

# ONCE MORE INTO THE BREACH

SPYCRAFT COMBAT, STEP-BY-STEP. BY LOREN DEAN.

*The team moves quickly down the volcano base corridor, coming up on a door marked 'Master Control.' Sherman is guns-up in the lead, his rifle shouldered and ready. He and Gentry move to flank the door, with Bootleg standing a few paces behind them covering the entrance. At Sherman's nod, Johnny kicks it in, the doorjamb's light metal groaning as the latch tears loose.*

*Fanning out a few steps into the cavernous control room, the team brings weapons to bear, searching for hostiles. The room itself is circular, 100 feet across, surrounding a holographic projection of the globe ringed with tiny images of killer satellites in orbit.*

*The infamous Doctor Gunther whirls to face the team from his slightly elevated position behind his master console across the room. He straightens, adjusts his monocle, and slams his fist into a big red button, shouting, 'You're too late, fools! Now die!' Eight of the mastermind's guards grab weapons and rush toward the heroes...*

To many players, RPG combat can be a daunting challenge. The rules surrounding it are dense and concentrated, the process is time-consuming, and it's not always obvious how all the die rolls and modifiers translate to cool action. In particular, *Spycraft 2.0's* diverse array of options can leave some confused. Here we offer a typical combat sequence using this robust system, including the mechanics behind the scenes and how it all plays out in the game world.

Before diving into the nitty-gritty behind the mayhem, let's introduce our cast of characters...

**Sherman (Pointman 4/Counter-Terrorist 1):** Sherman is armed with a readied RSA AK-47 assault rifle liberated from a dead guard in a previous encounter, and still has his trusty Colt M1911A1 service pistol tucked into a tactical holster. Sherman possesses the Ambush Basics feat, which grants him a bonus die of sneak attack damage.

**Bootleg (Snoop 5):** Bootleg also has a readied RSA AK-47, gained from a similarly dead guard, and carries a .40 S&W HK P7 backup pistol in a concealed holster. She's not a combat character and has no combat-oriented feats.

**Johnny (Martial Artist 5):** As an unarmed combat specialist, Johnny doesn't carry a firearm. He has the following combat-oriented feats: Kicking Basics, Kicking Moves, and Martial Arts, all of which improve his general unarmed capability.

**Gentry (Sleuth 5):** Gentry packs a Colt M1911A1 service pistol, which would be in a shoulder holster, but he's announced prior to combat that it's out and readied. He possesses the Surge of Speed feat, which allows him to take 1 non-attack action during each round.

**Doctor Gunther:** This is the episode's mastermind, so his job consists of barking orders to his minions, menacing about his doomsday satellites, and cackling with mad glee. Gunther's unarmed as this encounter begins, but his .44 Magnum Ruger Super Redhawk hunting revolver is stashed in a holdout compartment under his master console. Of course, its preferred use is to show minions the 'price of failure,' but Gunther figures the weapon

will do just fine against the intruding agents. The good Doctor possesses the *mastermind* and *treacherous* qualities, which improves the GC's action die type for him (to d10) and generally improves his chance of survival.

**Gunther's Minions:** Also referred to as 'the goons,' these terrified mercenaries fight and die at Gunther's order. They possess the *horde* quality, which sets the minion squad's size to double that of the team size (instead of equal). Thus, the agents face eight of them instead of four. Each of the goons is armed with an RSA AK-47 and all of these weapons are slung when the encounter begins.

And now, Action!

Everyone rolls 1d20 and adds their Initiative modifiers. The GC creates a master list of the results: 22 for Johnny, 18 for Gunther, 17 for Sherman and the goons (Sherman's Initiative bonus is higher, so he goes just before them), 16 for Bootleg, and 15 for Gentry. As usual, the GC makes one roll for all the goons since tracking them individually would be cumbersome and offer little overall benefit.

