal does what it wants! Unlike unstable terrain, however, you don't need to make a Ride roll if hit by an attack. Of course, for Crashing Wave, this is all moot - his Ride is 5 and the control rating of a

trained warhorse is 2.

Crashing Wave declares he will use First Martial Arts Excellency for four dice at a cost of two motes, for a total accuracy pool of 12. Mukhtar briefly considers using First Martial Arts Excellency himself, but realizes with seven attacks coming in, he'll quickly be mote-bankrupt following that strategy. Instead, he activates Shadow Over Water, a reflexive dodge charm, at a cost of 1 mote personal. This charm is a typical Solar defense charm: instead of adding to his DV, it eliminates all penalties to his dodge DV, including action penalties, onslaught, wound, mobility or anything else.
Crashing Wave's roll turns up 6 successes. Mukhtar's Parry DV is 8 - 1 height penalty for a mounted opponent - 1 action penalty +1 stunt = 7. His dodge DV is 8 + 1 stunt, and ignores all penalties, for a total of 9. Crashing Wave misses!

The Water Aspect attacks again, using his Excellency for six dice, and a total accuracy of 13. The Solar activates Shadow Over Water again, so we know his DV will be 9 (his Parry DV will be lower due to onslaught, but that's not a problem his dodge needs to worry about with Shadow Over Water in play). The Dragonling rolls 7 successes, for another miss.

Mukhtar will choose to activate Shadow Over Water for each subsequent attack, so we know his DV will be 9 on each of those attacks.

Feizi can see where this is going, and on his first attack buys eight dice with the First Thrown Excellency at a cost of four motes, for a total accuracy pool of 18. He rolls nine successes and misses. On his second attack, he repeats the expenditure, and rolls an above average 10 successes on 17 dice. He hits with one success! His raw damage is 6L piercing, which is equal to Mukhtar's armour hardness of 6L. Piercing does not halve hardness! The Solar ignores the attack.

Ironheart picks herself up, and does her level best to kill the Solar with her three attacks. On her first, she spends two personal motes to add four dice with the First Excellency, for a total accuracy of 12 (Dex 4 + Melee 4 + Specialty 3 + Accuracy 3 - wound penalty 1 - multiple action 5 + excellency 4 = 12) . She rolls 6 successes, not good enough. On her next attack, she uses three motes for 6 extra dice, for a pool of 13, scoring 7 successes. On her last attack, she spends her last three motes for 6 more dice, and channels her valour (for the cost of 1 willpower) for a total of 16 dice. She rolls…9 successes.

For the cost of 7 motes, four of which he regains for his successful stunt, (leaving him with 4 personal, 17 peripheral motes), Mukhtar has emerged unscathed from seven attacks with 21 total motes spent on them.

Solar defense is very, very good.

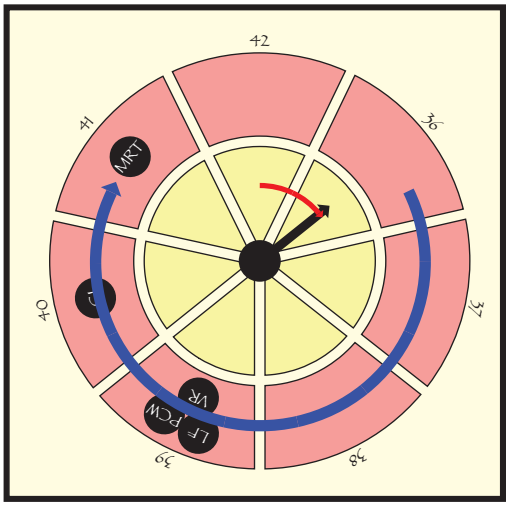
Ox-Body and Ping Spamming

Mukhtar landed gently, almost giddy with a rush of power. He'd been called overconfident before, but even he didn't imagine he'd escape the full fury of three Dragon Blooded unscathed! Seizing Ironheart's burning hair, he breathed in the flames of her anima as if they were perfume, and then smashed her head through a stone bench, through the trunk of a palm tree, into the flank of Crashing Wave's horse, and finally into the bottom of a shallow pond. He smiled as the water exploded into steam.

