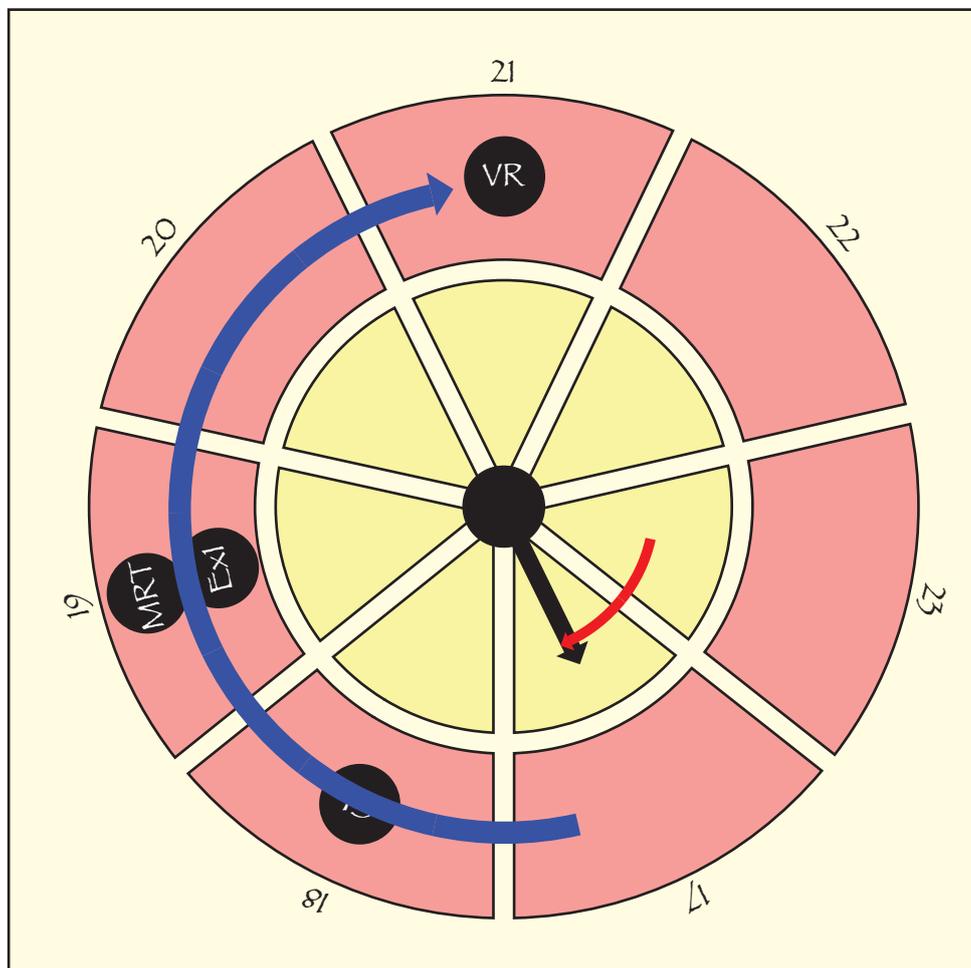


Exalted 2nd Edition Combat 201

By Kasumi



Incorporating Battlewheel Tutorial
By Bazzalisk

Document Version 1.1

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.

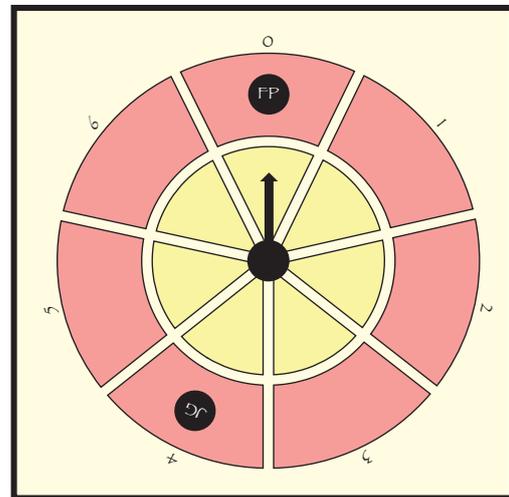
The blue arrow is used to indicate that a character marker has been moved on the wheel.