## ROUND 1

The minions are 80 ft. away and their weapons are slung. Johnny knows he has to close the distance, but doesn't want to just run out in front and draw all the hostile fire. Planning for next round, he chooses to Regroup, increasing his Initiative by 6 (5 + his Intelligence bonus).



Doctor Gunther is next. He spends the round indulging a character flaw, shouting and exhorting his minions against the agents.

Sherman takes a free action to sarcastically mutter 'yeah, whatever' in Johnny's general direction, then uses a full action to Strafe the group of goons. They're low-rent bad guys, so they're clustered together but didn't have the forethought or courtesy to stand in a neat line. Some are located behind others and can't be targeted with a Strafe action. Sherman can only Strafe five goons, all in adjacent squares. Fortunately, Sherman's AK-47 has a full magazine (30 rounds), so he plenty of ammunition to make the attack (at 3 shots per square, it will consume 15 rounds).

Sherman's base ranged attack bonus is +6. He's within the AK-47's first range increment, so he suffers no penalty there. The minions haven't been attacked yet

and so they're still *flat-footed*, but their Dexterity scores of 10 offer no bonus to Defense, so this has no effect the attack either. Sherman's Strength is higher than his rifle's recoil, so he suffers no penalty for making a Strafe attack with it.

He rolls 1d20, getting a 12, for a total of 18, but he knows this won't be enough against all the minions' Defense values, which increase from the first Strafe target to the last. He uses his Counter-Terrorist core ability, *shoot first*, which allows him to spend 1 action die and roll 2, applying both. He scores a 2 and a 4. The 4 'explodes,' allowing him to roll that die again. He rolls a 3 the next time, for a total bonus of 9, which brings his final Attack roll to 27. Sherman feels good about that total, and opts not to spend any more action dice to boost the attack result.

The minions' base Defense is 14. Modifiers applied by the Strafe action increase the first target's Defense to 16, the second target's Defense to 18, and so on. Sherman hits all five minions (whose modified Defense values are 16, 18, 20, 22, and 24, respectively).

Each minion hit suffers the rifle's standard damage – 3d6 lethal – plus an additional 1d6 sneak attack damage from Sherman's Ambush Basics feat because the enemy is *flat-footed*. In total, each minion suffers 16 points of damage. Since they're standard NPCs, each must make a Damage save with a DC of 10 + 1/2 the damage inflicted (rounded down), or 18. The mission's Threat Level is 4 and the goons' Damage save Roman Numeral is III, which translates to a +5 Damage save bonus. Respectively, their rolls are 5, for a 10 (the first goon dies), 14, for a 19 (the second goon lives, but the 16 points of lethal damage carries over toward the next attack), 19, for a 24 (ditto), 8, for a 13 (another death), and 13, for an 18 (another injured survivor).

Next up, at the bottom half of Initiative Count 17, three of the surviving goons take one half action to ready their rifles and their other half action to fire (the other living goons dive for cover behind Doctor Gunther's holoprojector). As the attacking goons can only manage 1 half action to fire, they can't Strafe (which would allow them to attack all four agents at once). They can, however, take a Standard Attack action with the Burst trick, which allows each of them to fire three shots at a single team member.

Each goon's base ranged attack bonus is +2. There's no range penalty, but the AK's recoil is 11, which is higher than the goons' Strength scores of 10 and therefore inflicts a –1 attack penalty. Each minion has a +1 modifier for these attacks.

The first goon fires at Sherman and rolls a 15, for a total of 16. Sherman's Defense is 14, so only one bullet finds its mark (with Burst fire, two shots hit if the attack result exceeds the target's Defense by 5 or more, and three shots hit if the attack result exceeds the target's Defense by 10 or more). The GC rolls 3d6 lethal damage, scoring a 13, which decreases Sherman's vitality points from 34 to 21.

The second goon also bursts at Sherman, rolling... a natural 20! Sherman's hit with two bullets, but since the goon lacks the *treacherous* NPC quality the attack can't be activated as a critical hit. The GC rolls damage twice (6d6), inflicting 27 more points of lethal damage.