"We have returned. Your rule is over. Your crimes are at an end. Your numbers are nothing before the rage of the Unconquered Sun!"

The Solar is, understandably, very pleased with himself. This isn't helping his case of recklessness, but he's happened on to a not-too-bad tactic: save your charm for Shadow Over Water or the equivalent when massively outnumbered. He decides to keep that one up, and hence on tick 36 when his action comes around, he doesn't use a charm, but acts without reference to DV penalty (since he'll just be using Shadow Over Water to ignore those penalties anyway!).

Ironheart is particularly vulnerable, having spent vast amounts of Essence (Mukhtar doesn't know it, but she's in fact empty!) and having taken a big flurry. He thus simply announces a flurry of four attacks against her (Speed 5/DV -4, acting on tick 41). He doesn't expect to do a lot of damage, but if he can do just enough to bypass her hardness each time, he'll roll at least two dice of damage with every hit (his Permanent Essence, and thus his minimum damage). Doing minimum damage has been known in fan forums as a "ping" since First Edition, and "ping spamming" is the traditionally effective tactic of launching many cheap attacks to ping as often as possible.



The ST rates Mukhtar's stunt as 2 dice, even if the "breathing her anima in like perfume" bit was going a little far (the ST doesn't mind messing with the aesthetics, but the hardness isn't on his lungs). His first attack is at 11 dice, while Ironheart's Parry DV is a paltry 2. He rolls 6 successes, but doesn't bother doubling them with Solar Hero Form - with 17B soak on the Cathak, it isn't worth it. His raw damage is 10B (Str 3 + Weapon 3 + Successes 4), however, well over her hardness, so he does minimum damage, and scores one success.

Ironheart's third -1 level fills with bashing damage. Exalted have access to a permanent charm named Ox Body Technique, that adds additional levels to their health track. Each Exalt type gets a different version of the charm - the Dragon-Blooded version adds a -1 and a -2 health level. Generally you can buy Ox Body Technique as many times as you have dots in Resistance.

With onslaught penalty, the situation just gets worse for Ironheart, and the next three attacks achieve a similar result. Her three -2 levels are also filled with bashing damage. To make matters worse, on the final attack she fails her Knockdown check (Rolling Dexterity + Athletics - wound penalty at difficulty 2), and is knocked prone. Mukhtar's stunt has succeeded, so he takes back another four motes peripheral.

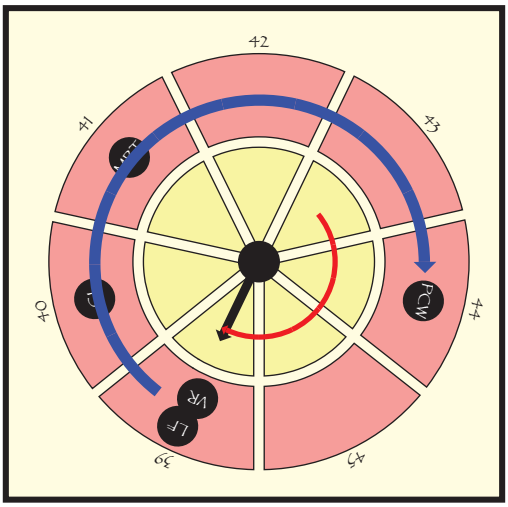
(Re)gaining Surprise

"Dragon Shields the Hatchling!" shouted Crashing Wave, and suddenly he and Feizi broke off the attack, dashing quickly about. The Water Aspect's horse bore down on the Solar, causing him to skip back a few steps, but no assault followed - instead, the rider scooped up his fallen compatriot! Her anima burned the horse, but with an iron grip upon its mane, Crashing Wave relentlessly kept the creature under control."