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-

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.

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.

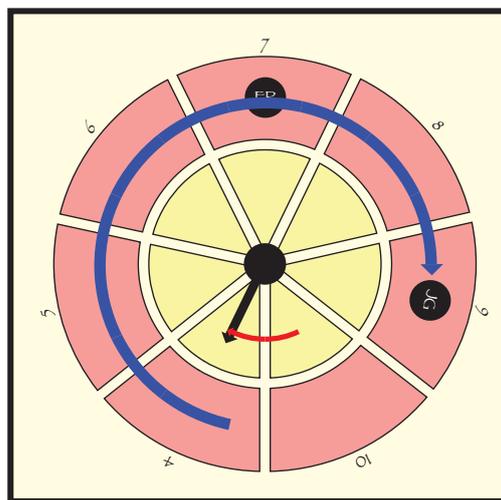
With a grunt of exertion, he lifted her by her sword in a magnificent arc that ended abruptly in the column behind him. Spinning on his heel, he unleashed a precise and measured series of blows, delivered with regret, but no hesitation...

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-

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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 ac-

tions, 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

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.

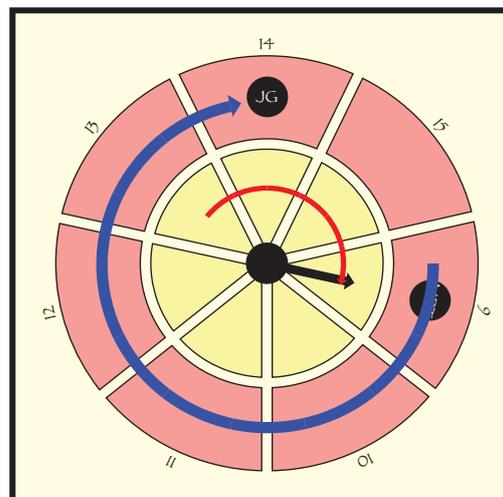
“Consider the lesson learned.”

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

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.

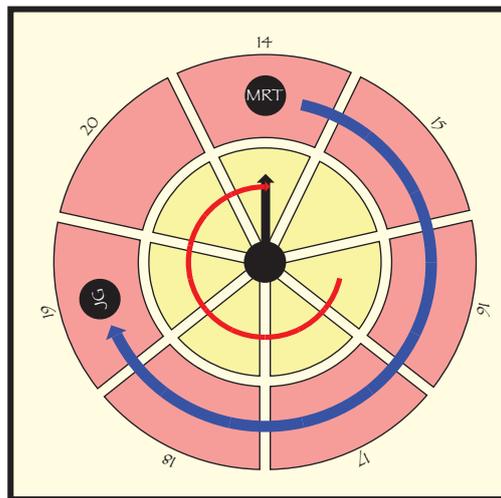
Jamal has been hurled only 8 yards, which is twice Mukhtar's Move distance of (Dex 5 - 1 Armour Mobility penalty) = 4. The Solar can easily close the distance by taking the Move action on any two ticks, which he can do at leisure, since Jamal isn't going anywhere until he takes a Rise From Prone (Speed 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 $(\text{Dex } 5 + \text{Dodge } 3) / 2 - \text{armour mobility } 2 - \text{wound penalty } 2 = 0$. 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 ($\text{Speed } 5 / \text{DV} = 0$) 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.