Sherman's vitality points drop to 0 and his wounds drop from 12 to 6. This is bad news. Because he suffered wound damage, Sherman becomes *fatigued*, which reduces his Strength and Dexterity by 2 each, and his Initiative Count by 3 (to 14). Now he acts after the minions and in fact, he now goes dead last in the round.

The third goon takes a Burst as well, hoping to finish Sherman off. Sherman's Defense is now 13 (he loses a point of Dexterity bonus due to his *fatigued* condition), but the GC luckily only rolls an 8, for a total of 9. A miss.

Bootleg acts next. She only has a ranged attack bonus of +3, as she's far from a hardened combatant. She knows she's unlikely to hit any target more than once, and based on Sherman's turn knows that just one hit may not be enough to take a goon down, so she decides to sow some confusion. She takes a Cover Fire action targeting one of the goons behind the projector. While Cover Fire counts as an attack, and requires a full action to perform, no attack check is made, which is good, since Doctor Gunther's holoprojector's provides the goon with 1/2 cover, increasing his Defense against her attacks to 18.

The Cover Fire action forces the goon to make a Will save with a DC of 10 + Bootleg's attack bonus (for a final DC of 13). The Goon's Resilience bonus is only +1 and he rolls an 8, so he fails the save. He suffers a -4 penalty with all attack and skill checks for the next round. Bootleg hopes that's enough to keep him from hurting anyone else on her team.

Bootleg hasn't taken any move actions this round, so she can also take a bonus 5-ft. step, which she uses to shift directly in front of Sherman, taking him out of the goons' lines of sight. She's not going to let him die on her watch.

At the bottom of the round, Gentry spends his standard two half actions moving, closing 60 ft. on the goons. Then, once he's within CQB Range (30 ft.), he activates his Surge of Speed feat to Taunt a second of the goons behind cover. He makes a Manipulate (Cha) check, for

which his skill bonus is +6 (it's not a class skill for him). He rolls a 9, for a total of 15. Wanting to make sure he gets the goon's attention, Gentry spends an action die to boost his skill check. He rolls a 3, for a boosted total of 18. Still not confident, Gentry uses one more action die, rolling a 4, which explodes, totaling out at 10, for an overall result of 28.

The goon makes a Sense Motive (Wis) check to resist the Taunt, but he doesn't have the Sense Motive skill, so his Competence bonus of +2 is added to the roll. There's no way he can resist with a straight roll, so the GC spends an action die, which boosts the result by 1d6 because the NPC is a minion. With a 13 on the d20 and a 3 on the action die, the goon's total Sense Motive result is only 18. The GC spends another action die, this time rolling a 5, which brings the total to 23. It's still not enough, but the GC wants to save the rest of his dice.

Gentry's goading distracts the minion, who will have to attack the Sleuth during the next round. That works for Gentry; he's still got all his vitality points.

For heroically (or foolishly) advancing into the goons' point blank range to help save a comrade, the GC awards Gentry with a bonus action die (which also helps replenish the GCs pool, as he used a couple to try and aid the second goon).

With Gentry's actions done, the round is over.

*Gunfire erupts throughout the room as Doctor Gunther shouts, 'You can't stop my satellites! Minions! Kill them! Make them pay for this vulgar intrusion!'*

*Johnny hesitates to keep the sightline clear for Sherman, and the counter-terrorist grudgingly mows into the goons, a red-hot brass fountain erupting in a gleaming*

*arc from his AK. Two minions die immediately, and half the remainder dive for cover. The other half return fire, the staccato barking of the assault rifles rising to a snarling crescendo. Sherman staggers, taking at least one hit...*

*Bootleg steps in front of him and lays down some cover fire, while Gentry races toward a flanking position to try and draw some attention. Sherman struggles to get his bearings, fighting the clouds forming at the edges of his vision.*

## ROUND 2

The Initiative order looks similar to last round, except that Johnny's Count is now 28 and Sherman now acts last.