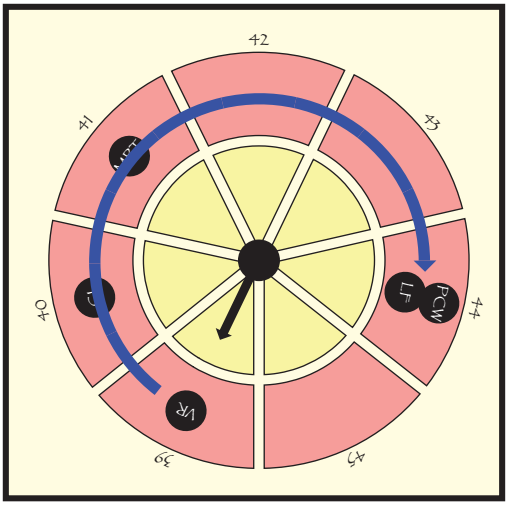
''Mukhtar idly wondered if this signaled a retreat, and probably a good opportunity to slip out himself with the mortally wounded Peony to find a surgeon, when he realized he couldn't see the Air Aspect. A cold shiver ran down his back…followed by blinding pain as a javelin lodged itself there."

Generally, once hostilities have started, it's hard to ambush someone - they're keeping an eye on you, expecting an attack at any time! However, it can be done, especially with the aid of magic.

On tick 39, both of the male Dragon Blooded act. Crashing Wave declares his intention to rescue Ironheart from her prone position. The ST rules this is a flurry of two miscellaneous actions - a Strength + Ride roll to scoop up the Cathak, and a Wits + Ride roll at control rating +1 difficulty to control the mount when it discovers it has a burning passenger. This is a Speed 5/DV -2 flurry (the ST rules both actions are non-combat, and are covered by the same rules Rose used to tend to Peony), so Crashing Wave will act again on tick 44. The Water aspect passes both rolls, and Ironheart is lifted up onto the horse!



The meat of the tick's actions come from Feizi, however, who attempts to hide himself, in order to make an unexpected attack against Mukhtar. He declares a flurry of concealing himself (a miscellaneous action) and an attack (Speed 5/DV -2, act again on tick 44). The ST rules that using Crashing Wave as a distraction is a valid two-dice stunt.



The roll to hide yourself is a Dex + Stealth roll (with two bonus successes if you're actually invisible), reflexively opposed by each onlooker with their Wits + Awareness + 2. An onlooker who wins the opposed test spots the hiding character, while one who loses has no idea where they are and cannot interact with them unless a successful onlooker points them out.

Feizi's pool is 9, and he uses the First Excellency for four more dice (spending two personal), for a total of 13. Mukhtar's pool is 8, and he has no relevant charms. Feizi rolls seven successes, Mukhtar 4. The Dragon Blooded is concealed!

Attacking breaks the concealment, but it is an unexpected attack against its target. That's rather bad for

Mukhtar, since the property of unexpected attacks - setting Parry and Dodge DVs to 0 if positive - isn't actually a penalty, and Shadow Over Water can't ignore it.

Feizi uses First Thrown Excellency for eight bonus dice, and spends a willpower to channel his conviction of 4 (this is all for the Cathak-Ledaal alliance, after all), for a total accuracy pool of 25 dice. Mukhtar doesn't have any charms that protect against unexpected attack, and he's thus forced to use a DV of 0. Feizi rolls 13 successes, for a total raw damage of 19L piercing. The Solar's piercing soak is 5L (his 9L from armour is halved then rounded down, plus 1L from Stamina), so he takes 14 dice damage.

It would be at this point, if he had one, that Mukhtar would use a soak boosting charm. But, he doesn't, and Feizi rolls 5 successes, filling the Solar's -1, -1, -2, -2 and -4 levels with lethal damage. Mukhtar passes the Knockdown check, but fails the Stun check, and takes a further -2 internal penalty. He is in a great deal of trouble.

