



VIPER

COILS OF THE SERPENT

Scott Bennie & Steven S. Long

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VIPER: Coils Of The Serpent

An Organization Book for *Champions*

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A WORD OR TWO OF APPRECIATION

Special Thanks:

Steve would like to thank Scott for his numerous ideas about and keen perspective on VIPER, and the many fans who offered their comments and suggestions for what this book should contain.

Scott would like to thank Cliff Christiansen, Shelley MacTyre, and the gang from the AOL Hero Games board from the mid-1990s, for feedback and support.

We'd also like to thank the *Digital Hero* playtesters and testreaders who reviewed the *VIPER* manuscript. We may not have hordes of agents willing to obey our every command, but we've got a great bunch of fans who help us correct typos, inconsistencies, and dropped words in our books, and we definitely appreciate it.



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Printed in the U.S.A. First printing August 2003

Produced and distributed by DOJ, Inc. d/b/a Hero Games.

Stock Number: DOJHERO206 • ISBN Number: 1-58366-019-4

<http://www.herogames.com>

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INTRODUCTION



CHARACTER SHEET NOTATION

Generally, the text of the character sheets in this book should be pretty straightforward and easy to understand. Consult the Glossary in the *HERO System 5th Edition*, and the example powers in that book, if you have any questions about abbreviations, terms, or notations. The *Writer's Guidelines*, available on the Hero Games website (www.herogames.com), also provide some information about character sheet formatting.

In a Multipower, a “u” next to the cost indicates a Fixed (or “ultra”) slot, and an “m” a Flexible (or “multi”) slot.

Under the END column, a number in brackets indicates Charges (however, the bracketed number next to STR is an END cost).

Since the earliest days of the Champions Universe, they have been there — garbed in green, armed with blasters, living in secret Nests, and directed from afar by a mysterious and supremely powerful leader. They are the agents and evil scientists of VIPER, a criminal organization devoted to the acquisition of power and wealth by any means necessary.

VIPER has a long and proud history as a part of *Champions*. It was created by George MacDonald, one of the creators of the *HERO System* itself; Hero's first published adventure for *Champions*, titled *VIPER's Nest*, featured VIPER as the main opposition. Since then, VIPER has involved itself in countless plots and schemes, directly or indirectly created dozens of supervillains and superheroes, and remained one of the defining elements of every version of the Champions Universe.

After over a decade of being a common, but undefined, part of the world of *Champions*, in 1993 VIPER finally received an in-depth look in the aptly-titled *VIPER*, by Scott Bennie and Cliff Christiansen. Filled with weapons, villains, Nests, plot hooks, and lots of wonderful little details about the organization, *VIPER* was an instant hit with *Champions* gamers everywhere. To this day, many GMs and players refer to the book fondly as one of their favorites.

When Hero Games “rebooted” the Champions Universe as *Champions: The New Millennium* in the late 1990s, it brought VIPER along as part of the new setting, albeit in a somewhat different form. The company hired Steve Long and Scott Bennie to create a new book about the new VIPER. Unfortunately, after the two of them wrote most of the book, the company was no longer in a position to publish it, so the manuscript sat quietly on their respective hard drives for several years.

In 2002, after DOJ, Inc. bought the Hero Games assets and began the process of revitalizing the Hero product line, Steve and Scott started planning a newer, bigger, better book about VIPER for the new Champions Universe. Outlines were written, ideas were bandied back and forth by e-mail, a plan emerged, and work on the book began. The final result of that collaboration you now hold in your hands; we hope you enjoy it and find it useful for your *Champions* games.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

VIPER, like *Conquerors, Killers, And Crooks*, is designed primarily for GMs. It's a book about an organization player characters oppose, and thus falls within the GM's province. For that reason, it doesn't have a GM's Vault or other section of GM-only material; for most games, the entire book constitutes GM-only material — so if you're a player, stop reading unless you have your GM's permission! Some GMs

let players read parts of this book that pertain to their characters' origin or the like; others keep the entire thing off-limits.

Chapter One, *History Of The Snake*, details the origins and history of VIPER, beginning in the nineteenth century and progressing all the way up to its current incarnation under the leadership of the Supreme Serpent. Using this information, you can incorporate VIPER into a Golden or Silver Age Champions campaign if you wanted — or, in an earlier form, into a *Pulp Hero* game.

Chapter Two, *A Thousand Venoms*, describes the organization, structure, and hierarchy of VIPER. After reviewing VIPER's recruitment and training procedures, it showcases VIPER's iron-fisted leader the Supreme Serpent, the ruling Council Of Thirty, the various branches and ranks of the organization, and so forth. The chapter also discusses VIPER activities around the world and VIPER's oft-poisonous internal politics.

Chapter Three, *Fangs Of The Serpent*, describes over thirty different types of VIPER agents, ranging from the low-level Basic Agents to highly-trained agents like Draysha, Takara-Shinja, and Air Cavalry. By applying the appropriate Package Deals to standard agent templates, you can create any sort of agent you need for a scenario.

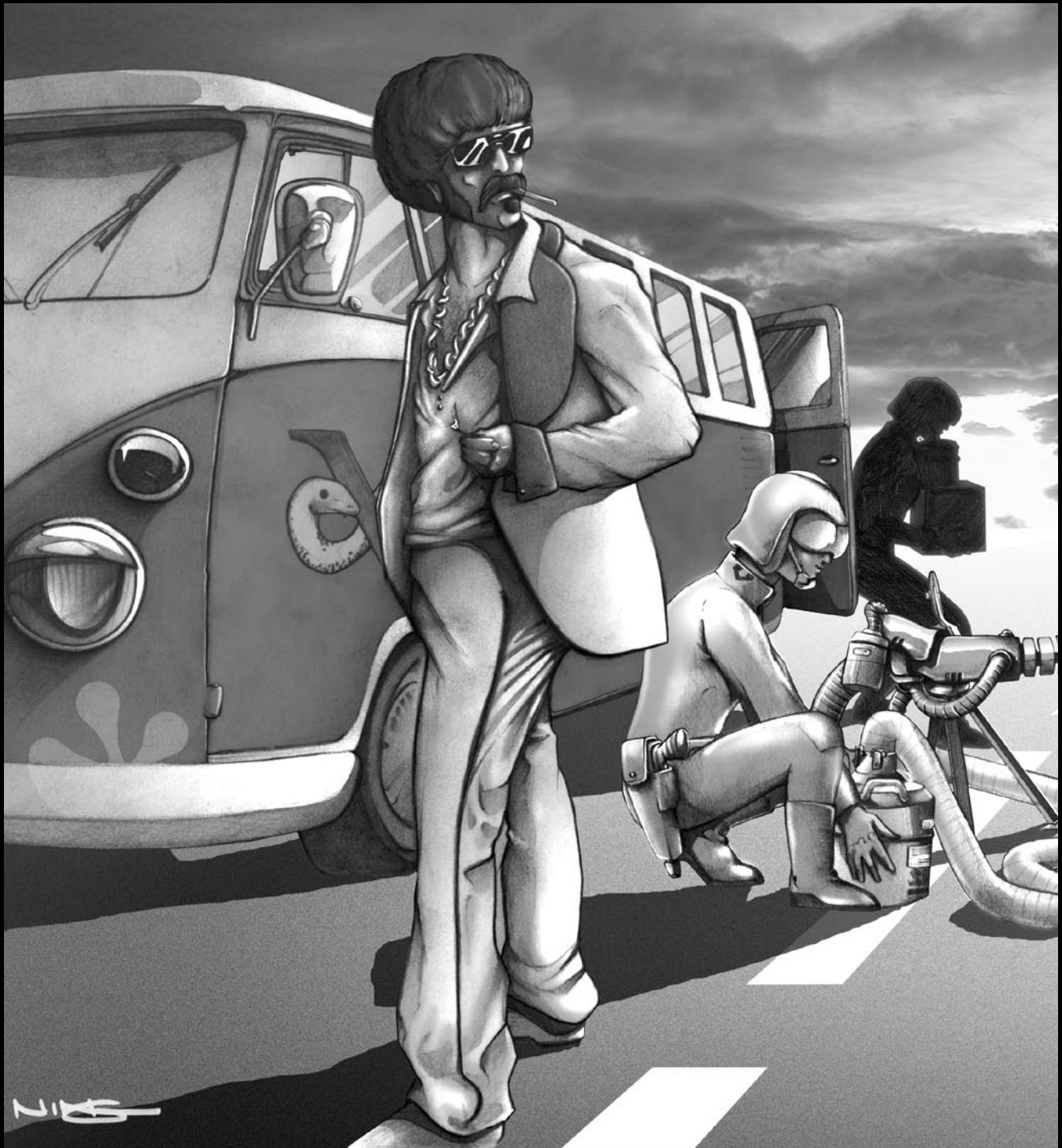
Chapter Four, *Nests Of The VIPER*, reviews VIPER's local bases — its Nests. It discusses the benefits (and drawbacks) of the Nest system, as well as how VIPER establishes and controls a Nest. It also provides details about numerous Nests in America and around the world.

Chapter Five, *The VIPER Armory*, describes VIPER's technology. From blasters, to vehicles, to robots, VIPER has it all — and the snakes are ready to use it against your heroes!

Chapter Six, *Dragon Branch*, provides information on VIPER's cadre of superhuman agents. It includes writeups for approximately a dozen new supervillains, including Oculon, Ripper, Freon, and the infamous Viperia.

Chapter Seven, *Gamemastering VIPER*, discusses how to use VIPER in your game — or even run an entire VIPER-oriented campaign. In addition to information about VIPER's combat tactics and how VIPER relates to other characters and organizations in the Champions Universe, it discusses how to incorporate VIPER into other genres, such as Fantasy, Science Fiction, or Pulp.

So, you'd better tell your heroes to look out! — they're about to find themselves caught in the coils of the serpent, and they may not escape....



VIPER: chapter one

HISTORY OF THE SNAKE

FROM THE VALDORIAN AGE



VIPER AND “REALISM”

For many gamers, the existence of an enormous criminal organization like VIPER raises all sorts of uncomfortable questions. How does VIPER recruit, train, and equip its army without the government finding out and stopping it? How can it build a secret headquarters without the government seeing the project via spy satellites? Why hasn't VIPER already taken over a bunch of Third World countries? How can VIPER survive, and maintain any level of respect in the underworld, when heroes keep defeating it and smashing its Nests?

The answer to all these questions, and others like them, is: “Who cares?” This is a comic book criminal organization, in a comic book world, in a comic book roleplaying game. Evil organizations do these sorts of things all the time in the comic books without it bothering anyone, so it shouldn't bother you that VIPER can do the same. After all, we're talking about a world where people can teleport, fly, and fire blasts of energy from their eyes. Given all that, it's perfectly plausible that VIPER could build a secret headquarters or assemble and train a small army without anyone the wiser.

If you feel you absolutely have to, you can devise

Sometime toward the beginning of the Valdorian Age, 50,000 years ago, there were three great serpents who lived in a cave in the lands that would one day be known as West Africa. Beneath the cave, volcanoes gave off a combination of rare gasses that suspended the aging process; these gasses wafted into the cave and the snakes who lived there did not die. These snakes were pythons, a breed that keeps growing from the day it's born until the day it dies... but what would happen if a python never died?

After a thousand years of life, these three snakes, now huge beyond reckoning, somehow became sentient. The local tribes named them Beda, Xoruba, and Nama, and worshipped them. As the snakes' awareness grew, so did their curiosity and their desire to become mighty among the creatures of the world.

Beda made himself ruler of a vast empire. A merciless tyrant even by the barbarous standards of his times, he was slain by a great hero from the north during the Atlantean Age. Beda's rule had cast such an appalling shadow over the land that even today, one hundred and fifty centuries after his death, a few superstitious Africans still sacrifice their daughters to the Mighty One to appease him.

Beda ruled even the other great serpents. Xoruba, tiring of her brother's company, traveled into the east, made herself a great nest, and slept for millennia. She awoke in the days long after Atlantis fell, at the dawn of recorded history, when the great Sahara grasslands were turning to sand. Finding herself alone in a strange land, she made a pact with the forces of chaos and became their agent. In Egypt, they called her Apep and Apophis, greatest foe of the gods, the serpent who tried to swallow the sun. Xoruba was slain by a hero in the days before Egypt's First Dynasty, but like her brother she was not forgotten. Small cults of Apep worshippers endure to this day.

Nama was the wisest of the three serpents, though he also possessed a malicious spirit and preferred the role of trickster to that of conqueror. Rather than trying to become the embodiment of a primal power, he learned sorcery. For amusement, he loosed evils into the world, to see how mankind dealt with them, and delighted in the destruction they caused. But Nama also had a soft spot for heroes, a self-important breed whose efforts provided him with endless hours of amusement. Sometimes the great serpent used his sorcery to aid human champions (particularly against creatures like Sharna-Gorak, who were as much of a threat to him as he was to humanity). He was especially

revered for his gift of prophecy, and many heroes performed great deeds only because Nama directed them to the time and place where they were needed. At other times, however, Nama became bored and restless; at such times he unleashed things upon the Earth that wrought only chaos and destruction.

“Vipers Upon The Land”

In the ages after the death of Xoruba, Nama considered it wise to forsake his serpentine form, so he used his sorcery to take the shape of a great African warrior. In the guise of Nunyamo, the warrior-scholar, he wandered the world from Africa to China, an apostle of the cult of the snake. Wherever Nunyamo went, he taught the practices of snake worship and snake-handling. Many legends followed in his wake.

At the height of the Dark Ages, in the lands now known as Armenia, Nama decided the world was ripe for conquest. He gathered six barbarian chieftains, the mightiest warriors he could find in lands as far west as Germany and as far east as Mongolia. He forged an enchanted serpent-blade for each warrior, then brought the great dragon Bludrinkig under his heel and commanded him to serve as the warriors' vassal. Nama told his proteges the fates had selected them to restore order to the world.