Johnny decreases his Initiative Count by 20 to Press, which gives him an extra half action during the current round. First, though, he uses a free action to make an Athletics/Speed Push check to increase his Speed. His total Athletics skill bonus is +10 and he rolls an 18, for a total of 28. Needing 2 more points for the desired result, Johnny spends an action die and rolls exactly the 2 he needs. This increases his base Speed to 40 ft. for the next minute. He'll suffer 2d6 subdual damage at the end of that time, which could potentially knock him out, but he's hoping that the fight will be over before then.

Johnny uses his bonus Press action to move forward 40 ft. and place himself between Sherman and the goons who are still in the open. Due to the Press action, Johnny's remaining actions happen on his new Initiative count of 8, so he's done for now.

The agents are closing on Gunther's position, so the mastermind uses a full action to retrieve his Ruger Super Redhawk from its hidden compartment.

The goons go next, and typically they'd have to make Resolve/Morale checks before they act (as they lost 1/4 their number during last round). The check's DC is 0, though, because they're Supportive of their leader, so they can't fail and fight on.

The goons out in the open have a clear line of sight to Johnny and Bootleg, and either partially or completely obstructed lines of sight to Sherman. They now realize that their attack bonuses aren't as effective as they first assumed, so instead of applying the Burst trick each of them Aims at a target and fires a single shot. The Aim action grants each of them a +1 attack check bonus against his target and boosts his Initiative Count by 1. The first goon attacks Johnny, rolling a 5. Adding his total attack bonus of +2 (which includes the Aim bonus), he misses.

The second goon also attacks Johnny and rolls a 17, for a total of 19. A hit! Johnny's vitality points drop from 45 to 31.

The third goon fires at Bootleg, whose Defense is 16 – more than enough to avoid the total attack check result of 12.

The other three goons behind the holoprojector all fire on Gentry. The players might assume this is payback for Gentry's wildly successful Taunt, but the second goon is still under the effects of Bootleg's Cover Fire action, which inflicts a –4 penalty with all his attack checks. He's unlikely to hit either Johnny or Bootleg (who have high Defense bonuses), or Sherman (who's directly behind Bootleg, and benefits from cover), so he decides to go for the easier shot. The third minion, admittedly, is just following suit.

The fourth (Taunted) goon stands to unleash a Burst attack in Gentry's direction, which the GC thinks is



appropriate to the circumstances despite its dubious strategic value. However, as the weapon's muzzle swings in line, Gentry spends an action die to enter a Stand Off with the attacker. Gentry must make a Reflex save (DC 12). His Reflex save bonus is +4 and he rolls a 10, for a total of 14, which means that the goon's attack is cancelled and the two combatants become locked in a mortal test of wills, each of them pointing their weapon at the other and waiting for him to flinch. It also means that both characters are now *vulnerable* (Gentry loses his Dexterity bonus to Defense, which lowers his Defense to 13), and neither can take any non-free action until the Stand Off is complete. Gentry's Initiative Count also drops by 5 (to 10).

The fifth goon Aims but just before he makes his Standard Attack against Gentry, the agent spends his last action die and tries to add him to the Stand Off as well (Stand Off is a free action and can be taken by those already in a Stand Off). Gentry rolls a 9 for his Reflex save this time, totaling 13 and narrowly adding the second goon to the silent, staring fray. Gentry's Initiative drops by another 5, to 5. He's sacrificing his own reaction time in order to keep the minions at bay.

Gentry can't stop the sixth and final goon from firing on him, but the goon's first attack roll is a 2, which falls within the AK-47's error range. Knowing her teammate is out of action dice, Bootleg spends 2 action dice to activate the error as a critical miss, which translates as a misfire rather than a jam since the rifle has the *dependable* quality. The minion spends his second half action growling and clearing the misfire.

With the goons done, the GC surveys the scene. For gutsy use of a double Stand Off the GC awards Gentry another bonus action die.