Experienced Solars

A golden glow washed through the shadowed, ruined chamber, and Venomous Rose shivered as she felt raw power glide overhead.

"Finally!" she smiled at Peony, who was staring in horror at her wounds (or at the old dress binding them - Rose couldn't quite tell) "Your sister is here - are you ready for a scolding?"

The battle in the courtyard was fought in the sunlight of Mukhtar's anima, but now it was if the Sun himself descended to match blades with the Dragonlings, so great was the light. As if suddenly painted, every stone and plant was instantly bleached white, and the sound of hoof beats vanished. Only silence attended her glory.

Her banner rose totemic behind her, two sets of beautiful, angelic wings whose feathers were the blades of swords. The arc of her leap was heartbreakingly graceful as she glided down to the ground. The mark of the Dawn burned upon her brow. Her hair was long and white, her face fair and resolute, her armour golden! Yet it was her sword at which they marveled, a golden blade taller than she, its blade wide enough that a veritable book of ancient script was carved there, that she wielded as if it were lighter than a dream.

"I am the Invincible Sword Princess" she declared, and who could have doubted it? "Yesterday I shattered the jade vultures of the Lap, today I break the jade dogs of the Tri-Khan!"

She rolls to Join Battle on tick 40, and scores 5 successes. She will act in that tick.

Invincible Sword Princess
(Dawn Caste)

Invincible Sword Princess is one of the most powerful Solar warriors in Creation, a girl utterly possessed by her own Essence and striving to perfect the way of the blade. She is here to scold her sister, Frost Peony, but is in no mood to humour Dragon-Blooded attempting to kill a fellow Dawn Caste.

Strength 5, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4, Wits 4, Melee 5 (Daiklave +3), Martial Arts 5, Resistance 4, Athletics 5 (Leaping +?), Awareness 5 (Join Battle +3), Dodge 5 (Multiple Opponents +3).

She is equipped with *Principle of the Sword*, an *orichalcum grand daiklave* **(Speed 5, Accuracy +3, Damage +12L piercing (min 4), Defense +1, Rate 3)** and is wearing *orichalcum articulated plate* **(14L/16B soak, 9L/9B hardness, -2 mobility, 1 fatigue)**.

Essence 4, Willpower 8, **20 motes of personal Essence** and **51 motes of peripheral Essence**. *She currently has 14 motes of peripheral committed to her artifacts, and 40 motes committed to charms, so her entire peripheral pool is committed, as well as 3 motes of her personal. Two of her willpower points have been spent on charms, leaving her with 6.*

Relevant Charms:
Increasing Strength Exercise (*currently adding 4 dots to her strength for a cost of 12 committed motes.*), Fivefold Bulwark Stance (*which allows her to ignore Onslaught penalties and reduces the DV penalty of each of her actions by 1 to a minimum of 0. She has committed 5 motes and spent 1 willpower on this charm* ***willpower is not usually committed***.), Infinite Melee Mastery (*every two motes committed to this charm reduces the mote cost of the three Excellency charms for Melee by one mote. She currently has 20 motes committed to the charm, meaning she gets a 10 mote discount on uses of the Melee Excellencies.*), and Lightning Speed (*increases the distance she can Move or Dash by her Athletics score (which also allows Athletics Excellencies to be brought to bear), at a cost of three committed motes.*)

We won't give her full charm list, as she'll just be using two combos. We also won't go into combo creation rules (apart from noting they're much simpler than Exalted 1E), but we'll demonstrate the combos in use.

Relevant Combos:
Sword Piety (Solar Counterattack + Second Melee Excellency + Dipping Swallow Defense + Reflex Sidestep Technique) and Sword Apotheosis (Iron Whirlwind Attack + Heavenly Guardian Defense + Dipping Swallow Defense + Second Melee Excellency + Hungry Tiger Technique).