The Six raised large armies to pursue this goal; they became known as “vipers upon the land,” and villages shuddered at the rumor of them. But before they could achieve any major success, a hero slew Bludrinkig. Blaming each other for the loss of their greatest weapon, the chieftains quarreled among themselves... and the quarrel only ended with their deaths. Most of the Swords of Nama were destroyed over the ages, but a few of these legendary weapons remain buried under ruins across Eastern Europe, waiting to be rediscovered.

This was Nama's first attempt to act as a catalyst for an army of conquerors, and he regretted that it failed so quickly. Geiskivaro, son of Bludrinkig, later confronted Nama and demanded compensation for his father's death. Nama's enchantments transformed Geiskivaro into the greatest dragon of his day. As further recompense, Nama gave him a three foot tall pure gold statue of a python, the Golden Serpent, which became the centerpiece of his hoard. But the Golden Serpent was cursed. Its power attracted the greedy and desperate; treasure-hunters from Northern

Europe suddenly felt a compulsion to hunt the dragon. Eventually a band of Viking warriors slew Geiskivaro and seized the Serpent. These Vikings fell victim to the same curse, but one of their number, of pure and honest heart, resisted the compulsion and eventually learned he could neutralize the statue's power by sealing the object in a box with the bones of a Christian saint.

Despite great temptation, the Vikings achieved their quest. Then they took the box containing both Serpent and bones across the ocean to get it as far away from Europe as possible. The ship sank off the coastal waters of America sometime around the turn of the millennium, and the box containing the Golden Serpent was lost forever.

After the loss of the Golden Serpent, Nama grew tired (as he periodically does). He returned to his caverns beneath the Mbang Mountains and rested for centuries while the world changed. Prior to falling asleep, he took human form and fathered one of his three known offspring, the woman who would eventually become known as Viperia.

The Serpent's Wheel

In Renaissance Italy, a cabal of heretical scholars discovered records of the cult of Nama and the so-called "six vipers" — and decided to form their own version of the cult. This decadent group became known as *Rota Vipereus*, the Serpent's Wheel. They held snakebite parties, where drunken patrons willingly allowed poisonous snakes to bite them; they kidnapped children and threw them into viper-filled pits; they schemed to acquire power. They also experimented with snake venom and used alchemy to turn it into elixirs they hoped would cure diseases, provide them with awesome (if monstrous) abilities, and grant the ultimate gift — immortality.

A band of brave Church inquisitors infiltrated their ranks, bound their summoned demon guard, halted their sacrifices, and stopped them from seizing control of Milan and Naples. The leader of the cult, Giovanni Pontormo, died in the assault, and his masterwork, the *Librum Blasphemare*, a book of alchemical secrets involving snake venom, was lost forever.

Nonetheless, the Church did not completely destroy the cult; several of these Italian sorcerers combined magic with snake venom to achieve an unlimited lifespan. The discovery, however, came at a severe price: as the years lengthened, so did the sorcerer's need for sleep, and that need drastically increased as the centuries passed. During the late nineteenth century (the last time these villains were active) they could remain awake for less than four hours per day; today, at the start of the twenty-first century, they're fortunate if they can remain awake for two hours each day. The Slumbering Serpents, as they're now called, have spawned a number of legends, and one of them was among the Thirty Founders of VIPER.

A Snake You Say?

The next thread in the tapestry of VIPER's history dates to nineteenth century England, where British explorers, returning from expeditions into "Darkest Africa," came home from the continent bearing artifacts of ancient snake cults (specifically the cults of Beda and Nama) and stepped into the middle of a scholarly controversy. In the 1860s, after the publication of Darwin's *Origin Of Species*, turmoil and numerous public feuds arose among members of the Royal Geographic Society over the truth (and implications) of Darwin's work. One of the most vicious vendettas was between Sir Robert Evan-Jones and Lord Hubert Lancelyn Essec (a pair of pro-Darwinists) and Reverend Evan Fowler, an Anglican bishop and naturalist. Angered by Fowler's constant slurs, Evan-Jones and Essec formed a secret society to mock Anglican conventions and venerate ancient African snake cult practices. They called themselves "the Unholy Order of the Grand Reptile," and they were the direct forebears of the modern incarnation of VIPER.

The Order went from hosting decadent parties to building criminal empires; its crimes included the murder of several members of the Royal Geographic Society and the American-based Empire Club. They sponsored eccentric scientists like the original Dr. Moreau and Professor Myron Klauss (a.k.a. Professor Clock, the Swiss clockwork roboticist who allegedly inspired some of the more fanciful creations of L. Frank Baum, and one of whose marvels, the robot butler "Dalhousie," still functions 140 years after his creation).

Then there was the notorious Dr. Victor Vulcaine, whose sonic experiments, backed by the Order, produced prototypes even modern science cannot effectively analyze. In his most famous experiment, he blanketed a twenty mile radius with the amplified music of the London Symphony Orchestra using a series of "sonic reflectors" that kept the volume evenly distributed throughout the region. Another time, he broadcast a sub-sonic vibration that broke every piece of glass in London. These days he's accorded the same degree of quasi-scientific awe later shown to Nikola Tesla. Unfortunately during the 1890s, he experienced bouts of madness, spending days crawling naked on his belly imitating a snake. Vulcaine died in 1899 after being stabbed multiple times by an unknown assailant; his attacker stole his notes and some of his advanced prototypes, which the authorities have never recovered.

The Order also became obsessed with the West African cult of the snake-god Nama. While exploring darkest Africa in the 1870s through the 1890s, they encountered many legends that Nama the Great, living in a cave somewhere in the depths of Africa, guarded great treasure and the secret of immortality while the bowels of the world sung to him. Occultists in the service of the Order cast spells that allowed them to commune with Nama, though these spells were dangerous (several members of the society went mad). A few managed to contact him and received the serpent's

Continued from last page

some sort of "realistic" explanation for VIPER's continued secrecy that involves super-technology or superpowers. For example, perhaps VIPER has hacked into the world satellite networks and interfered with their systems so they view ordinary ground where VIPER Academy exists. Or maybe they bribe a nation's government to gain permission to build a secret factory. Whatever the justification you decide on, the important thing is this: use VIPER to have fun in your game. Don't worry about the "realistic" details, unless everything in your game is about "realism."

ANCIENT ARTIFACTS AND EVIL PLOTS

While VIPER's activities are more in the technological sphere than the mystical, the "race the bad guys to uncover the mystical artifact" scenario is one of the classics of the adventure genres to which VIPER belongs. Ancient artifacts like the Swords of Nama and the Golden Serpent are merely "MacGuffins" for this type of scenario; these "serpent motif" items provide players with opportunities to keep VIPER from getting its hands on some very dangerous relics.

Also, you'll notice several instances of evil plots stopped by unnamed adventurers throughout the history of VIPER. Those unnamed adventurers could either be PCs (in *Fantasy Hero* or *Pulp Hero* campaigns set in the appropriate milieu) or the ancestors of *Champions* player characters.

advice, though he refused to reveal his hiding place. During their relentless search for Nama's cave, the Order plundered ancient tombs and burial places, pillaged villages, and ruthlessly exploited the native population.

But despite numerous expeditions (and even a few tribal wars instigated in the hope of improving access to various African sacred sites), the Unholy Order never found Nama's hiding place. As the cult founders aged, they became more desperate to meet the great serpent and wrest the secret of immortality from his jaws.

Finally, at midnight on the eve of the new century (January 31, 1900), the leaders of the Unholy Order kidnapped "seven maidens of impeccable purity" and gathered in Greenwich, England to perform a mystic rite to summon Nama and "welcome him to the modern world." A group of bold adventurers infiltrated the gathering and rescued the women; when Nama appeared and found no sacrifices waiting for him, he ate the summoners (including the aging Evan-Jones) and returned to his lair.

Lord Essec was one of the few leaders to survive this debacle, though he suffered a humiliating defeat in a sword duel at the hands of an old rival — an American adventurer named James Harmon, who dealt him a crippling leg wound. Essec vowed that one day the entire Harmon family would pay dearly for his injury. However, Lord Essec's nephew Albert supplanted his now crippled uncle as the Essec patriarch; embarrassed by the family's association with the Order, he took great pains to distance the Essecs from it. However, old Hubert continued to tell tales to Albert's children, urging them

to venerate the Great Serpent, and thus passed on the quest to find Nama to his descendants.

In 1910, a few of the Unholy Order's last surviving (and looniest) members gathered in the Canary Islands to perform a rite that would pull Halley's Comet toward Earth, believing that an event of such astrological significance would ruin their enemies. Once again, a band of heroic adventurers foiled the Order's plans.

The Unholy Order lay fallow for decades, though adventurers occasionally encountered various snake cults in the Middle East whose origins they could trace to it. In the late 1920s, when fascist movements began their rise to power in Europe, the sons and grandsons of the Unholy Order lent them their support; these dictatorships were more to their liking than "the chaos of democracy" or "that socialist rabble." Many of the Unholy Order's families were the backbone of the Nazi war machine during WWII, and some served as officers in the German and Italian armies. A few in Britain and America spied for the Axis powers; these included the infamous saboteurs Dr. Scorpion and the Spider Lady.

Amid the chaos preceding the war, one of the members of the Unholy Order finally achieved its most highly cherished dream. Lord Essec's grand-nephew, Edgar Lancelyn Essec, had "gone traveling" to avoid various scandals that plagued him in England. He journeyed to Africa, where (after making a vast fortune exploiting the native populations) he felt the call of Nama draw him to the serpent's stronghold in the Mbang Mountains. He fell asleep for decades, but when he woke, a new serpent would be born.



BIRTH OF A VIPER

The families of the Unholy Order profited mightily from the Second World War and took the opportunity to seize control of major industrial firms in Europe and America. The defeat of the Nazis dealt a tremendous blow to many of them, and it took them awhile to recover.

In the late 1940s, descendants of the Unholy Order began to experience dreams. They saw a lantern made of crystal and jade serpents, from which a pale light emanated. They saw themselves placing their hands inside the lantern, and when they pulled them out again, there was a serpent tattoo on their wrists. When the dream reoccurred at frequent intervals, some of the dreamers sent out agents to locate “the Serpent Lantern.”

The quest to find the Lantern did more than just spur the dreamers’ curiosity — it brought the chosen together for the quest. When they finally recovered the Lantern in 1954, thirty men and women held a meeting in Zurich to consummate their victory. The people at this gathering included: the Duchess Henrietta Von Drotte, head of Germany’s Duchess Industries (a corporation that had consolidated many German industrial firms after the war); Roger Essec, Edgar’s son and head of the Essec fortune; Willem DeVries, a Dutch-American banker with widespread interests in Asia and Oceania; Phillipe Belanger, a prominent French arms dealer with many connections in the mercenary world; Kamimura Kiyomora, ace pilot and Japanese war hero; Alexandra Petsalnikos, daughter of a Greek shipping magnate and an amateur archaeologist; Patrick McGivin, aspiring Irish athlete (and terrorist); exiled Peruvian revolutionary Roberto Danini; and twenty-two others.

Each person placed his left hand into the Lantern. Nama, remembering how the barbarian chieftains had turned against one another, was determined that this new group would not turn on itself, so each person who joined the alliance swore an oath never to betray (directly or indirectly) either the other founders or the organization they created. The power of the Lantern sealed the oath, promising certain death to anyone who violated it. In token of their oath, the Lantern tattooed each of them with the sign of the Serpent on his left inner wrist, and granted them extended lifespans.

After the thirty people placed their hands into the Serpent Lantern, they received Nama’s vision of the future. The shocked gathering beheld many threats to the world in the years to come: demons summoned by evil sorcerers laying waste to regions; alien invasions threatening the entire world; a madman who wedded his body to machines and brought death from the sky. They witnessed the collapse of the world’s great colonial empires and elected governments fomenting endless cycles of war because of their weak policies (rather than doing what a government is *supposed* to do: enforcing peace and order with a firm hand). Then Nama himself appeared to the gathering and made a proclamation:

“The world is about to become a cauldron of

such chaos that it will be beyond even *my* ability to tolerate. Only snakes can prosper in such a world — and your task is to nurture them. You must build a new nest for snakes in the modern world. Its foundation will be money and technology, and its goal will be power and perpetuity. You must seize the world by the throat and dominate it, or it will be lost!”

Convinced by the vision of Nama, the thirty began to put together plans in place to build a secret army. They called this army VIPER, which DeVries declared stood for “Venomous Imperial Party of the Eternal Reptile.” Not everyone agreed on the acronym, but the name reflected a colonialist attitude which represented their common interests, so it stuck. But everyone in attendance agreed on the name “VIPER” — a name destined to spread to every corner of the Earth.

The Early Years

The original VIPER had four goals: Personal Wealth, Economic Influence, Technological Supremacy, and Global Stability (achieved by VIPER control of the world). It gathered its forces slowly, uncertain as to how to achieve its goals. Though the early years may seem fallow, they weren’t; the Founders maintained contact with each other, and their economic alliances opened numerous commercial opportunities.

But DeVries, who saw himself as VIPER’s leader, was unhappy. He felt the organization was not proceeding quickly enough on its major mission of global stability, which required the creation of a VIPER Army and the conquest of nations. The others were reluctant to declare themselves openly until 1959, when colonialism in Africa began to unravel. They realized Nama’s prophecy was coming to fruition faster than they’d anticipated. DeVries became *de facto* leader of VIPER, and he structured it in the manner he envisioned: an organization of spies, soldiers, and technocrats able to conquer and rule Earth. He knew exactly what he wanted and what he had to do to achieve it.

His first step was to have his small corps of agents and mercenaries conduct a recruiting drive. World conquest takes manpower, and he didn’t have enough. Soon a steady stream of thugs, malcontents, and killers made its way to DeVries’s secret “training academy” in the American West. But his agents wouldn’t choose just anyone to join VIPER; DeVries gave them specific criteria: intelligence, ruthlessness, quick-wittedness. He didn’t want a gang of legbreakers in green jumpsuits — he wanted the most advanced, well-trained, well-equipped fighting and criminal force in the world. Only with such a weapon could he win the throne he sought.