Bootleg goes next, and knowing that Johnny will be in melee with goons 4, 5, and 6 before the end of the round she trains her weapon on the goon whose error she just activated. She Aims to raise her attack bonus by 1, which she hopes will partially offset the goon's cover bonus, and makes a Standard Attack. The goon's Defense is currently 18, but Bootleg rolls a natural 20, which is a threat! She spends her last action die to activate the critical hit and automatically kill the poor bastard.

Gentry is embroiled in the Stand Off and can only take free actions for the moment. He passes and the action continues with Sherman at the bottom of the round. Like the minions, Sherman has suffered a morale trigger (he came under automatic fire from more than two

opponents at once), so he must make a Resolve/Morale check vs. a DC of 15. His Resolve skill bonus is +10 and he rolls a 12, for a total of 22, so he's fine.

Sherman uses his bonus 5-ft. step to move out from behind Bootleg, firing a Burst attack at the now-*vulnerable* second goon (one of the two locked in the Stand Off with Gentry). The goon benefits from 1/2 cover, so his Defense is 18. Sherman's got a total attack bonus of +5 and rolls a 13, for a total of 18, which is just enough to hit the goon with one shot. He rolls a whopping 21 points of damage (he gets an extra sneak attack die vs. the *vulnerable* goon), which means that goon's now suffered a total of 37 points of damage (factoring in the 16 points he suffered last round). His Damage Save DC is now 28 (10 + 18). He rolls a 19, but even with his bonus of +6 this is only a 25. He dies, which ends the Stand Off.

With his second half action, Sherman fires a Burst at the third goon, who's just emerged from the Stand Off and is no longer *vulnerable*. He rolls a 9, which gives him a total attack result of 14. He needs an 18, so he spends an action die. It comes up 3, and Sherman spends his last action die to push his total over the top. He rolls 15 points of damage, bringing the third goon's new damage total to 31 (and bringing his Damage Save DC to 25). The goon only rolls a 2 with his Damage save, and his corpse hits the floor, a giant smoking hole in his chest.

For taking fearsome advantage of the *vulnerable* opponents and bailing Gentry out, the GC awards Sherman an action die.

Initiative Count 8 rolls around and Johnny gets another chance to act. He uses his first half action to complete his movement, advancing another 40 ft. into melee range of the goons hiding behind the holoprojector. He levels a Kick at the fourth goon, activating the Power Kick trick

from his Kicking Moves feat. This grants the attack the *armor-piercing* (2) and *takedown* qualities, though only the latter matters in this case. The goon's Defense is 14 and Johnny has a base attack bonus of +8. He rolls a 7 for a total of 15, which thanks to bonuses from his Martial Arts feat inflicts 8 points of lethal damage. The goon must make a Damage Save with a DC of 14. He rolls an 8 – precisely what he needed to roll to stay alive.

The goon still needs to save vs. the *takedown* effect. He rolls a Fortitude save with a DC equal to the damage suffered (8) using his Resilience bonus of +1 and scores a pathetic 3, failing. He becomes *sprawled*, falling to the floor and becoming *vulnerable*. Next round, the goon may only take the Drop Prone or Stand Up actions and suffers a -2 with attack checks.

Johnny's Initiative decreases by 2 for the Kick attack. Technically, Gentry's Initiative Count of 5 comes next, but he's already acted for the round, so it's time to move on.

*Johnny explodes into action, leaping through the hellish crossfire to close on the minions with near-inhuman speed. Gentry, whose understanding of human nature is unparalleled, makes eye contact with two of the minions behind the holoprojector, and they hesitate just long enough for Sherman to bring them both down.*

*The third goon behind the holoprojector suffers a freak misfire, which he follows with an amateur mistake: standing up from cover to work the AK's bolt. He realizes his mistake just as Bootleg unloads a shot in his head.*

### ROUND 3

The GC's Initiative chart now looks like this: Doctor Gunther at 18, the remaining three goons after their boss at 18, Bootleg at 17, Sherman at 14, Johnny at 6, and Gentry rounding things out at 5.