Her total attack values with Principle of the Sword are Speed 5, Accuracy 16, Damage 21L piercing, Parry DV 7. Her Dodge DV is 7? ((Dex 5 + Dodge 5 + Essence 4)/2 - Mobility 2 = 5 although against multiple opponents it is 7). Her total soak is 16L/20B. Her Join Battle is 11.

Combos, Counterattacks, and the Full 10 Steps of Attack Resolution

Collecting herself from the savage beating the Forsaken had bestowed upon her, Ironheart found herself a passenger on a horse, and Mukhtar choking on the javelin through his lungs. Good man, that Feizi! But there was something else, a true horror - another Forsaken. ***The*** *Forsaken, murderer of her husband, her family!*

She lost control, leaping off the horse and flailing wildly at the Invincible Sword Princess with her daiklave.

The Solar, for her part, was unfurling her Essence, her anima-wings beating as her sword floated up into the air, orbiting respectfully around her and leaving glowing Essence-copies of itself trailing its wake. She looked quizzically at Ironheart and furrowed her brow.

"Cathak?" On receiving no answer, she decided it must be so, and selected one of the sword images, neatly decapitating the Dragon Blood without breaking stride.

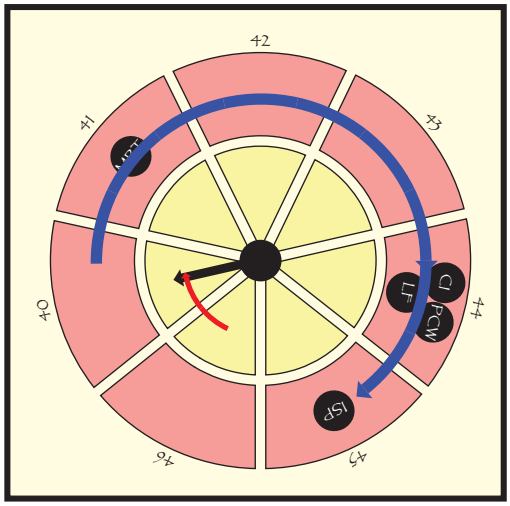
Crashing Wave very briefly mourned the loss of his political marriage, before realizing just how quickly she was coming towards him...

On tick 40, both Invincible Sword Princess and Ironheart act. If you are a passenger on a horse, you don't need to make Ride rolls, but your Abilities are capped at your Ride for the purposes of attack and defense. That's no good for Ironheart, so she decides she'll hop off the horse! The ST rules that's pretty trivial, and doesn't require an action for it, so Ironheart declares an Attack/Attack/Attack flurry (Speed 4, DV -3, she will act again on tick 44).

Invincible Sword Princess also declares an Attack/Attack/Attack flurry, but the DV penalty of each of her actions is reduced by one by Fivefold Bulwark Stance, so she the flurry is Speed 5, DV -0. She will act again on tick 45.

The ST grants them both a one-die stunt. Neither scores a success for DV.

Previously, we've not actually presented the ten steps



At this point we've removed Venomous Rose from the Battlewheel as she's busy tending to Frost Peony, and unlikely to take further part in the battle.

to resolving an attack, because many of the steps were irrelevant. It's worth going into now, however, since Invincible Sword Princess can use charms on multiple steps with her combo.

We'll run through the steps for Ironheart's first attack.

It's important to note that every charm that interacts with an attack will note the specific step on which it can be used in its description. For instance, Mukhtar's Fists of Iron can only be used on Step 1, while the First and Second Excellencies are noted as being Step 1 for the attacker, Step 2 for the defender.

Step 1: Declaration of attack

The attacker declares their attack, and any Step 1 charms they will use to supplement it (virtually all attacking charms other than rerolls fit into this category). If the attack renders a defense inapplicable (i.e. it's not able to be dodged or parried), the attacker MUST declare that

Ironheart declares her attack. Normally she'd declare her use of the First Melee Excellency now and spend the motes, but she's out of motes! No such luck. Her accuracy pool is 9 dice (Dex 4 + Melee 4 + Specialty 3 + Accuracy 3 - Wound Penalty 2 - multiple action 3 = 9).