Well aware of the extent of “honor among thieves,” and determined not to lose control of what he was building, DeVries set out to make his followers loyal to *him* personally, as the ultimate embodiment of VIPER philosophy and the organization’s Supreme Leader. Each agent-in-training received a copy of a document penned by

THE NAME OF VIPER!

VIPER’s acronym was an obvious anachronism, even at the time it was founded, and reflects the organization’s Victorian roots. When agents (even the most thoroughly indoctrinated ones) are told what VIPER really stands for, the reaction of many of them is: “Say what?”

As a result, many Nest leaders have changed what the acronym stands for (though the Council Of Thirty steadfastly refuses to acknowledge these changes). Other invented names for VIPER include:

“Venom, Industry, Power, Evil, and Ruler-ship”

“Victory In Perpetuity through Eternal Resolve” (the favorite among current Nest Leaders).

“Vicious Inevitable Power of Everlasting Rule”

PRIMUS, UNTIL, and many superheroes have unofficial versions of the acronym, including: “Vapid Imbeciles Pretending to be an Effective Regiment”; “Victims of Incompetent Personnel and Egomaniacal Retards”; and “Violent Idiots in Pajamas, Exterminate them Right away (please).”

Most people, though, have forgotten that an acronym ever existed. To the majority of the general populace, VIPER is simply VIPER, and that’s all you need to know. As one Nest Leader put it: “We’re the brand name of evil!”

DeVries, “The VIPER Manifesto,” which described the privileges and duties of a VIPER agent. A VIPER agent, it said, was one of the elite, a member of an organization destined to seize world power under the leadership of DeVries. Through unswerving loyalty to VIPER, and success in assigned missions, an agent could expect to receive power and riches. But if the benefits of membership were great, so were the penalties for failure or betrayal; a traitor or incompetent agent would receive harsh punishment, up to and including a painful death at the hands of VIPER’s skilled torturers. To accompany the Manifesto, DeVries issued each agent a uniform, thus further building a sense of camaraderie and a feeling of personal superiority.

DeVries tried to make each agent feel as if he belonged to something mystical, something unstoppable, something much larger than himself that he could ride to the heights of power — if only he obeyed and remained loyal. For the most part, his plan worked admirably. He and his most trusted lieutenants sifted their recruits carefully, choosing only those who were susceptible to DeVries’s cult of leadership and arranging the deaths of any they deemed untrustworthy or unreliable.

DeVries assigned each of his lieutenants a territory in which they established “Nests,” or secret bases. As each trainee proved himself worthy, VIPER’s taskmasters assigned him to a specific Nest. Competition among the lieutenants for the best recruits, and among the recruits for the best postings, helped to boost the organization’s morale.

Once he had gathered his “force of VIPERs,” DeVries was ready to make his move. On August 22, 1962, a day that law enforcement officials around the world eventually came to call “Green Monday,” DeVries struck. Beginning precisely at 7:00 AM Greenwich Mean Time, his carefully-trained agents and elaborate conspiratorial mechanisms lashed out, killing dozens of underworld, political, and industrial figures in one swift, poisonous stroke. Some died in staged accidents the authorities never realized were assassinations; others were brutally snuffed out of existence by bombs or squads of armed men dressed in green; a few were subjected to blackmail so ruinous they committed suicide. But the end result was always the same: they died, and through carefully planned legal and extra-legal arrangements, DeVries and the other Thirty Founders (also known as the “High Serpents”) came into possession of their riches and power.

Early Contact With Paranormals

As paranormals became more and more common in the post-war world, DeVries studied them carefully. Here was a rogue element, something he could use to accelerate his rise to power — or which, if not carefully handled, could ruin him. He realized he needed superpowered assets of his own, both to use in his schemes and to protect him from the “heroes” who would undoubtedly oppose his aims.

The first of VIPER’s paranormals was the super-human agent Valery Gurzhy, a major in the Soviet Air Force who defected to VIPER in 1964. Gurzhy had gained superpowers as the result of a radiation accident while training for the Soviet space program; he possessed the ability to turn himself invisible or intangible which, combined with low levels of telepathy and the training of an elite soldier, made him the ideal operative. Gurzhy was the most powerful weapon in VIPER’s arsenal for many years. Known by the codename “VIPER-X,” he battled such heroes as Vanguard, MeteorMan II, and Beowulf. But as Gurzhy grew older, his powers became more difficult to control; not only was he emitting dangerously high levels of radiation, he discovered it was becoming harder for him to shift from an intangible to a corporeal state. Gurzhy infiltrated American nuclear plants to access their nuclear control rods, the only objects capable of absorbing the radiation and keeping him stable. Naturally, American superheroes misinterpreted these actions as sabotage. In 1971, VIPER-X and Vanguard fought inside the main reactor of the Trojan nuclear plant near Portland, Oregon. There, Gurzhy completely lost control of his form, got sucked into the control rods, and has not been seen since.

The original VIPER-X was the most famous of VIPER’s early supervillains, but he did not stand alone. In addition to employing the services of mercenary villains like Revenger, Plague, Grave, Cyclotron, and Agone the Smasher, VIPER also employed home-grown villains like Darkbolt, Fatalla, Dr. Snake, and Cottonmouth. But even with this impressive roster, DeVries decided to launch a project to create his own supervillains. With the full support of the Thirty Founders, he assigned Dr. Francis Camille and Prof. Kelly Bryant the task of creating superhumans for VIPER’s new “Dragon Branch.” Their early efforts to create stable superhumans were fruitless (with the exception of Cottonmouth), and the backbone of the agency remained its agent corps.

Operation Coil

By 1968, with the world destabilized by wars and assassination, DeVries felt confident enough in the power and effectiveness of his organization to begin his conquest of the world in earnest. Teams of agents struck at carefully selected targets, stealing technology and data, destroying potential enemies and enemy resources, and generally testing their skills and methods. At first, all went well; conventional authorities could not cope with an organization like VIPER.

Pleased with his success so far, DeVries launched Operation Coil, an attempt to conquer the United States — the first of many nations that would fall before VIPER’s power! And he might have succeeded, too, had one of his lieutenants, Nest Leader “Darius” of the Detroit Nest, not made a fatal error. Moving too soon, he attracted the attention of several of the Motor City’s superheroes, including Microman, MeteorMan II, and (then newcomer) Scarlet Shield. After a tremendous

battle, the heroes defeated VIPER. Learning of the organization's plans, they alerted the authorities and short-circuited Operation Coil altogether. DeVries, furious, rescued Darius from jail so he could have him publicly tortured to death as an example to all other agents.

The Fall Of DeVries

But no scapegoat could save DeVries from the fate awaiting him. The Thirty Founders were annoyed with both DeVries's attitude and his failures. Though they had rescued him after Operation Coil fell apart, they warned him they would not help him if he were captured again (the oath they'd sworn to Nama did not compel their assistance, it merely prevented betrayal). DeVries scoffed at the threat and embarked on an elaborate scheme to replace the First Lady with the shapechanging android Fatalla. But Fatalla had secretly fallen in love with Vanguard, and Vanguard eventually persuaded her to reveal the location of DeVries's New Jersey Nest. In a raid conducted on May 12, 1969, Vanguard and the Justice Squadron smashed their way into the base, capturing DeVries, several superhumans, and scores of agents.

In what was billed as "the trial of the century," the United States government tried and convicted DeVries of numerous crimes, ranging from conspiracy to murder. DeVries was sentenced to death and executed in a Florida electric chair (one of VIPER's killings had occurred in Florida). The Duchess promised the desperate DeVries she would arrange to rescue him at the last minute, but that was a ploy designed to ensure his silence. However the VIPER leader's body disappeared within minutes of the execution, and some have speculated DeVries's death was one of VIPER's many elaborate hoaxes. Even so, if DeVries ever commanded a VIPER Nest again, no one acknowledged it. VIPER had lost its most effective leader, the Head of the Snake, and the authorities proudly boasted it would never be a major threat to the world ever again.

They were wrong, of course... very wrong.

VIPER AFTER DeVRIES

With DeVries gone, VIPER threatened to crumble into squabbling fragments. Each Nest leader and officer struggled to seize control of the organization — or at least his little part of it. But VIPER was already too large, too powerful, and too important to fall apart simply for lack of a single leader. After months of internecine conflict and uncertainty, the Thirty Founders stepped forward and presented the mysterious "Serpent-One" as VIPER's new leader. Serpent-One was merely a propaganda tool, a figurehead selected by the Founders as their mouthpiece. Rather than destroy

VIPER (and thus deprive themselves of power), the leaders of the organization supported him; the few who did not were summarily executed. Nests that supported "Serpent-One" were generally left alone by the leadership; most VIPER crimes in the 1970s and '80s were the work of Nest Leaders lining their own pockets.

The High Serpents retained control of their personal Nests and a few other key Nests, using them to pursue more dangerous goals. VIPER firsts during this era included the construction of the organization's first undersea base (Sea Snake Citadel, abandoned in 1983 when an undersea earthquake irreparably cracked its protective dome), VIPER's first ventures into space (VIPERSAT-1, a plot which ended disastrously but yielded rich technological fruits), and VIPER's first multi-billion dollar crime (a successful raid on certain military and commodities stores of France).

Operation Oroborous

VIPER's most ambition crime during this era was Operation Oroborous, the 1979 attempt to implant mind control devices into every major world leader simultaneously — a plot performed in conjunction with the highly-feared supervillain Dr. Destroyer. Though enmity had arisen between Destroyer and VIPER in the past, most of the Thirty Founders felt the goal was worth the risk (the Duchess, whose loathing of Zerstoiten had its roots in the Second World War, violently opposed it). But Destroyer betrayed his allies. Oroborous was merely a cover to disguise his true goal: to seize the Serpent Lantern and wrest from it the secret of immortality. In the chaos that followed, the Lantern was flung out into space, and either fell back to Earth or bounced off the atmosphere into deep space. In either case, VIPER's greatest treasure was lost. To say that the Thirty Founders were outraged would be to put it mildly — even with the Lantern's effects mitigating the aging process, they were beginning to feel the effects of time. Henceforth, Destroyer was VIPER's most hated enemy, and any VIPER who (willingly or unwillingly) helped him was sentenced to death. After Operation Oroborous, VIPER increased its reliance on scientists allied solely to the organization.

The Thirty Founders also commissioned the development of special squads of elite agents. One of these was the Death Adders, founded in 1973 — a squad where VIPER sent any agent too wild to control, but who showed extraordinary competence. Another notable squad was the so-called Suicide VIPERs, agents who injected themselves with a time-release poison prior to an operation, with an antidote available only if they succeeded on the mission (this squad did not survive for very long, though it had a very storied history).

THAT SEVENTIES VIPER

VIPER suffered a bit of a technological decline during the '70s and '80s — its penchant for technical innovation slacked after the death of DeVries. It did develop several inventions; VIPER's arsenal of "VL"-class laser weapons dates to this period, as does the "VFL" series of jetpacks. The VFL-2, VIPER's first working jetpack (VIPER does *not* talk about the VFL-1), dates to 1973 and allowed an agent to fly at 10" with a ½ DCV penalty; the VFL-3, which went into service in 1980, increased the flight speed to 15" with no DCV penalty.

Another innovation during this period was the construction of the first of VIPER's so-called "doomsday devices." A Nest Leader who called himself "the Destronomer" built a Weather Intensifier that was supposed to turn a little breeze into a hurricane — but like many VIPER prototypes, it didn't perform to specs. In 1982, VIPER built the world's largest factory in an artificially created underground cavern in Greenland; this complex, considered a masterpiece of industrial engineering even by VIPER's enemies, provided VIPER Nests in Europe and North America with most of its weapons and vehicles until it was finally discovered in 1997. The New Knights of the Round Table and a force of British commandos captured the factory, and later turned it over to local authorities (it has boosted Greenland's GNP by over 300%).

In 1980, VIPER's first version of the Serpentine computer network

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went into operation. This was part of an effort by the Thirty Founders to keep a closer eye on Nest activities, but most Nests sidestepped it through skillful computer programming (or more commonly, feeding it false data).

The Demonflame Incident

In 1986, Nama received a prophetic warning that some foolish humans — a Boston DEMON cell — were about to resurrect one of his greatest enemies, Sharna-Gorak the Destroyer. First, they raised an object known as the Tower of Destruction (a 10,000-foot-tall monolith) in the center of the city as a precursor to his coming, then summoned an army of demons to secure the site. Nama directly contacted the Founders and ordered — for the first and only time — that VIPER intervene on his behalf.

Many Nest Leaders hesitated; DEMON was already fighting a number of VIPER's enemies, including the Justice Squadron and the US Air Force, and they thought it advantageous for DEMON to weaken their foes. But after the Thirty Founders detonated a self-destruct device they'd placed in a rebellious New York Nest, the others fell into line. The Justice Squadron was defeated and DEMON was on the verge of summoning Sharna-Gorak's essence through the mystical Edom Gate when a fleet of VIPER vehicles and agents, in numbers not seen since Operation Coil, unexpectedly arrived in Boston and turned the tide of battle for the heroes.