Gunther Aims at Gentry, shouts 'Never!' (a free action), and fires, making a Standard Attack. Gentry spends his last remaining action die to again attempt a Stand Off, but fails the Reflex save (Gunther is harder to trick). Worse, Gentry's Initiative Count drops by another 5 for the attempt, which brings him to 0 and sends him *reeling*. He loses his next two half actions. Too much happened too quickly behind the holoprojector, and Gentry must take a few moments to catch up to the action.

The mastermind's attack proceeds. Gentry's Defense is 14 and Gunther's base attack bonus is +4. The Super Redhawk's recoil, however, is 14, which is higher than Gunther's Strength, so he suffers a -1 penalty. Fortunately, his Aiming bonus compensates. Gunther rolls a 19 – a threat – and since Gunther's a special NPC, he can activate threats as critical hits. The GC spends an action die and rolls for damage: 2d6+2. He scores maximum damage, 14 points, which is all applied directly to Gentry's wound points, bypassing his vitality entirely. Gentry's Constitution is 12, so his wound points drop to -2. He falls *unconscious* and begins to die.

Gunther takes another free action to cackle with mad glee.

The minions lost half their number last round, so the GC must make another Resolve/Morale check for them, this time against a DC of 5 (base 20 minus 15 because their leader is still present and they're still Supportive of him). The GC easily makes this check and the goons keep their heads despite mounting casualties.

The goons must now deal with Johnny. All three are adjacent, so if they want to fire on him they must move away or suffer a stiff penalty (-8 for shooting at an adjacent target who's also engaged in melee, and +4 to the attack's error range).

The fourth goon takes a Stand Up action but since this is a movement action he can't also take a bonus 5-ft. step. Neither can he use the Withdraw action to get clear, since it's a full action and he only has 1 half action remaining. His only recourse is to attack and hope for the best. Rather than firing his rifle, he attacks unarmed, sparing himself the penalties for shooting in melee. He rolls a 13 for a total of 15, which results in a miss.

The other two goons take 5-ft. steps away from Johnny and the first uses a Delay action to let the other get free. This decreases both their Initiative Counts by 1. They consider firing on Johnny but think the better of it. One shoots at Bootleg and the other shoots at Sherman.

Bootleg's Defense is 16. The goon rolls a 16, and with no modifiers to the roll, hits the agent with a single bullet. Bootleg suffers 9 points of damage.

Sherman is now out from behind cover, so his Defense is only 13 (remember, he's *fatigued*). The Goon declares a Burst and rolls a 12, which misses.

At Initiative Count 17, Bootleg Aims at Doctor Gunther, then immediately uses the bonus to make a Standard Attack. The villain's Defense is 14, but he benefits from 1/4 cover behind the console, which increases his Defense to 16. Bootleg scores that on the die, which brings her total to 20, and she inflicts 14 points of lethal damage. As expected, it's not enough to bring the mastermind down.

Sherman spends his first half action to reload his AK-47 and then fires a Burst at Doctor Gunther. He rolls a 17, adding his +5 attack bonus (down from +6 because he's *fatigued*). His total is 22. This exceeds Gunther's modified Defense of 16 by 6, which means that Gunther is hit with two bullets. Sherman rolls damage, inflicting 24 more points of lethal damage on the (not so good)

Doctor. This strips Gunther of all his vitality and inflicts 4 points of wound damage. (The Doctor's a special NPC, so he possesses vitality and wound points rather than a Damage Save). Gunther is now *fatigued* and suffers the attendant effects.

As a Level 5 Martial Artist, Johnny has an effective Reach of 10 ft., so even though the fifth and sixth goons aren't immediately adjacent to him, they're still in danger. Johnny attacks the fourth goon first, though, making a Standard Attack with a roll of 6. His unarmed attack bonus of +8 brings the total to 14, which hits, and he rolls 1d6+3 for damage, inflicting 7 more points of damage on the battered goon.