Step 2: Defender Declares Response

The defender stipulates how they'll respond - either accepting the attack (rarely chosen) or defend using whichever of their Dodge and Parry DV is best. At this point, they must declare and pay for any Step 2 defense charms they wish to use (virtually any charm other than a reroll or counterattack).

Invincible Sword Princess wants to use Second Melee Excellency, which she would have to do now. However, she also wants to use Solar Counterattack later. She can do this by activating a combo that contains both charms by spending a point of willpower - and indeed, her Sword Piety combo contains these charms. She cannot activate a combo if she's used a charm since her last action, even if that charm is in the combo, so she needs to make that decision now. She spends a willpower to activate the combo, and then activates the Second Melee Excellency charm within that combo, which will add five points to her DV at no cost (owing to Infinite Melee Mastery).

She could also use any other Step 2 charms in the combo, such as Dipping Swallow Defense, which cancels DV penalties, but she doesn't see the need.

Step 3: Attack Roll

The attack dice are rolled. Ironheart scores five successes.

Step 4: Attack Reroll

If the attacker is unsatisfied with their roll, and is able to use a reroll charm, they may activate that charm to reroll their dice according to the rules of that charm.

Step 5: Subtract External Penalties/Apply Defenses

Here any success penalties to the attack roll are deducted. Any dice that need to be rolled to calculate DV are rolled now, and all other DV effects are applied now. The best final DV is subtracted from the successes. If any remain, the attack hits. Otherwise, it misses.

Invincible Sword Princess' Parry DV is 7, and the Second Excellency raises it to 12. Finally her anima is active which further increases her DV by 2 against anything with a Valor of 4 or less, this is a magical fear and includes the Dragon Blooded. Against Ironheart, the Invincible Sword Princess' DV is 14. This overwhelms Ironheart's successes - the Dragon Blood has missed.

Step 6: Defense Reroll

If the defender's DV was insufficient, and they can use a reroll charm, they may activate it at this step to modify their DV. Usually this provides a small bonus rather than actually rolling any dice.

Step 7: Calculate Raw Damage

If the attack hits, the raw damage is calculated at this step. Some effects can be activated at this step to manipulate raw damage (for instance, Mukhtar's Solar Hero Form effect is activated at step 7). The effects of charms used earlier that apply to raw damage are also applied here. Many soak enhancing charms can be activated in Step 7 or Step 8, making them very useful - while they can't stop you from being hit, you only need to activate them when you really need them!

Step 8: Apply Hardness and Soak, Roll Damage

It's at this step that the final results of the attack are determined by comparing the raw damage to hardness and soak, and rolling any resultant damage dice.

Note the final health levels of damage are calculated AND applied here, so counter-attackers will suffer any appropriate wound penalties.

Step 9: Counterattack

If the defender has a valid counterattack effect available, they may do so now. Steps 1-8 of that attack are then resolved. Counterattacks have no Step 9, so you may not counterattack a counterattack. Both attacks then share Step 10.

Invincible Sword Princess activates Solar Counterattack at a cost of 3 motes. We'll run through the steps quickly:

1. ISP declares attack. Uses Second Melee Excellency for 5 successes.
2. Ironheart declares she will defend with Parry DV. No charm declared.
3. ISP rolls her 17 dice (counterattacks are generally full-pool actions), scoring 9 successes. Second Melee adds 5 successes for a total of 14.
4. No attack reroll.
5. Ironheart's Parry DV is 5. 9 successes remain.
6. No defense reroll.
7. Raw damage = 21L base + 9 successes = 30L piercing.
8. 30L > 8L hardness. 30L raw - 7L soak = 23 lethal dice. Nine successes rolled.

Step 10: Apply Results

Non-damage effects of the attack are applied here, as well as all results of the counterattack.

Ironheart's attack came to nothing. Invincible Sword Princess' counterattack inflicted nine lethal health levels. All of the Cathak's remaining normal health levels and all three Dying levels fill with lethal damage.