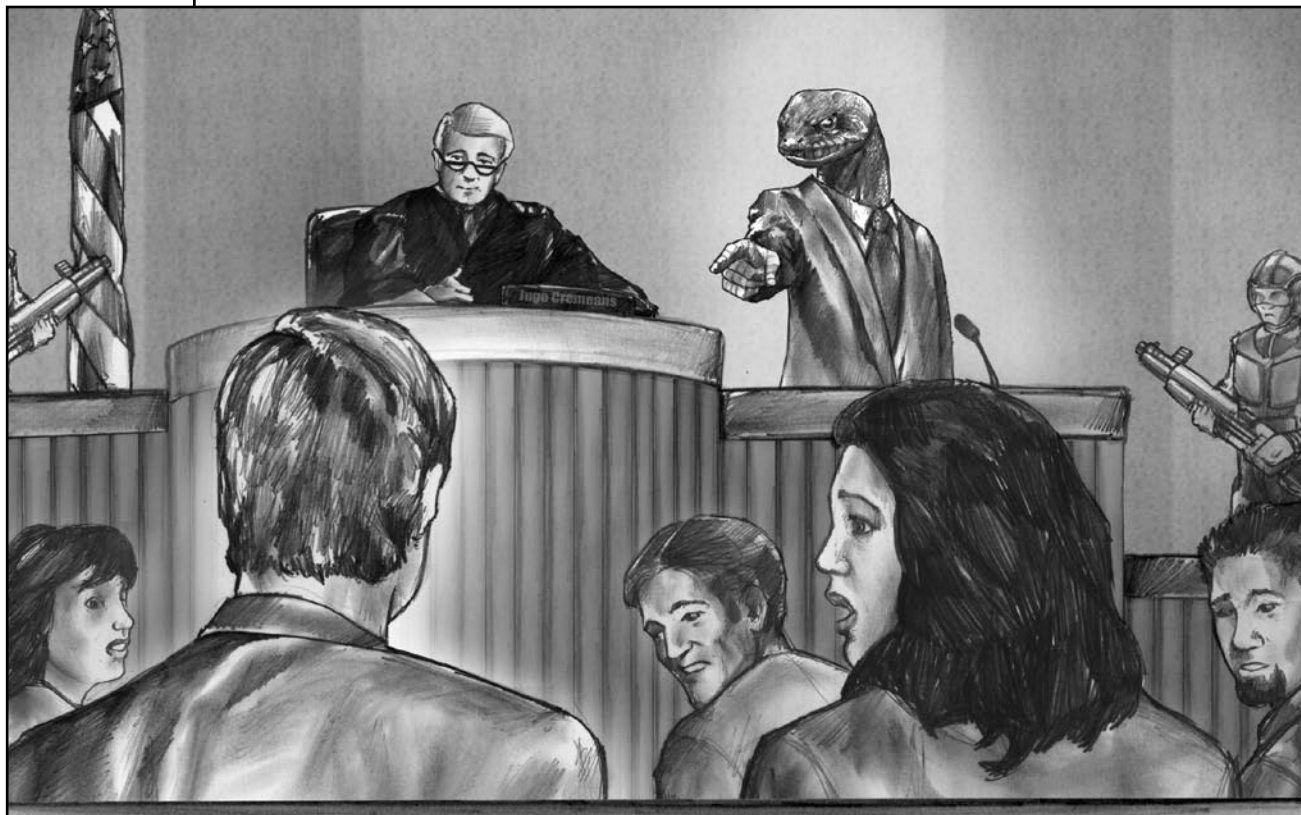
A state of open war has existed between DEMON and VIPER ever since "the Demonflame Incident," for which VIPER has shed very few tears. VIPER's official stance on the operation (as mentioned in a press release it issued after the incident) was: "the world belongs to VIPER, and this is a sample of how effectively we can protect it when it finally has the wisdom to embrace the snake." Most superheroes had mixed feelings about VIPER's intervention. A few Nests actually used this rare window

of opportunity to establish informal relations with local superheroes, making under-the-table arrangements to cooperate against mutual enemies (including obvious threats to the whole of humanity, like the Gadroon). These Nests, however, were in the minority. Some VIPER leaders feared the Demonflame Incident had "tamed" VIPER's image and that people no longer gave them the respect they deserved, so they went out of their way to commit crimes and wreak havoc on their home cities. In the words of Washington, D.C. Nest Leader Frank Detweiler: "Even when the snake is a benefactor, it still must be feared."

Cottonmouth

One of the people who was most heavily offended at the idea of a "kinder, gentler snake nation" was Frank Detweiler. For years a loyal agent of VIPER, Detweiler's ambitions took him to positions of greater power, wealth, and influence as the years wore on. He finally gained control of VIPER's prestigious Washington, D.C. Nest in 1982, but that wasn't enough to satisfy him. By 1990 he had wiggled his way into control of eight major Nests in Washington, Maryland, Virginia, and the Carolinas. Detweiler was now one of the key players in VIPER.

But pride goeth before a fall. Detweiler's operations taxed the Nest's resources to the limit. He sent his men on too many dangerous operations in too short a time; to replace the men he lost on raids, he took in more men than he could adequately screen, and his Nests became riddled with moles. He also made superhumans his lieutenants, for he thought the sight of the VIPER Commander standing tall and proud next to men of wonder elevated his status. His





favorite superhuman was Cottonmouth, who could talk a great game and who was (at least in his own mind) one of VIPER's greatest military leaders.

In 1990, Detweiler finally decided to make his move. He launched an invasion of Washington, D.C., hoping to seize the White House, the Capitol, and the Supreme Court in one bold stroke. But the authorities were alerted to the operation; not only did they foil it, they made a well-prepared counterstrike. They captured most of Detweiler's attacking force before it could even threaten its targets, then they invaded Detweiler's Nests.

The authorities tried to access Serpentine, but only a handful of people knew the control codes. Detweiler wouldn't talk. Cottonmouth, the other person who knew the access codes, sang like a canary. Feeling pressured and threatened at the prospect of a long prison sentence, Cottonmouth agreed to cooperate with the authorities in every way possible. Using the information he provided, PRIMUS and other government agencies launched a massive raid against over fifty Nests. Overnight, VIPER was wiped out on the East Coast and in the mid-western United States. Cottonmouth also turned state's evidence at trial and implicated some of the backers of VIPER who lurked behind the scenes, including a prominent businessman and a politician. The United States government even indicted one of the Thirty Founders.

VIPER was on the verge of unraveling (though it did manage to have Cottonmouth killed). Nests unhooked themselves from the Serpentine Network and completely divorced themselves from the chain of command. The Thirty Founders (a name that was no longer appropriate, for many of its members were the heirs of the original Founders and their hands had not been touched by the Lantern) panicked. VIPER devoted many of its resources during the next two years to replacing its infrastructure in the United States, and lost the chance to seize control of the nations which arose after the collapse of the Soviet Bloc — a loss now considered the greatest "missed opportunity" in VIPER history.

VIPER'S REBIRTH

In 1992, Nama, sensing the turmoil among his children, again intervened. In suspended animation in his cave was a British explorer, the long missing Edgar Lancelyn Essec. During his sleep, Nama whispered words of wisdom into his ear, teaching him how to be a master of men. Now he let Essec loose from his coils, and Essec went forth and took control of VIPER. The Thirty Founders became the Supreme Serpent's Council Of Thirty.

The first thing Essec did was develop a new Serpentine Network, which all VIPER Nests were forced to install in their main headquarters. To gain the confidence of the Nests, VIPER landed an airplane in downtown Manhattan, and the Supreme Serpent publicly announced that the plane's computer had details on his identity and location, as well as an account bearing one billion dollars in cash. If any hacker who entered the plane could decrypt the account within six hours, not only could the authorities capture the Supreme Serpent, the hacker could transfer the account and keep it for himself. On the other hand, if any hacker took longer than six hours to decrypt the file, or tried to leave the plane after he entered, or removed the computer, a lethal poison would flood the plane. After three of the FBI's best hackers died trying to crack the Serpent's encryption scheme, the Nests were convinced; VIPER had scored a major propaganda victory and the Supreme Serpent won the loyalty of most of VIPER's Nests — and those that didn't follow Essec's directives were quickly wiped out.

Essec also restored VIPER to its early level of technical innovation (and cruelty, for the new VIPER had no problems with human experimentation when it served "the greater good of the snake"). Numerous new weapons and vehicles were produced. But the Supreme Serpent's most sweeping changes were to the nature of the VIPER agent

NAMA

Nama is *not* the Supreme Serpent, and it's a mistake to think of him as such. He's a god-like figure in the classical sense: full of mischief and malice, but also benign when he's in the right mood or his interests are at stake. But he doesn't rule VIPER or direct its policies. In fact, if he intervenes in VIPER affairs more than once a decade, he's being unusually active.

Nama was quite relieved that VIPER prevented the resurrection of Sharna-Gorak, for this was the major reason he had brought the Founders together. With his prophetic abilities, Nama saw that great powers would become active in the world after the 1960s, and that for the first time in millennia, humans would walk the earth who had the power to destroy him. In truth, the main reason VIPER was brought together was to serve as an unwitting bodyguard for a very frightened god.

This book does not include a character sheet for Nama — even if the heroes somehow discover and directly confront him, he won't become involved in battle. In addition to being a giant, 50,000 year old snake, Nama possesses a *very* large Variable Power Pool (magic), which he can use to avoid a fight.

To those few people who have heard of him in the Champions Universe, Nama is known only as an obscure African snake god. The authorities know some VIPER Nests have turned to snake worship, but associate it with "voodoo cults trying to gain a foothold in VIPER." A

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few archaeologists know VIPER has actively sought artifacts associated with the snake god Nama, and some in the Mystic World know Nama exists — but no one outside the Council Of Thirty knows VIPER's patron is actually the wise and terrifying snake god of West Africa. (And in fact, not even all members of the Thirty know about Nama.)

Nama has three known offspring, but only two are named. One is Viperia (page 152). The second is the Serpent Of The Lantern, a spirit-snake who dwells within the Serpent Lantern, emerging only at its father's behest. The third scion is reserved for you to work into your own campaign, or for a player to incorporate into a character's background. (There's no reason a hero can't secretly be the estranged son of Nama — happens all the time in the comics.)

himself. Before Essec became the Supreme Serpent, VIPER had degenerated into a bunch of criminals in green-and-yellow costumes who were out to rob the establishment and become rich. After Essec took over, things changed in two fundamental ways that, to many older members, harked back to the earliest days of the organization.

First, VIPER adopted a more military demeanor for its agents' costuming and training. VIPER took young criminals and ne'er-do-wells and turned them into professional-grade criminal-soldiers. The average VIPER agent of today is a far more responsive, educated, disciplined, and capable individual than the average VIPER agent of 1992.

Second, to help indoctrinate the new generation of VIPER agent, VIPER became more like a cult. The leaders encouraged agents to "embrace the serpent within," take snake venom to develop immunities, and keep poisonous snakes as pets. VIPER's veneration of snakes sometimes took on religious overtones: many VIPER agents now see themselves as members of the Nest of the Great Serpent, and their beliefs lend them a fanaticism that makes them much more dangerous opponents than pre-1992 VIPER agents. (Some veteran agents, who see brainwashed kids streaming into VIPER with their strange beliefs, shake their heads and wonder just what they're teaching these days at VIPER Academy.)

Operation Fever Dream

To further announce VIPER's return to the world stage, in 1994 the Supreme Serpent initiated an uncharacteristically open and flamboyant scheme: Operation Fever Dream. Harking back to VIPER's nature under DeVries as a quasi-terrorist organization, Fever Dream consisted of a fairly simple plan — biological warfare bombs hidden in locations in several major American and world cities to hold those cities "hostage" pending the payment of multibillion dollar ransoms. Over five tense days in July, the world waited anxiously as superheroes and the authorities struggled against VIPER, trying desperately to stop the impending apocalypse. Two nations, France and Mexico, actually paid the ransom, though some question remains as to whether the governments or certain wealthy private individuals actually made the payments. By the narrowest of margins, the angels won; the heroes defeated VIPER and saved millions of people from a lingering, painful death.

But the Serpent did not lose. Even his most overt plot contained a hidden agenda. The real purpose of Operation Fever Dream was not to obtain ransom money, but to study and evaluate the strength and efficiency of VIPER's enemies. The organization's scientists and scholars carefully observed the superheroes and law enforcement groups fighting it, gathering valuable tactical data in the process. VIPER sacrificed some assets, including the supervillains Smoke and Mirrors (twin mutants with powers of darkness and illusion), but considered the information it obtained well worth the price. It also allowed the Supreme Serpent to assess VIPER's tactical strengths and weaknesses.

War In Europe

Following Operation Fever Dream, Essec made one major change to VIPER's goals. He ordered that no Nest should ever launch a campaign of open conquest in the United States, Canada, or Western Europe unless authorized by the Council Of Thirty. He wanted to leave those regions in (relative) peace so they could serve as cash cows for the remainder of VIPER's operations... until VIPER could conquer them with overwhelming force. Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa were another matter entirely. But at least in Europe, one major rival stood in VIPER's way: Eurostar.

VIPER decided to wipe Eurostar out. In 1996, it used a telepath to control one of Eurostar's most highly trusted contacts, then lured the team into an ambush. A number of VIPER special operatives and teams (including the Serpent's hand-picked VMS-Alpha team) launched an assault. Their primary target was Fiacho, but Bora (perhaps at Mentalla's psionic behest) threw herself in the way of the barrage, and was killed. The Whip also died in the attack, but the rest of Eurostar escaped, vowing revenge.

What followed were two years of bloodshed and collateral damage not seen in Europe since Dr. Destroyer's 1980 rampage in Berlin. Eurostar destroyed three Nests and killed dozens of agents in Prague, Munich, and Amsterdam. VIPER inflicted a few injuries on Eurostar, but failed to kill any more of its members. Finally, VIPER and Eurostar called a truce in 1998, and VIPER allegedly ceded its dream of dominating Europe to Fiacho and company. But VIPER used the chaos of the VIPER-Eurostar War to insinuate agents into the European intelligence community, especially in France, so it did not fare as poorly as it might have.

The final battle of the VIPER-Eurostar War is also noteworthy because it was the first public appearance of VIPER's ultimate weapon — Viperia, daughter of the Serpent. Some suspect it was Viperia's unexpected show of force persuaded Eurostar to agree to a truce.

VIPER TODAY

Today, with more effective direction, more highly trained and better armed agents than ever, and the most extensive resources it has ever had, VIPER is one of the most serious threats to world peace and security. The serpent has its coils on every continent, and may soon have access to outer space. If VIPER were a country, its technological production and military might would place it among the top twenty nations on earth (and without the expense of health and social programs). Its infrastructure is pernicious and almost impossible to completely uproot; its head is extremely well protected in his African stronghold. The Supreme Serpent has boasted that "when you crush the head of one snake, two eggs hatch," and as far as the authorities are concerned, it's a boast that's proving increasingly accurate.