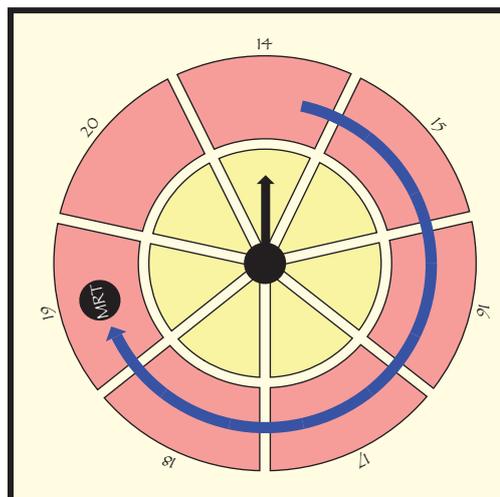
Now we have another problem - there's nowhere for the last bashing level to go when the fifth lethal level pushes it out of Incapacitated! Well, actually there is - when a character has their Incapacitated level filled with lethal, they are unconscious and Inactive as with bashing, but they are on the 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!

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.

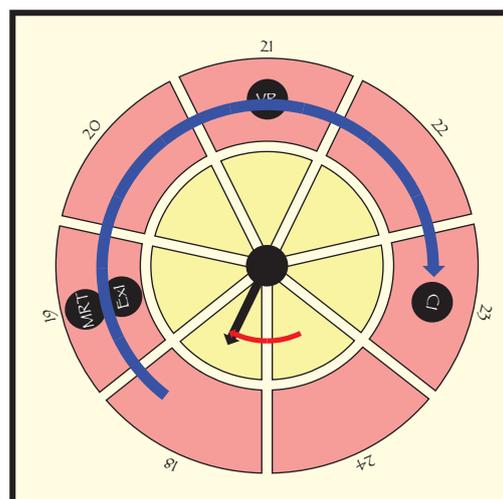
Jumping, Willpower and Unstable Footing

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 dai-klave 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

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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.

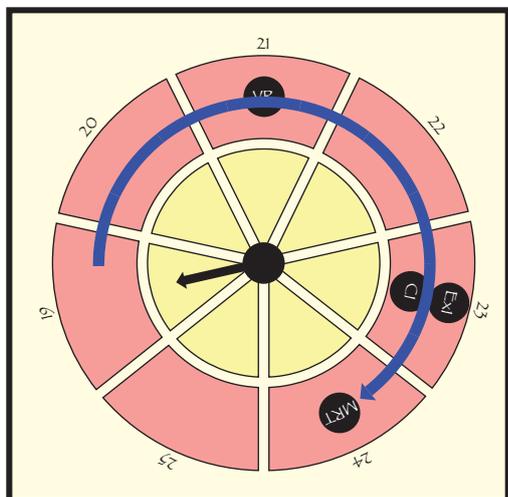
Height Penalties, More Unsteady Terrain, Hardness

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

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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

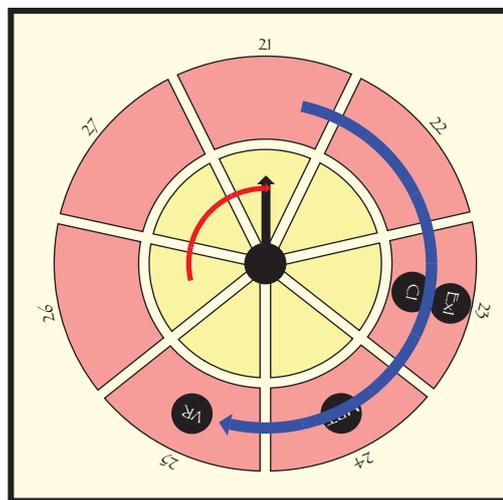
Smiling sweetly, Rose fires arrows into two of the soldiers' skulls, still standing with feet braced on the chests of two more.

"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!"