The goon's suffered a total of 15 points of damage now and must make a Damage save with a DC of 17. With a +6 Damage save bonus, he can stay vertical with any roll of 11 or more. Sadly, he rolls a 6 and dies.

Johnny then lays out a Power Kick on the fifth goon, rolling a 15 (for a total of 23). He Initiative Count decreases by 2 for the Kick, but he inflicts 7 lethal damage. The goon's Damage save DC is 13 and he rolls a 2. He dies as well.

Johnny's had a good round, but Gentry less so. At the bottom of the Initiative curve, his wound damage drops to -3. Also, he must make a d% roll to see if he stabilizes. His result must be equal or lower than his Constitution score (in this case, 12) or he continues to die. He rolls a 49, and approaches one step closer to his final mission.

*In the heat of battle, Gentry loses track of Gunther just long enough for the mastermind to get the drop on him. 'Never!' The Doctor's cry rings out across the room a split-second before his enormous revolver buries a slug in the agent's chest.*

*Johnny, enraged at his apparent loss of his teammate, crushes into the remaining minions in a whirlwind of limbs. Two fall with brutal, bone-crunching efficiency, leaving only one standing. The minion glances nervously at the door, then back to Gunther, who's fully manic now, waving his revolver and screaming like a banshee.*

## ROUND 4

Initiative now looks like this: 17 for Bootleg, 17 for the last goon, 16 for Doctor Gunther, 14 for Sherman, 4 for Johnny, and Gentry pulling up the end at 0.

The agents have effectively lost one-quarter of their number (as no one has had time to see if Gentry is actually dead or not), so each of them except Sherman must make a Morale check with a DC of 15 (Sherman's DC drops to 10 because he succeeded at his last morale check). Johnny rolls a total of 16 and Sherman scores a 17, both successes. Bootleg, however, only has a



Resolve skill bonus of +3 and only rolls an 8. Her total is 11, and because she failed her check by 5 or fewer points she suffers reservation in the form of 1d6 stress damage (the GC rolls a 4 for this damage).

Doctor Gunther's a maniac, Gentry's down, Sherman's a mess, and it's all starting to get to Bootleg just a little bit, but she has the highest initiative this round and she's gotta step up if her team's going to win the day. She uses her first half action to Aim at the last goon, then follows with a single-shot Standard Attack. She rolls a 1, which is an error with her weapon (an AK-47). The GC unloads 4 action dice on the error, which after applying the weapon's *dependable* quality prompts a catastrophic misfire, rendering the gun useless until repaired. Bootleg gulps and starts scrambling for her backup pistol.

The misfire is a boon for the last minion, but he's the last survivor of his squad, outnumbered by more than 2 to 1. His Morale check DC starts at a staggering 25, which only drops to 10 because Gunther's still standing. The GC isn't feeling any special need to help the heroes out just now, but given Gunther's manic gun-waving he feels compelled to also apply a -2 discretionary modifier to the goon's Resolve check. He rolls a 4, which drops to a 2 – far, far less than needed to keep the minion in the fight. With a failure of 8, the GC must spend 1 action die or the goon breaks into a run for the nearest cover. He declines and the goon flees.

The goon spends his first half action to scramble behind the holoprojector, after which he fires a Burst at Sherman (he hasn't got much of a chance of hitting Johnny, and Bootleg is too far away to be threatening with a handgun). The GC rolls a 15, which is enough to hit Sherman. Fortunately, the attack scores only 5 points of damage. Sherman has 1 wound remaining.

However, as he's suffered wound damage a second time now, his condition moves from *fatigued* to *exhausted*. His Strength and Dexterity scores each drop by 6 and his Speed is reduced to 1/2 normal (in this case to 15 ft.).