VIPER: chapter two

A THOUSAND VENOMS

VIPER GOALS AND PHILOSOPHY



“Human nature is predatory, and rather than reject it, we should recognize it for the virtue that is. Is the scavenger capable of greatness? Never! Only the predator achieves anything of value, so we must cultivate our predatory nature whenever possible.

“So what is a VIPER agent? Criminal? Terrorist? Snake? We are all these things, and much, much more. VIPER is a forge where human weaknesses are milled and hammered until they’re turned into strengths. In VIPER, lies, fear, and hate — normally the qualities of cowards and weaklings — become tools to improve the human species.”

—Augur Maxwell,
Commandant, VIPER Academy

To those who wear the green and yellow uniform of a VIPER agent, VIPER is a religion, and they are its apostles. For many years, they were pirates who plundered society for personal gain. In recent years, though, this has changed. The current VIPER isn’t just a criminal organization — it is a belief system, a way of life. Its primary goal, like any great and aggressive religion, is to convert the world to the truth — VIPER’s version of the truth.

The truth according to VIPER is as follows: humanity in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, instead of wisely husbanding its resources and improving itself, has squandered its birthright and become pathetic and weak. But that time is passing. Now is the time of the snake, and of the serpent within man. Serpents know the strong can only survive at the expense of the weak. Serpents realize the virtues of civilized society — honor, charity, and compassion — are merely excuses used by parasites and the incompetent to maintain their existence, and that humanity would be better off without them. Since VIPER rejects human “weaknesses,” its members are the elite. They tell themselves their spirit is “pure,” and that they’re the best that humanity has to offer, because they have removed society’s lies from their souls.

It requires a lot of indoctrination to get a person to reject most of his values (even people from backgrounds as tragic as that of the average VIPER agent), but VIPER long ago became skilled at brainwashing. VIPER even tells its agents they’re being brainwashed, “for you must be burned in a crucible before you can remove society’s cancerous influences from your soul.” In short, VIPER fosters a culture of contempt for ordinary citizens and the “heroes” who protect

them, making criminal traits into “virtues” to improve organizational morale.

VIPER also perpetuates the Supreme Serpent’s cult of personality. His (helmeted) image, portrayed using a number of classical and fascist motifs, hangs in a proud and prominent location in most VIPER Nests. VIPER commanders frequently address their troops with a Roman style chest-pounding salute and the exclamation: “Mighty is VIPER, Supreme is the Snake!” VIPER holds the Supreme Serpent up to all agents as the ideal man — perfect in mind and body, and absolute embodiment of VIPER’s ideals. VIPER has woven an elaborate body of myth and false histories around him: how he often sneaks into UNTIL headquarters, strangles UNTIL agents, and leaves unscathed; how Dr. Destroyer retreated from him; how Menton bowed down before him to acknowledge “his perfect mind”; how he’s a master of snake magic as well as science, and can raise particularly effective VIPER agents from the dead. VIPER exposes agents to these tales at VIPER Academy, but reinforces them with daily briefings and propaganda showings. Many VIPER agents really believe the Supreme Serpent is invincible.

Ultimately, though, VIPER’s philosophy is just a means to an end, and that end is power. The Supreme Serpent and Augur Maxwell (who can take credit for much of VIPER’s current perspective) believe that for VIPER to transform (*i.e.*, conquer) society, it first must break society, like a colt or a new recruit. VIPER calls this its “snake dance” policy: just as a snake cautiously dances and gauges its enemy with subtle motions before it strikes, VIPER carefully measures society before striking at its jugular.

AGENTS’ GOALS

The goals of each individual VIPER agent vary. The most heavily indoctrinated “snakes” just want to belong to something bigger than themselves — something that makes them feel tough and powerful, that lets them hurt people with impunity. Most VIPER agents also have a streak of pragmatism and greed — they want good pay (money), they want respect from their Nest Leader and fellow agents, and they want to enjoy the good life.

Most Nest Leaders belong to VIPER for even more selfish reasons. They like it when they can treat the city as their piggy bank, spread fear and terror throughout the populace, take revenge against an element of society that wronged them

in the past, or perform a favor for VIPER's leaders in exchange for credits (which they use to purchase deadlier weapons, better vehicles, and the like.)

For most campaigns, a good general rule is that a VIPER Nest's complement should follow standard criminal motivations, but have an agent or two who *aren't* as predictable. These agents have hidden agendas ranging from revenge against another VIPER agent, to a desire to become a snake-man or technologically gifted super, to a PRIMUS agent's kid brother trying to prove himself to his family by taking down the local Nest.

VIPER'S CURRENT PROJECTS

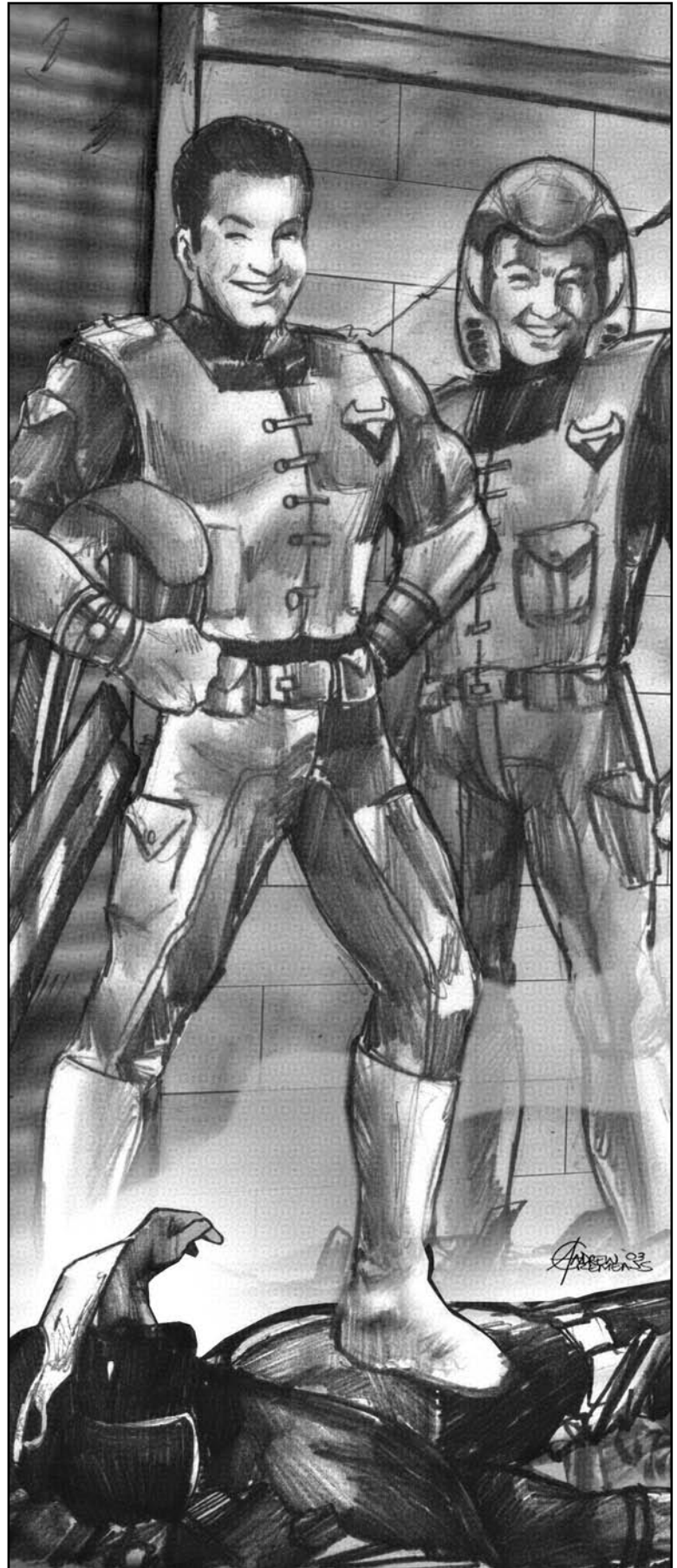
VIPER's Council Of Thirty, on the other hand, is far more ambitious than the average Nest. The "High Serpents" have many special projects in the works, from weapons research, to the assassination of enemies, to control of the world economy. You can read about the scientific/technological ones on page 131; a few other major ones include:

The Black Page Project: Not an officially sanctioned VIPER project, this is an informal competition by Nests in the United States to get the most print coverage of their crimes. The participating Nests each put \$250,000 into a pool, choose three non-competing Nests at random to judge, and select five national newspapers and magazines as the bellwether. Whichever Nest gets the most ink about its exploits within the defined time period wins the pool.

Project Paragon: A scientific analysis of human victory and the genetic, psychological, and probability-manipulation factors that make people go into unlikely situations and emerge victorious. This extensive project involves kidnapping champion athletes, authors, artists, and academics and taking DNA and brain scan samples, combined with various soft science analyses of crisis conditions and how people perform in them. This particular project is Lorelei Tannhauser's baby; she hopes that by isolating "the Champion Factor," she can engineer a retrovirus to turn her (and her private guard) into natural champions — people who can emerge victorious from the worst situations.

Project Scavenger: An ongoing search for artifacts from VIPER's mystical past, especially the Serpent Lantern of Nama, which was lost because of the actions of Dr. Destroyer. Unbeknownst to the rest of the organization, the Supreme Serpent has learned the location of the Lantern. But he knows if he reveals this fact, the Council Of Thirty will force him (and other newcomers) to swear an oath of loyalty to VIPER. He'd rather not weaken his position that way, preferring to maintain the capacity to betray his underlings and otherwise act as he sees fit.

VIPER: LIVING THE DREAM



VIPER: THE UNPLEASANT REALITY



OPERATION HUMAN POTENTIAL

Some people wonder why VIPER hasn't made a more concerted effort to conquer the world, given its massive paramilitary resources. The answer: the conquest — Operation Human Potential — is a work in progress. Broken down into projects code-named New Venom, Spearhead, Shadow, Neptune, and Unity, it's just the first part of the Supreme Serpent's plans for power.

Project New Venom: The upgrade of the average VIPER soldier to even higher performance standards (as agreed on by both the Supreme Serpent and Serpent-General Warren Cliffe) and the establishment of a large, elite VIPER Force directly under the Supreme Serpent's command. Some in VIPER believe the organization has done well enough at this project to declare it a success, though the Supreme Serpent seems to think the VIPER force is not yet large enough.

Project Spearhead: The development of VIPER weapons of mass destruction. Spearhead has not attempted to create nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons — such things tend to make the West nervous, and the Supreme Serpent feels he can obtain those weapons from rogue nations at the appropriate time. Instead, Project Spearhead investigates a number of technological breakthroughs regarding “doomsday weapons.” The ones it's expending the most effort on include the Orbital Blaster Cannon and a Seismic Bomb, but it will gladly research others. (See page 132 for more information.)

Project Shadow: VIPER's search for a “cloaking device” — an energy-efficient invisibility screen large enough to shield Nests and vehicles from visual and radio detection. When VIPER can quickly establish hidden bases, it can *greatly* expand its operations.

Project Shadow has enjoyed some significant successes. It has established several prototype Nests with invisibility cloaks, but it cannot yet keep the cloaks stable or reduce their power consumption to acceptable levels. But the project has yielded one major dividend — the Stealth Matrix Suit (page 116) evolved as a byproduct of Shadow experiments.

Project Neptune: VIPER's plan to gain a presence in outer space. The first step of this plan is the production of VIPER Shuttle-1. Once it's perfected this technology, VIPER will train some of its pilots to become VIPER's first generation of astronauts. Once VIPER has access to outer space, combined with orbital weapons created by Project Spearhead cloaked with stealth technology developed by Project Shadow, it can strike whenever it likes.

Project Unity: VIPER's search for a secure political base. Rather than attacking the United States and the western world, Project Unity wishes to unite much of Western and Central Africa into a large empire. VIPER has exploited many of the conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa to recruit a new generation of soldiers and gain access to

vast reserves of mineral wealth, thus gaining a significant foothold in the region. Within several years, VIPER hopes to sponsor from behind the scenes a “regional peace conference” to serve as the catalyst for the VIPER Nation. Two things hold this Project back: first, VIPER hasn’t found an appropriately charismatic figurehead who can unite these countries; second, Joseph Otanga of Lugendu has proven to be an unexpectedly implacable enemy to VIPER’s efforts to dominate the region.

When VIPER completes all five projects of Operation Human Potential, it plans to launch *Operation Human Achievement*, its euphemistically-named campaign of world conquest. Its armies will sweep north out of Africa into Europe, capturing France, Spain, and Italy before bombing the rest of Europe into submission. It will indoctrinate conquered peoples into VIPER using established techniques, thereby gaining millions of new soldiers. Simultaneously, VIPER will use its orbital weapons to take out key targets in America, Russia, and China; it also plans to use squads of superhumans to neutralize the world’s nuclear weapon arsenal by securing missile launch sites. Without the ability to respond tactically, the world’s governments will quickly fall before VIPER’s technological superiority.

OPERATION HUMAN DESTINY

VIPER’s third major planned project is code-named *Operation Human Destiny*. It involves two phases: *Project Mars* is the Supreme Serpent’s planned interstellar campaign of conquest against the Mandaarians and any other nearby alien species; the other, *Project Cold Iron*, is the Supreme Serpent’s planned invasion of the Faerie Realm and the closing of all magical conduits to “dark dimensions” (along with the elimination of anyone with the ability to reopen them).

Yes, Essec is an imperialist on *that* big a scale.

THE TWENTY SCALES OF VIPER

Augur Maxwell, Commandant of VIPER Academy, is also VIPER’s philosophical guru. When he developed the curriculum of VIPER Academy, he created the *Twenty Scales* — twenty sayings that encapsulate the VIPER philosophy. To graduate from VIPER Academy, all agents must recite all Twenty Scales... while undergoing torture.