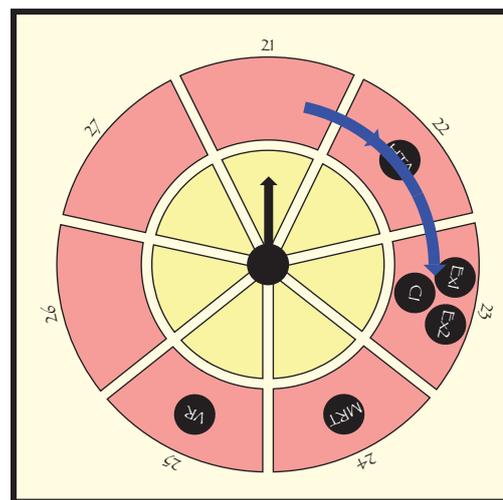
Coolly assessing the situation, Hasim the Axe judged with care that he might just survive at the cost of only seven of the remaining eight men, and took cover behind one of the columns as he planned the attack...

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

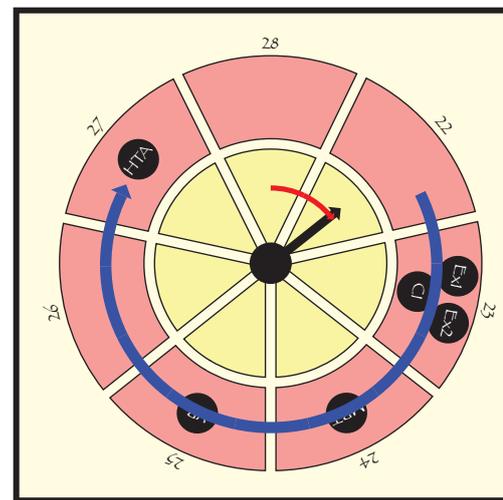
Hasim the Axe has Join Battle 7, Dodge DV 2, an exceptional great axe (totals Speed 6, Accuracy 11, Damage 13L (min 2), Parry DV 4, Rate 2) and soak 6L/13B (from lamellar armour: 6L/8B, -2 mobility). He has Valour 4 and is an excellent leader, with a Charisma + War total of 8.



-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).



Cover, Coordinated Attacks, Unexpected Attacks

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!

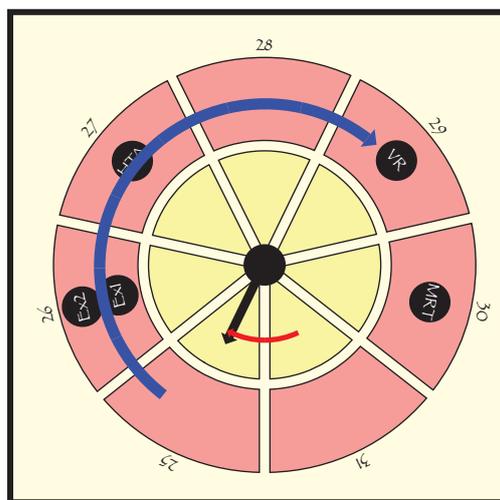
Dragon Blooded Aspects each have a similar power that also activates automatically in the 11+ range. For Fire Aspects, such as Ironheart, their power inflicts their Essence in lethal damage against anyone who attacks them with a bare-handed or grappling attack, and adds their Essence to the damage of 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!

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.

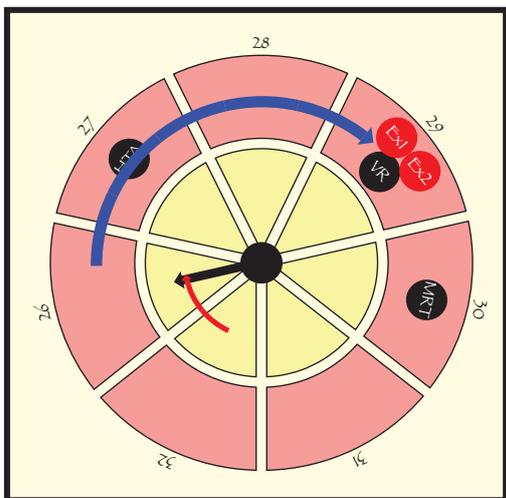
Shields and cover perform the same function - only the better of the two bonuses applies. If Hasim had a shield, it would be superseded by his excellent cover.

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 Penny, 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.