At Initiative Count 14, Gunther Aims at Johnny and makes a Standard Attack with his Redhawk. Johnny's Defense is 18 and Gunther's attack bonus is +4 (with the recoil penalty, as before, offset by the Aim bonus). Gunther rolls a 12, for a total of 16, and the GC spends an action die to roll an additional 1d10. (Gunther's a *mastermind* so he gets better action dice than other villains.) He rolls an 8, boosting the roll enough to score a hit. Johnny suffers 10 points of damage, bringing his current vitality down to 21.

Sherman goes next, but he's not well at all. One more wound and he's down for the count, and his Strength and Dexterity scores are so low that he has little hope of firing his AK-47 accurately. He chooses the Drop Prone action (which increases his Defense) and uses his remaining half action to pull and ready a liquid skin patch from his gear.

Johnny uses a half action to move behind the master console with Doctor Gunther, engaging him in melee. This will have the happy byproduct of making the Doctor's Redhawk attacks much more difficult. Johnny uses his second half action to Kick again, rolling a 10, for a total of 18. He connects with Gunther, scoring 13 points of damage, which brings Gunther's wound point total below 0. The mastermind falls *unconscious* and begins *dying*.

Just like Gentry, who rolls again to stabilize. His d% roll comes up 72 and his wound points continue to drop.

*Gunther swings his revolver to bear on Johnny, screaming 'And now YOU!' In a move worthy of bullet-*

*time cinematography, Johnny leaps over and past the bullet, delivering a sound boot to the Doctor's head. The mastermind flies back into the master console and slides to the floor, his eyes fluttering shut.*

*Sherman takes another bullet and collapses. He digs into his tac-vest for a liquid skin patch as Bootleg tries to finish off the last minion. Unfortunately, the chambered round blows out the side of her weapon and she knows the gun's toast. She drops the Kalashnikov and goes for her backup piece...*

## ROUND 5

Approaching thirty seconds of game time into the combat, there's only one enemy left standing, and he's a poorly trained mercenary faced with a horrendous Morale check. His leader's down and he's surrounded with no hope of escape, so he's got to beat an astronomical DC of 50! Worse, he failed his last Morale check, so he gains no DC reduction from that. His heart just isn't in it anymore and he only rolls an 8, for a total of 10. Failing by 40 points, he surrenders unconditionally.

*It takes the last of Gunther's minions no more than a split-second to realize he's better off in custody than the morgue. He slides his rifle out from behind the holoprojector and mutters 'No more' as he slowly gets to his feet.*

*The team splits, half moving to arrest the survivors and the rest tending to the wounded. They've defeated another maniac bent on world domination, but they got close to losing some of their own today. They'll get a week or two of R&R, but soon they'll be back in the fray, defending the innocent from unseen, unfelt threats. How long before they're not so lucky? How long before one of them doesn't come home, or they fail and it doesn't matter?*

*Best to leave that to fate, they decide. No need to brood when there's work to be done...*

This example illustrates several things that set *Spycraft 2.0* apart from many of its contemporaries. First, even non-combat characters can be effective in a fight. Bootleg and Gentry used a couple of tricks (neither of which required an actual Attack roll) to keep half the goons out of the fight long enough for Sherman and Johnny to mop up.

Action dice are an amazing tool at the disposal of every player, including the GC. They're critical to the cinematic

nature of *Spycraft* play, and as this combat shows a nice flow of them across the table promotes action and all-around fun.

Guns are dangerous, but fists and feet shouldn't be discounted. Much is made of the idea of automatic weapons, but the *Spycraft* engine is built to offer just as much power and versatility to melee and unarmed options.

Body armor makes a difference. Just a few points of damage reduction would have kept both Gentry and Sherman in the fight for the duration.

Lastly, the GC is a player, too. He needs to keep track of more details than the players, but *Spycraft* offers him just as many ways to whoop and holler at the large-caliber mayhem as the players themselves.

Feeling the need to wreak some devastation? Grab your mission profiles and dive right in! There's always room for more bodi- uh, heroes. There's always room for more heroes.