1. Life is Struggle; Victory is All.
2. The inability to endure pain is Defeat; the ability to inflict pain, Victory.
3. Bring pain unto others, before they can bring pain unto you.
4. Honor is just another weakness to exploit.
5. Weakness is meant to be exploited or destroyed as ruthlessly as possible.
6. Society is weak and deserves to be conquered by VIPER.
7. Take pleasure in the breaking of weak things.
8. Always strike against your enemies, but never strike from a vulnerable position.
9. Defeat your enemies in both mind and body.
10. Decadence is the father of discontent in those that have, of envy in those that have not. Use it wisely.
11. Feed your enemy a diet of falsehoods, but never accept anything but the truth from him.
12. The wise snake always has a locked back door... and the only key to it.
13. Suffering is life, as long as you’re not the one doing the suffering.
14. Cultivate cynicism like a garden, for heroes cannot live in it.
15. Ignorance is preferable to paranoia in one’s enemies, but paranoia has its uses.
16. Always keep a sharp blade in hand. You never know when you’ll need to slit someone’s throat.
17. Know your enemies, for only when you know someone well can you truly hold them in contempt.
18. Respect and obey the Supreme Serpent, for he will crush you if you do not.
19. There are two types of people: snakes and rats. Snakes eat rats. It’s better to be a snake.
20. The new millennium belongs to VIPER.

VIPER RECRUITMENT



One of the things people wonder most about VIPER is: “Where the hell do they find all those agents? Don’t you have to be brain damaged to put on that costume and go out and fight honest-to-god superheroes?”

The truth is, VIPER has numerous sources of potential agents. First, there’s the military. VIPER sources get a list of individuals who leave military service in the United States, Canada, Great Britain, and elsewhere; they also spend a lot of effort trying to access military records, looking for dishonorable discharges and personnel with discipline problems. VIPER also monitors Internet message boards frequented by servicemen and their ilk. At all times it looks for signs of contempt for government and authority, greed, violent tendencies, or other personality traits that might make an individual a target for recruitment. VIPER likes recruiting ex-military personnel because they’re already accustomed to the sort of training and discipline VIPER provides.

Second, there’s prison. If someone’s committed two or more violent crimes and has just gotten out of prison, there’s a good chance VIPER’s keeping an eye on him and may try to recruit him. In fact, VIPER may recruit a prisoner before he’s released. More than one prison has an underground network of incarcerated VIPER agents (and guards who owe their loyalty to VIPER) who evaluate new prisoners and direct the best candidates into the organization. Worse, however, are VIPER-sponsored jailbreaks. VIPER has caused numerous small escapes since its inception, but the most serious actions involve VIPER raids on major penal institutions. Three times in the last ten years, VIPER launched full-scale assaults on prisons and freed hundreds of prisoners, many of whom then received plastic surgery, new identities, and a spot in the next class at VIPER Academy.

Third, there are the ranks of disgruntled scientists, academics, and technicians. The collapse of the Soviet Union has left numerous scientists without the resources they need to conduct their experiments, and scientists working for restrictive regimes like North Korea may prefer the comparative freedom of a VIPER laboratory. More than one scientist has abandoned conventional society in favor of VIPER when scorned by other scientists — or when prevented from conducting “proper experimentation and analysis” due to “idiotically restrictive” regulations regarding safety and human testing. The scientific freedom VIPER offers these renegades is an intoxicating lure.

Finally, but perhaps most importantly in the long term, there’s the Third World (and, similarly,

inner cities in the United States). While life in VIPER may not be the epitome of Western comfort and leisure, it’s light-years better than dying of starvation, disease, or genocide; to millions of potential VIPER recruits from the Third World, life as a VIPER agent promises immense wealth, power, and opportunities compared to staying home. Despite the Supreme Serpent’s general disdain for “lesser peoples,” recent waves of “immigrants” to VIPER from Africa, Asia, Russia, and South America have invigorated VIPER and greatly expanded its manpower resources. If these recruits already have useful skills from early careers in organized crime, the military, or espionage, so much the better.

VIPER’s philosophy appeals far more to men than to women. Nonetheless, VIPER goes out of its way to recruit competent female agents, since VIPER needs strong female leaders to achieve its goal of world conquest. VIPER Nests remain overwhelmingly male, but not exclusively — though most female agents have to act more male than male to survive in the rough environment of a Nest. According to UNTIL, female VIPER agents are even more vicious than their male counterparts.

RECRUITMENT PROCEDURES

When VIPER spots a potential recruit, a recruiter subtly tests him for philosophical compatibility with VIPER’s goals, then determines the recruit’s attitude toward VIPER. If the potential recruit seems in synch with VIPER generally, he gets “tagged,” in organization parlance — he receives a recruitment pitch. If he rejects the offer, VIPER has him killed. If he accepts — and most do — VIPER extracts him from society and tests his physical and mental strength (see page 48). Those who fail these tests are killed. Those who pass (which most recruits do) are sent to VIPER Academy (see below) for training. Those who undergo the training but fail to meet the Academy’s physical and mental standards are usually killed, but if VIPER fears someone will notice that a recruit permanently “disappeared,” it may brainwash him and return him to the world.

Recruits who graduate from the Academy receive an assignment to a Nest. The Nest arranges a new identity for the agent, finds him a cover job (that is, a place where he pretends to work while really performing VIPER duties), and pays the agent wages and benefits using the cover job as a smokescreen. VIPER agents receive a broad package of health, dental, and funerary benefits, as well as various investment options such as 401Ks.

If a VIPER agent works for 10-20 years without being imprisoned for life, maimed, or killed,

he usually gets to retire to a planned community, either in Florida or (in the case of agents who pose a security risk) a beautiful (but utterly isolated) Caribbean island known as Ophidia. To date, VIPER has kept the existence of these retirement communities totally secret from law enforcement.

VIPER ACADEMY

In a resort town in southern Wisconsin, not far from Milwaukee, there's a newly built planned community named "Honor, Wisconsin." The centerpiece of the community is a large complex called "The Greene Hill Lodge and Spa." It claims to be the latest in modern resorts for overstressed business travelers, but it's actually a front for VIPER. The community is a VIPER base, and the Lodge is actually VIPER Academy, the place where all VIPER recruits go to become full-fledged VIPER agents.

This is the third incarnation of VIPER Academy. Two other installations were busted by UNTIL (including VIPER's so-called "Cobra College," a raised island in the Caribbean) in 1992, and the Champions located and destroyed a lesser college in Millennium City in 2000. The authorities know VIPER has built a new training facility, but no one has figured out its location yet.

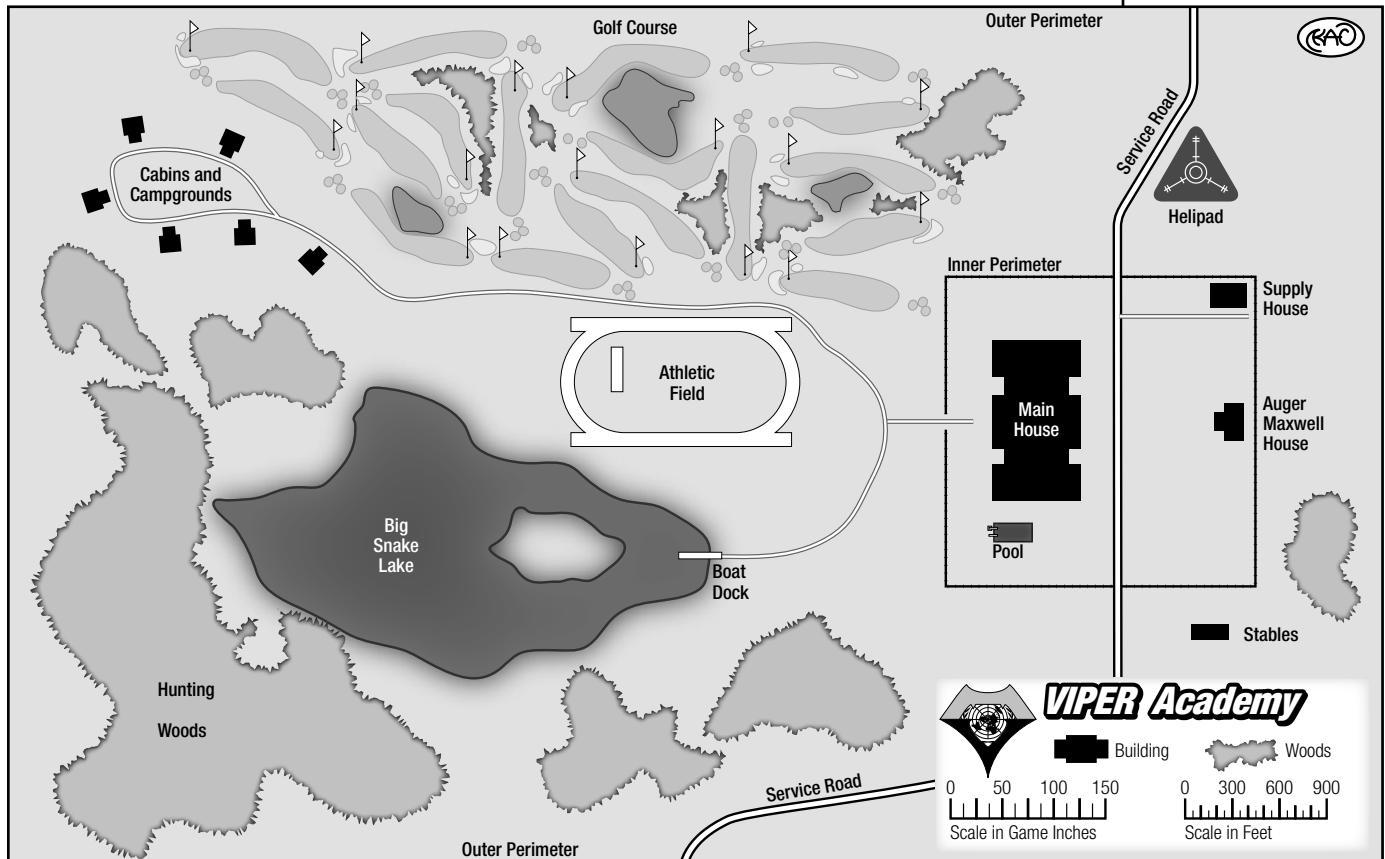
Honor, WI has a population of 800. Thirty of its citizens, all community leaders, are full-fledged members of VIPER, but VIPER has conditioned *all* Honor residents to serve it. They're (excessively) friendly, but do their damndest to get visitors out of town as quickly as possible, and report all strangers to the mayor. The mayor of Honor (also the

head of the spa and the Academy Superintendent) is Augur Maxwell, one of the cruelest and most influential people in VIPER.

All VIPER cadets who pass through town receive pseudonyms and alterations on their records to conceal the fact they stayed there. The cover of a "planned community" has worked extraordinarily well to hide VIPER's presence — perhaps the authoritarian nature of such communities does a better job of masking VIPER than anything else VIPER could have chosen.

VIPER Academy has a large underground facility and wide areas of woodlands. The spa has a pool, a golf course, and Big Snake Lake. Security remains extremely tight at all times: in addition to a very tall barbed wire fence surrounding the entire complex, hidden cameras cover virtually every inch of ground. Agents dressed like rent-a-cops and wielding conventional firearms guard the outer perimeter; inner perimeter security includes not only more guards, but concealed automated blasters controlled by agents from inside the underground facility.

VIPER brings prospective agents into the main spa area, where it pampers them for two to three days. The pampering actually serves as cover for elaborate mental conditioning, which includes drugs and hours of exposure to subliminal messages. Once VIPER feels it's properly primed the would-be agent, it transfers him to "The Snake Factory," a complex located under Big Snake Lake. Here, agents receive indoctrination, an extensive and grueling 24-week training regimen, and (in the most radical cases) even low-grade mutagenic treatments designed to improve them physically



VIPER ACADEMY
PLOT SEEDS

Someone has stolen an endangered Eastern Indigo Snake (a non-poisonous snake native to the American south-east that can grow up to eight feet in length) from a herpatorium in Milwaukee. Upon investigating, the heroes can trace it to the reptile shop in Honor, Wisconsin, where the insane, snake-loving owner keeps a large collection of illegally-obtained reptiles in his personal zoo.

A friend of the PCs decides to try out a new spa. After returning home, he or she has said some (possibly) uncharacteristically fascist things, and is having late night meetings with disreputable-looking people.

A publisher has gotten his hands on a copy of VIPER's philosophical handbook and plans to publish it, believing controversy will generate a best seller. Friends of one of the PCs want them to intervene and stop this. The PCs must debate the merits of freedom of the press versus the harm the book could do as a recruiting tool, especially after they learn that VIPER's Serpent Mages plan to cast a spell to make the books "magically persuasive."

and mentally (sometimes to near peak-human levels). Criminals with recognizable features receive cosmetic surgery and new identities.

They're also tortured without mercy. Augur Maxwell believes a person can only find his true self when someone pushes him to his physical limits. When someone's "true self" does not meet with Augur Maxwell's approval, he disposes of the "failed recruit" as described above. Those who pass Augur's tests become VIPER agents and leave the Academy for a Nest.

Some features of the Snake Factory include:

Main House: Guests stay in the main house. The building resembles a large nineteenth century hacienda, with twenty bedrooms, several luxury suites, libraries, saunas, weight rooms, ballrooms, a movie theater, and other luxury accommodations. A secret elevator to the basement leads to a security room (where all cameras feed to, and from which agents can fire all automated weapons) and an access tunnel to the "Snake Factory."

Big Snake Lake: The name predates VIPER by decades. Beneath Big Snake Lake is a huge, well-armed VIPER complex, complete with training facilities. There are three entrances: the previously mentioned tunnel; a tunnel that leads to a hangar bay located below the helipad; and a "lake scoop" for boats (a shaft comes out of the bottom of the lake, and boats and hydrofoils may drive down it).