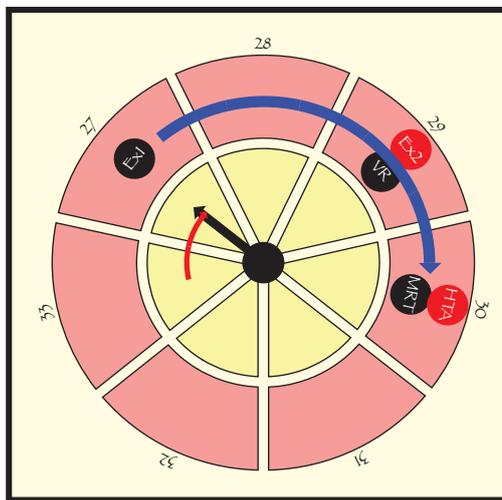
On tick 26, the extras act again, and Guard (those not in hand-to-hand with Rose have been using Move actions to get there).



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.

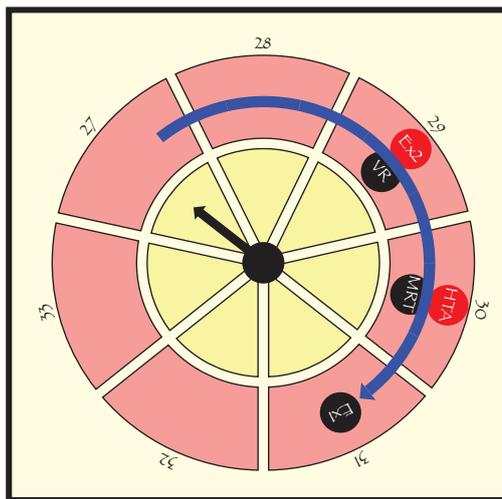
Here we've coloured the appropriate markers red.

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

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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.

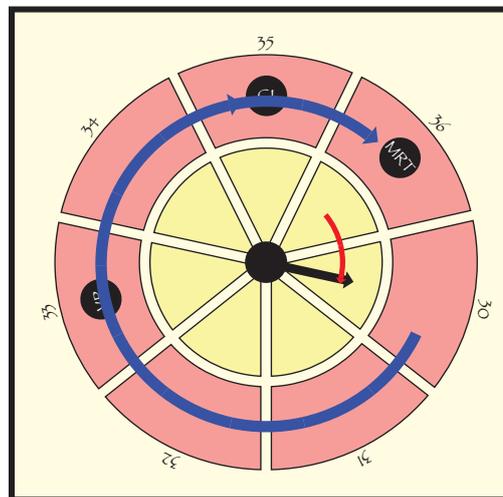
The ST rules that Ironheart has fallen about eighteen yards. Falling damage is piercing bashing levels (NOT dice) damage equal to half the distance in yards fallen, or in this case 9B. This is above her hardness of 8B, so she does take damage. Falling damage can be soaked, but if it is completely soaked, 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.

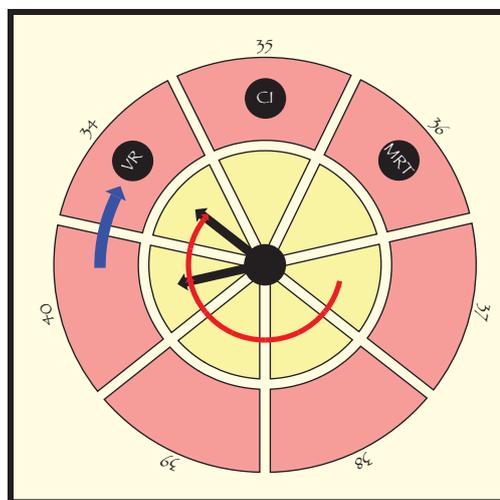
Since Mukhtar won the clinch he takes a speed 6 action. Since she lost, but is no longer in the clinch Cathak Ironheart is forced to immediately take the Speed 5 Inactive action.



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

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.