It should be abundantly obvious that when Invincible Sword Princess launches her actual flurry against Crashing Wave, he is crushed by her overwhelming power. We won't belabor the point, but it's worth noting that a Grand Daiklave has the R (for reach) tag, and she is able to attack mounted and otherwise elevated targets without penalty.

Detecting Unexpected Attacks

Feizi's plans were in ruins. The Sword-Angel had come in all her horrible majesty and cut down his companions in a heartbeat. His only hope was that she was as vulnerable to his hidden javelin attack as her Forsaken brother had been.

Running up one of the walls to gain speed, he launched himself, spinning, into the bleached-white undergrowth out of her gaze, flooding his body with Essence as he sought to thread the mazy path of branches without a sound. As he landed, sure that he was unseen, he snapped a javelin at the back of her unarmoured head. He prayed that pretty skull would unfurl like bloody flower.

It was not to be. As Crashing Wave slid off her sword and his horse alike, she twirled the great blade with no more effort than a child would a ribbon, shattering the javelin midair.

On tick 44, Feizi acts again, and facing an opponent unstoppable in hand-to-hand, he uses the same tactic he did last time - a flurry to conceal himself and launch an unexpected attack (theoretically, he'll act again on tick 49, but you can be sure the Invincible Sword Princess has other ideas).

In the interests of brevity, we'll assume he is successful at concealing himself.

Feizi declares his attack, and at Step One uses First Thrown Excellency to add 8 dice, for a total accuracy pool of 21.

On Step Two, Invincible Sword Princess declares the use of a charm in her combo, Reflex Sidestep Technique, a Step 2 charm that renders an unexpected attack expected, at the cost of one mote. She then declares the use of Second Melee Excellency to add five to her DV at no cost.

On step 3, Feizi rolls 10 successes. Not good enough, since Invincible Sword Princess can cheerfully apply her full Parry DV.

Extra Action Charms and More Combos

With perfect serenity, the Invincible Sword Princess turned to face the cowering Ledaal.

"So this is the one who feels he can strike down the Chosen of the Unconquered Sun by treachery. I am told your souls reincarnate - display better judgment in your next life!"

The walls of the courtyard flexed as the light streaming from her anima took on coherent force. Essence-images of her blade spun into the air, and she leapt from one to the next with incredible speed, plunging each one into Feizi before vaulting up to catch another.

When she came to rest, his body had burned to a fine ash, and his rent armour fell empty to the ground.

On tick 45, Invincible Sword Princess' DV refreshes (not that it was ever actually reduced). She spends a willpower to activate her Sword Apotheosis combo.

When you use an Extra Action charm as your action, it generates a magically assisted flurry, which almost always contains only a certain number of attacks. If you have an Extra Action charm in a combo you've activated, you MUST use that flurry as your action.

The Extra Action charm in Invincible Sword Princess' combo is Iron Whirlwind Attack. The charm generates a flurry of Dexterity + 1 melee attacks, with a total DV penalty equal to the highest for any one attack, on which no multiple action penalties apply. This costs 5 motes and 1 wp. So the charm has granted Invincible Sword Princess a flurry of six melee attacks at Speed 5/DV -1 (which Fivefold Bulwark takes to 0), and no multiple action penalties.

The ST awards a two die stunt. This stunt bonus applies to all attacks in the combo. She can regain 4 motes of Essence or 1 willpower from this stunt, total.

She declares her first attack against Feizi. At Step One, she declares her use of Second Melee Excellency, and is forced to declare use of Hungry Tiger Technique. This is because Hungry Tiger Technique is a supplemental charm, and when a supplemental charm is in combo with an Extra Action charm, you must use the supplemental charm on every action of the generated flurry. This is why you should be careful constructing combos - they can get expensive!

On step two, Feizi spends some of his last Essence for four dice on First Dodge Excellency.