Maxwell's House: Augur's residence is fairly ordinary, and rather spartan. He does have a perfectly manicured zen garden, a huge collection of West African art, and a basement filled with dozens of poisonous snakes, which he raises in his spare time.

Supply House: Over a dozen vehicles, with VIPER markings, and an arsenal of VIPER weapons and ammunition are stored here.

Helipad: VIPER stations an unmarked helicopter here at all times, but the pad opens to reveal a cavernous hangar below where VIPER stores six of its aircraft.

Golf Course: This eighteen hole course is particularly well monitored; its security features include hidden land mines (which agents in the Main House's security room can arm and activate electronically).

Cabins and Campgrounds: With the press of a switch in the security room or the cabin itself, each

A DAY IN THE LIFE...

At VIPER Academy, a typical day of basic training consists of the following:

05:00	Wake up
05:15-05:30	Inspection
05:30-06:15	Morning mess
06:00-08:00	Twelve-mile run
08:00-08:30	Flogging (of anyone who failed the course, or whoever finished last in the run)
08:30-08:45	Snake-feeding and -handling training
08:45-09:00	Paramedics training
09:00-11:00	Physical Endurance training (also known as pain resistance and torture techniques classes)
11:00-11:30	Break (although this is usually canceled so the trainees can clean the facilities)
11:30-13:00	Indoctrination (agents watch training videos in a VR environment, with drug treatments often administered)
13:00-13:45	Lunch mess
13:45-14:00	Inspection
14:00-15:00	Weapons training
15:00-16:00	Tactical drill (elaborate paintball-like games with toned-down blasters)
16:00-17:30	Technical training
17:30-18:15	Evening mess
18:15-19:00	Recreational break (see previous Break)
19:00-21:00	Close combat training
21:00-23:30	VIPER inspirational speeches, testimonials from guests on how weak and corrupt the enemy is (and how wonderful VIPER is), news, rewards to outstanding students, and other entertainment.
23:45	Bed

Agents who return to VIPER Academy to upgrade their skills to specialist (Elite) level receive appropriate specialty training in lieu of physical endurance training, tactical drills, and the first half of close combat training.

cabin converts into a small bunker with thick walls and emplaced weapons capable of hurting even a superhero.

Stables: A stable of twelve thoroughbreds, completely normal.

Pool: This connects to a shark tank, hidden in the basement of the hacienda. Maxwell can release the shark into the pool to kill unwanted guests.

AUGUR MAXWELL

20 STR	20 DEX	20 CON	15 BODY
18 INT	20 EGO	23 PRE	20 COM
13 PD	13 ED	4 SPD	10 REC
40 END	40 STUN		

Abilities: Telepathy 12d6, Requires Eye Contact (-¼); Major Transform 2d6 (mental, give people false memories); Mental Defense (24 points); Regeneration 1 BODY/Minute; Running +1"; Martial Arts (VIPER Brawling, all maneuvers); +2 with VIPER Blasters; +2 DCV; Only While Using VFL-4 Jetpack (-½); +1 versus Range Penalties with all Ranged Weapons; +3 with All Combat; KS: Criminal Law 12-, KS: The Local Underworld 11-, KS: The Piloting World 8-, KS: The Superhuman World 12-, KS: VIPER 13-, PS: VIPER Agent 13-, Acrobatics 13-, Animal Handler (Snakes) 15-, Breakfall 13-, Bureaucratics 14-, Combat Piloting 13-, Conversation 14-, Demolitions 13-, Gambling (Card Games) 13-, Interrogation 13-, Navigation 13-, Oratory 14-, Paramedic 13-, Persuasion 14-, PS: Instructor 14-, Security Systems 13-, Seduction 14-, Stealth 13-, Streetwise 13-, Systems Operation 13-, Survival (Arctic) 14-, Tactics 13-, Teamwork 12-, TF: VFL-4 VIPER Jetpack, WF: Small Arms, Blades; Fringe Benefit: Membership (VIPER)

200+ Disadvantages: Hunted: PRIMUS 8-; Hunted: VIPER 8- (Watching); Psychological Limitation: Messiah Complex; Psychological Limitation: Bully; Psychological Limitation: Snake-Worshipping Fanatic; Reputation: VIPER commander 8-; Social Limitation: Subject To Orders.

Notes: VIPER's philosophical guru and the head of VIPER Academy, Augur Maxwell was actually born in the lost city of Arcadia, home of the Emphyreans. His father was a Greek air force captain (and covert VIPER agent) sent to investigate rumors of the lost city of Arcadia in the early 1970s. His mother was the Lady Laureanus of the Emphyrean city, who found Maxwell's father Demetri when his plane crashed. After the Arcadians erased his memories to protect their hidden realm, Demetri took Laureanus as his wife, and she gave birth to one child, a son named Augur.

Raised among the Emphyreans, Augur became well-versed in their lore; because of his mother's heritage, he received some measure of the Emphyreans' natural telepathic abilities. When he became an adult, he used these powers to see through the barriers the Emphyreans placed in his father's mind, and in so doing discovered his heritage was a lie. No longer willing to trust the Emphyreans, he fled Arcadia into the wider world.

The Emphyreans discovered his escape several days after he'd crept away. They used their telepathic powers to order him to return, but Augur responded only with contempt. Feeling they had no choice, the Emphyreans psionically attacked him and tried to rob him of his memory. They only partially succeeded — Augur forgot Arcadia's location and many of the details about its culture, but the rest of his memories, including his general bitterness and contempt for others, remained largely intact.

Eventually the young man made his way to

the civilized world, where he contacted his father's people "the Vipers." Augur was enthusiastically received by the VIPER organization, who trained him to become an agent. Maxwell became an exceptional agent (despite his cruel nature), and an outstanding leader who showed a natural talent for indoctrination — so much so the Supreme Serpent made him Commandant of VIPER Academy in 1998. Augur instituted numerous reforms to more effectively indoctrinate people into the ways of the Snake, and deserves a lot of credit for the current generation of competent, fanatical VIPER soldiers.

Augur maintains a cold demeanor. He looks like he's never had a hair out of place, let alone worn a wrinkled shirt or cracked a smile. He has no sense of humor. He either remains silent, or screams long ranting monologues as loud as his lungs can bellow. He's hard to rattle, but his temper is truly explosive, and when he explodes, he'll often kill someone around him in a fit of pique.

Augur is a dark-haired Caucasian male, 6'2" tall, weighing 230 pounds with an athletic build. He wears a three-piece suit and a green-gold tie. His wedding ring can project a VIPER holographic insignia when activated.

Augur possesses a specially crafted *Discipline Staff*, a cattle-prod staff with a head in the shape of a serpent. It does EB 6d6 NND (the defense is being insulated, or having natural electrical powers) and has 12 charges.



THE VIPER HIERARCHY



VIPER has not survived for decades by growing without restraint, or allowing its people to act freely and without responsibility for their conduct. The organization maintains a strict hierarchy of authority and command; once recruited and indoctrinated, a VIPER agent finds himself a part of an organization run as efficiently and ruthlessly as any corporation or government.

Like many other, more traditional, organized crime groups, VIPER has a pyramidal leadership structure. One overall ruler — the feared Supreme Serpent — controls the entire organization with the assistance of the Council Of Thirty. Beneath them are various Nests and ranks of agents all the way down to the typical Basic Agent who's so familiar to superheroes and law enforcement personnel around the world.



THE SUPREME SERPENT

Looming over all of VIPER stands the Supreme Serpent, the unquestioned leader of the entire organization. Agents whisper that he can see and hear everything that goes on in any Nest, and that he punishes even the slightest disobedience with horrible, agonizing death. But no one in the organization knows the full truth behind the man.

THE SUPREME SERPENT

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
25	STR	15	14-	Lift 800 kg; 5d6 [2]
24	DEX	42	14-	OCV: 8/DCV: 8
23	CON	26	14-	
18	BODY	16	13-	
30	INT	20	15-	PER Roll 15-
25	EGO	30	14-	ECV: 8
40	PRE	30	17-	PRE Attack: 8d6
14	COM	2	12-	
10	PD	5		Total: 22 PD (12 rPD)
10	ED	5		Total: 22 ED (12 rED)
5	SPD	16		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
10	REC	0		
46	END	0		
50	STUN	7		Total Characteristics Cost: 214

Movement:	Running:	9"/18"
	Leaping:	8"/16"
	Swimming:	4"/8"

Cost	Powers	END
71	<i>Supreme Serpent Signet Ring:</i> HKA 1 point, Penetrating (+½); IIF (-¼), No STR Bonus (-½) plus RKA 6d6, NND (defense is appropriate LS [Immunity: neurotoxins]; +1), Does BODY (+1); IIF (reservoir of poison within the ring; -¼), No Range (-½), 4 Charges (-1), HKA Must Do BODY (-½), Extra Time (onset time begins 1 Segment after victim is pricked; -½), Gradual Effect (6 Segments; 1d6/1 Segment; -¼)	1/[4]
64	<i>Poisoned Fingernail Blades:</i> HKA 1 point, Penetrating (+½); IIF (-¼), No STR Bonus (-½) plus RKA 4d6, NND (defense is appropriate LS [Immunity: ophidotoxins]; +1), Does BODY (+1); IIF (tiny concealed blades under the fingernails; -¼), No Range (-½), 4 Boostable Charges (-¾), HKA Must Do BODY (-½)	[4bc]
70	<i>The Breath Of Nama:</i> RKA 5d6, NND	

	(defense is appropriate LS [Immunity: haemotoxins]; +1), Does BODY (+1), Area Of Effect (One Hex; +½); IIF (false tooth; -¼), No Range (-½), 1 Charge (-2) [1]	3	Simulate Death 14-
55	<i>The Serpent's Coils</i> : Entangle 10d6, 15 DEF; IAF (tiny, concealable "pills"; -½), Range Based On STR (-¼), Cannot Form Barriers (-¼), 12 Charges (-¼) [12]	20	Skills
	<i>Martial Arts: Hebijutsu</i>	32	+2 Overall
	Maneuver OCV DCV Notes		+4 with All Combat
3	Constricting Snake Delighted By Its Prey -1 -1 Grab Two Limbs, 55 to STR for holding on	3	Acrobatics 14-
4	Serpent At the Throat -2 +0 Grab One Limb; 4d6 NND(2)	3	Acting 17-
4	Serpent's Fang Sinking Deep In Flesh -2 +0 HKA 2½d6	3	Analyze Style 15-
5	Serpent Suddenly Lashing Out From Shadow -2 +1 13d6 Strike	3	Breakfall 14-
3	Serpent Unexpectedly Underfoot +2 -1 10d6 Strike; Target Falls	3	Bribery 17-
4	Sinuous Serpent — +5 Dodge, Affects All Attacks, Abort	3	Bureaucrats 17-
4	Snake On Guard Against The Mongoose +2 +2 Block, Abort	3	Climbing 14-
4	Snake Wriggle +0 +0 60 STR vs. Grabs	3	Computer Programming 15-
4	Sudden Serpent Strike -1 +1 Disarm; 55 STR to Disarm roll	3	Conversation 17-
16	+4 Damage Classes (already added in)	3	Deduction 15-
30	<i>The Serpent's Strike</i> : Find Weakness 13- with Martial Arts 0	3	Electronics 15-
18	<i>Armored Clothes</i> : Armor (6 PD/6 ED), Hardened (+¼); IIF (-¼) 0	2	Gambling (Card Games) 15-
2	<i>The Blessing Of Nama</i> : Life Support (Longevity: ages at one-fourth normal rate) 0	3	High Society 17-
20	<i>Poisoner's Gift</i> : Life Support (Immunity: all terrestrial poisons, diseases, and chemical and biological warfare agents) 0	3	Interrogation 17-
1	<i>Trained Swimmer</i> : Life Support (Extended Breathing: 1 END per Minute) 0	3	Lipreading 15-
6	<i>Strong Runner</i> : Running +3" (9" total) 1	3	Mechanics 15-
3	<i>Strong Leaper</i> : Leaping +3" (8" forward, 4" upward) 1	3	Oratory 17-
2	<i>Strong Swimmer</i> : Swimming +2" (4" total) 1	3	Paramedics 15-
9	<i>Observant</i> : +3 PER with all Sense Groups 0	3	Persuasion 17-
25	<i>The Skilled Make Their Own Luck</i> : Luck 5d6 0	3	Riding 14-
	Perks	3	Seduction 17-
200	Contacts (various, throughout the world and underworld)	3	Shadowing 15-
10	Fringe Benefit: Membership (leader of VIPER)	3	Sleight Of Hand 14-
15	Money: Filthy Rich	7	Stealth 16-
	Talents	3	Streetwise 17-
9	Ambidexterity (no Off Hand penalty)	8	Survival (Deserts, Mountains, Temperate/Subtropical, Tropical) 15-
12	Combat Luck (6 PD/6 ED)	3	Systems Operation 15-
15	Combat Sense 15-	3	Tactics 15-
5	Eidetic Memory	3	Teamwork 14-
		3	Tracking 15-
		12	TF: Common Motorized Ground Vehicles, Riding Animals, VIPER Aircraft, VIPER Ground Vehicles, SCUBA, Skiing (Snow), Small Motorized Boats, Two-Wheeled Motorized Ground Vehicles
		9	WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons, Small Arms, Grenade Launchers, General Purpose/Heavy Machine Guns, Shoulder-Fired Weapons
		3	Linguist
		1	1) Afrikaans (fluent conversation; English is native)
		1	2) Bantu (fluent conversation)
		1	3) French (fluent conversation)
		1	4) German (fluent conversation)
		1	5) Hindi (fluent conversation)
		1	6) Mandarin Chinese (fluent conversation)
		1	7) Portuguese (fluent conversation)
		1	8) Punjabi (fluent conversation)
		1	9) Spanish (fluent conversation)
		1	10) Swahili (fluent conversation)
		3	Scholar
		2	1) KS: Art History 15-
		2	2) KS: British Literature 15-
		2	3) KS: British Peerage 15-
		2	4) KS: Organized Crime 15-
		4	5) KS: The Superhuman World 17-
		2	6) KS: Superpowers 15-

SUPREME SERPENT PLOT SEEDS

The preliminary rounds of the Tournament of the Dragon begin again as the time of the Tournament approaches. Deciding to test himself anonymously, the Supreme Serpent becomes involved in the fighting. What happens if he makes it to the final round? If he loses, will he call in a VIPER strike on the competition? What if he *wins*?