On step 3, Invincible Sword Princess rolls her eighteen dice, scoring nine successes. Five successes are added by Second Melee Excellency for a total of fourteen successes. On step 5, Feizi rolls his four dice, gaining two successes, and a total DV of 7. He's hit by seven successes.

On step 7, Hungry Tiger Technique works exactly like Solar Hero Form, and doubles the successes for the purposes of raw damage. Unlike Solar Hero Form, you'll notice it must be declared in Step 1, not here. Raw damage is 21L piercing base + 14 successes = 35L piercing. Feizi's soak against piercing is 6L. He takes 29 dice damage, and the Princess rolls 12 successes. He is instantly killed.

Invincible Sword Princess aborts the rest of the flurry. This doesn't make Iron Whirlwind Attack any cheaper, but prevents her from having to spend five more motes on Hungry Tiger Technique to eviscerate a corpse.

Perfect Defenses

"Dynasts! How intolerable!" The Invincible Sword Princess walked over to Mukhtar and idly ripped the javelin from him. "Only one wound of consequence! I imagine you were doing quite well for yourself before that treacherous javelin. If you follow the path of the Dawn, you must learn to expect such things."

Red Thunder found himself rather speechless, and tried to simply concentrate on closing the wound.

"Now tell me, young Dawn, have you seen a pair of pretty girls, one a mortal with hair like black silk, the other Dragon Blooded with hair like a rose garden? I am here to remonstrate with them." The Princess looked quizzically at Mukhtar, whose expression had turned apprehensive. Turning on her heel, she noticed the Tri-Khan's greatest thaumaturges and savants, clustered about an ancient Essence weapon whose workings they but barely understood. They were in the great chamber from whence Crashing Wave had attacked, and the weapon was pointed directly at the Solars."

"This is a battlefield of the Exalted!" she cried in fury, starting towards the savants. "Show what little respect these Dragonlings were due!"

In answer, they fired. A screaming beam of black nightmare laced with green light tore at the very air, wilting the stone about its passage.

Invincible Sword Princess slammed Principle of the Sword into it, her caste mark blazing upon her brow, and it died with little more than a whimper. The last few mortals who could bear to look upon the mighty Dawn fled, utterly terrified.

"It is well past over. You, my young Bronze Tiger, will come with me. We shall find Rose and Peony, and be gone from this accursed place."

...TO BE CONTINUED

Finally, we would be remiss in giving a rundown of Solar power if we did not include perfect defenses.

As a result, we've had a somewhat gratuitous weapon of mass destruction unleashed on the Solars. Designed by first age Solars, it generates an unblockable, undodgeable attack with 50 automatic successes, does 100L levels of damage, and is perfect in its own right - even if somehow the 50 successes are reduced to 0, it's considered to hit with 0 successes. This is a completely arbitrary horror, and probably will only work for the Tri-Khan's thaumaturges this once.

In Step 2, Invincible Sword Princess activates a perfect defense - in this case, the charm Heavenly Guardian Defense, at a cost of four motes. The charm automatically and perfectly blocks any attack, so long as the defender is aware of it, even if it's unblockable.

In Exalted, the advantage is assumed to lie with the defender. So in this case, where the attack and the defense explicitly contradict each other - the attack always hits, the defense always defends - the defense wins. The Invincible Sword Princes crushes the attack with the absolute might of her Solar power.

However, perfect defenses always have flaws. When you buy a perfect defense charm, you must choose a flaw based on one of the four virtues. In this case, the Invincible Sword Princess chose the Conviction Flaw, which means the charm doesn't function when she's acting contrary to her Motivation. Since her Motivation is "Prove myself the greatest master of the sword who has ever lived", in this instance, it isn't a problem.

OK, that's it! There's obviously lots of interesting complications introduced by individual charms, but if you've read this document, you will understand the combat framework they exist in. Good luck, and may your battles be spectacular!
-- Kasumi

There isn't anything more to say on Battlewheels either, that's prettymuch everything.
-- Bazzalisk