Realizing he can't live forever, the Supreme Serpent wants to groom his grandson Richard to replace him as VIPER's leader. Obviously, not everyone on the Council Of Thirty would agree to this, so he needs to eliminate any potential troublemakers while still keeping his hands "clean" in the eyes of the remaining members. He decides to trick the PCs into killing off the problem members.

Upon learning that the "respectable" members of his family, back in England, have fallen on hard times and are selling the family estates, the Supreme Serpent arranges to buy the estates and assume the family's title. What will happen when the Supreme Serpent has a rightful place in the House of Lords?

- 7 7) KS: VIPER 20-
- 2 8) KS: World History 15-
- 3 Traveler
- 5 1) AK: Africa 18-
- 2 2) CK: Calcutta 15-
- 2 3) AK: China 15-
- 2 4) AK: Europe 15-
- 3 5) AK: Great Britain 16-
- 2 6) CK: Hong Kong 15-
- 5 7) AK: India 18-
- 2 8) CK: London 15-
- 2 9) AK: Middle East 15-
- 2 10) AK: South America 15-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 936

Total Cost: 1,150

200+ Disadvantages

- 0 Dependence: must revisit the Cave of Nama about once a month and breathe its fumes to maintain his youthful state, or he'll start to quickly age and die (Uncommon)
- 25 Hunted: UNTIL 14- (As Pow, NCI, Capture)
- 25 Hunted: US Military And Law Enforcement 11- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
- 25 Psychological Limitation: Convinced Of His Own Superiority And Destiny To Rule Mankind (Very Common, Total)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Casual Killer (Common, Total)
- 5 Rivals: Professional, various high-ranking VIPER members who'd like to get rid of him and take his place (Rival is Less Powerful; Seek To Harm/Kill Rival)
- 15 Social Limitation: Secret Identity: Edgar Lancelyn Essec (Frequently, Major)
- 835 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 1,150

Background/History: The third son of a British duke, Edgar Lancelyn Essec was born into a world of wealth and privilege. Blessed with a keen intelligence and devilish good looks in addition to his social prominence, he also seemed cursed with a malign spirit. Time and again he abused his position and natural gifts to take advantage of people or get into mischief and then avoid punishment.

As he grew up, Edgar's "mischief" became more and more wicked. The family covered up several of his deeds, but eventually he caused a scandal even his father couldn't completely hide. In 1924, after Edgar was found to have done... things... to several maidservants at one of the Duke's country estates, his family disowned him and banished him from England.

Matching their contempt with his own scorn, Essec took ship for the hinterlands of the Empire, following in the footsteps of his grand-uncle, a nineteenth-century explorer. In Africa, and later India, he found a wilderness where he could do as he pleased and earn the respect and power he felt were due him because of his intelligence and skill. Although he married a South African woman and started a family, he was rarely at home; he preferred to roam the world, becoming an expert hunter,

explorer, and colonialist in the process.

To spite his family and show he didn't need their money, Essec started his own business ventures... often by using blackmail or murder to take over existing concerns or claims. In just a few years, he owned diamond mines in Africa, silver mines in India, numerous plantations, and other businesses, and the wealth was pouring in. He exploited his employees mercilessly, regarding them more as his subjects or slaves than paid laborers. In his view, the colonial model was the proper one; the lesser peoples of the world should bow down before and serve their superiors — meaning primarily himself.

When World War II began, Essec found himself torn between loyalty to his native lands and his vague sympathy for Nazi political ideals. He began to consider some way he could turn the whole war situation to his advantage and become even richer and more powerful than ever... when fate intervened.

One day, while hunting in the Mbang Mountains of West Africa, Essec saw what seemed to be an enormous serpent slither into a dark cave. Intrigued, he left his native bearers behind, made a crude torch out of a fallen branch, and followed the serpent inside.

The inside of the cave was so dark that his torch had little effect. He saw no signs of the serpent, so he stubbornly headed further into the earth. After he walked and crawled further in, his torch began to sputter and he realized the air smelled funny. Suddenly he felt woozy and light-headed; before he could turn around and leave the cave, he passed out.

He awakened a few minutes later, his head aching and his whole body tired and a little sore. He stumbled slowly out of the cave, guiding himself by touch since his torch had burned out. He emerged into the light of day and was infuriated to discover his bearers had deserted him! Swearing loudly that he would butcher every single one of them and their misbegotten families to boot, he walked slowly back to the nearest village.

There he received the shock of his life. The "village" was a town! In the space of a day it had grown — and there were natives driving cars! Where did the strange-looking autos come from, and who would be stupid enough to give one to a black?

It didn't take Essec too long to find out he'd slept a lot longer than he'd expected — *decades* longer. Somehow, the fumes in the cave that caused him to pass out in 1939 let him sleep, unchanged and unaged, until 1992!

Stealing a car, Essec made his way to South Africa. There he found his eldest son, Roger, now a man of advanced years, running the businesses Edgar himself had founded. An astonished Roger at first refused to believe Essec was his father, but after hearing Essec describe several incidents from Roger's childhood that only the two of them knew of, he had to acknowledge the truth of the matter.

The tale of the serpent and the cave intrigued Roger, and for more than the obvious reasons. Truly a son of his father, he had become involved in business at an early age, ruthlessly crushing sev-

eral competitors and not hesitating to use blatantly criminal means to get what he wanted. In 1954, Roger had been one of the Thirty Founders of VIPER, and he remained a leader in the organization. But VIPER was foundering; those who created it had lost control to the individual Nest Leaders, and the entire organization was in danger of dissolving due to internal conflict and the Cottonmouth Incident. Roger knew the time had come for a change... and in his father, he saw the instrument of that change. The serpent and cave were a sign from Nama, and VIPER must obey.

Roger introduced his father to the organization at the next meeting of the Thirty Founders. Most were skeptical, believing the whole story was just a plot concocted by Roger Essec to gain more power. But others, including the infamous Duchess, saw the spark of truth in Roger's words and Edgar's malevolent eyes. Here was the man who could reform VIPER and make it a power to be feared once more.

The believers turned their powers of persuasion on the skeptics, pointing out the similarities between what happened to Essec and what they saw in the vision Nama granted them back in 1954. Gradually they convinced several, as much by the argument that VIPER needed a strong single leader as by any other. Though none of them liked the idea of giving up any of his personal power, they recognized that if they didn't do something soon they'd have no personal power at all. When the die-hard unbelievers refused to give in, Essec arranged for their deaths — often bloody and painful, but always prominent. The ease with which he had them killed, despite his lack of an organization, agents, or full understanding of the modern world, persuaded the remainder he was in fact the one to lead them.

Over the next several years, Essec reorganized and revitalized VIPER. He changed the Thirty Founders to the Council Of Thirty, replacing the murdered members with worthy Nest Leaders and others he hand-picked. He brought the renegade Nests in line, often by the simple expedient of slaughtering the Nest Leaders and all of their men and giving the "franchise" to someone loyal to him. It didn't take long for everyone in VIPER to realize they'd be better off to go along with the new leader — the Supreme Serpent, as he christened himself — than to oppose him. Those who stood against him died; those who joined him prospered.

And so it has remained in the years since. With the Supreme Serpent at the helm, VIPER has attained heights of power and wealth it never could before. Essec remains firmly in control, his hands filled with riches for those who obey him and faithfully carry out his orders, and death for those who defy him or fail.

Personality/Motivation: The strongest component of the Supreme Serpent's personality is an overwhelming belief in his own superiority, the inferiority of others, and his "right and obligation" to rule. Raised in a colonial era, by a family of colonialists high in the hierarchy of the world's greatest colonial power, he views the world in stark terms: some people (himself, and to a lesser extent those in VIPER

who follow him) deserve to rule; others (everyone else, particularly the "lesser peoples" of the Third World) need the strong hand of rulership to keep from going astray, and must serve their betters with deference and unquestioning obedience. Most of humanity is weak and stupid; it must obey those who are strong and smart, like himself... or be *made* to obey, if necessary.

In truth, though, much of the Supreme Serpent's attitude is just a rationalization for a naked hunger for power. Deep down, he's pure selfishness personified; he yearns for the freedom and power to do whatever he wants, when he wants, and how he wants — no matter who gets hurt or exploited in the process. If push came to shove, he'd abandon the most loyal of his serpentine followers to keep himself safe or obtain something he strongly desired.

The Supreme Serpent sees no contradiction in his racist attitudes and the fact that VIPER recruits so heavily among Third World peoples. To him, those agents are like the sepoys (native soldiers) the British used to help rule and control India. He needs them to fill his armies and Nests, and eventually to ensure his rule over their various peoples. But he rarely lets them attain much power or authority within VIPER (almost all members of the Council Of Thirty are white), and if necessary won't hesitate to purge them from the organization.

Quote: "There are two types of men in this world: those with the intelligence and power that gives them the right to rule; and those whom they rule."

Powers/Tactics: Despite being over 100 years old, the Supreme Serpent has the fit, muscular body of an athlete in his late 20s. Somehow, the fumes in the Mbang cave he crawled into in 1939 preserved him, even rejuvenated him slightly, until he awakened in 1992. Since then, he has worked hard to make himself as personally powerful as he is criminally powerful. Building on his superb hunting skills, he has trained with the Takara-Shinja, becoming a deadlier fighter than any of them (Augur Maxwell often sends him Academy rejects for fighting practice sessions... sessions from which none of the Serpent's opponents emerge alive). Through training and genetic therapy, he has become far stronger and faster than the average human — powerful enough to fight many superhumans on relatively equal footing.

In addition to his martial arts prowess, the Supreme Serpent always carries with him several weapons (and usually has many others hidden within easy reach). His Supreme Serpent signet ring has a small reservoir of deadly poison; those pricked by its fang rarely live more than a few seconds. (It's defined as an IIF because it looks like an ordinary ring; only extremely close inspection reveals the "fang" and poison reservoir.) Diamond-edged blades under his fingernails carry a similar poison, so that even shaking hands with him can prove fatal; the more fingers he uses, the more poison he injects into the victim's system. Rounding out his suite of poisons is the Breath Of Nama, a form of cyanide gas in a fake tooth. Immune to

all these toxins, he uses them freely on those who oppose him without fear of accidentally poisoning himself.

The Supreme Serpent's other chief weapon is the Serpent's Coils, a restraining weapon he reserves for enemies he doesn't yet wish to kill. In their normal form they look like pills (he conceals them in his sleeves and elsewhere on his person). When thrown against a target, the pills instantly expand into immensely strong metal coils that wrap people up so tightly they cannot move. The Serpent can then deal with them at his leisure.

Periodically, the Supreme Serpent descends down stairs only he knows about, through doors only he can unlock, to a cave in the Mbang Mountains deep beneath VIPER's world headquarters. There he breathes in the heady fumes of Nama that keep him alive, fit, and young. He wonders, sometimes, if prolonged exposure to them might grant him superhuman powers... or if not breathing in the fumes could bring his seeming immortality to an abrupt end.

Campaign Use: The Supreme Serpent functions best in the traditional master villain role: he controls a powerful organization with which he can Hunt, hurt, or otherwise bedevil the PCs, but he should rarely (if ever) confront them himself. Unlike Dr. Destroyer or Teleios (who often send robot or clone duplicates of themselves against heroes) or Gravitator or the Warlord (who enjoy personal confrontations with crimefighters), the Supreme Serpent is content to make the PCs miserable from behind the scenes. Only a direct appeal to his vanity and sense of natural superiority would have even the slightest chance of tempting him to reveal himself.

Although he spends most of his time in VIPER's Mbang Mountains headquarters, the Supreme Serpent sometimes decides to go out into the world and walk among men to observe them. Disguised as Roger Essec, Jr., his son's son, he mingles with normal society, always carefully observing the rich and powerful with his serpent's eyes. He might meet the PCs this way.

To make the Supreme Serpent more personally powerful, give him some superpowers as a result of his exposure to the fumes in the Cave of Nama. Perhaps he has a natural "Venom Touch," or maybe he's super-strong and super-fast. With true superpowers, he'd be more inclined to fight the PCs, so make him mighty enough to take them all on at once. If you want to make him weaker, reduce his combat-oriented abilities, leaving him a man of influence and authority but not fighting power.

Appearance: The Supreme Serpent is a tall, deep-chested, broad-shouldered man of British descent. He has dark hair and a short dark beard, both conservatively and elegantly cut. His features are quite handsome and rugged, but also carry an unmistakable hint of malice and power. He wears dark, finely-tailored men's suits and accessories. He carries no obvious weapons, but does have a distinctive VIPER signet ring on the largest finger of his right hand.

THE COUNCIL OF THIRTY

Although powerful, intelligent, and insightful, the Supreme Serpent is only one man. No one person can oversee all the workings of an organization as large and diverse as VIPER, particularly when the need to maintain secrecy prevents direct, frequent, and open communication. To assist him with the governance of VIPER, the Supreme Serpent has the Council Of Thirty.

The Council began in 1954 as the Thirty Founders, when thirty descendants of the members of the Unholy Order came together and opened their minds to the word of Nama with the help of the Serpent Lantern (page 9). Following his dictates, they set out to use their industrial, financial, and criminal power to forge an organization unlike any the world had ever seen before: the Venomous Imperial Party of the Eternal Reptile. To ensure their devotion to VIPER, the Lantern tattooed each of them on the wrist with the Mark of Nama — a distinctive serpent — so they could never deny their place or role in VIPER's history and conduct.

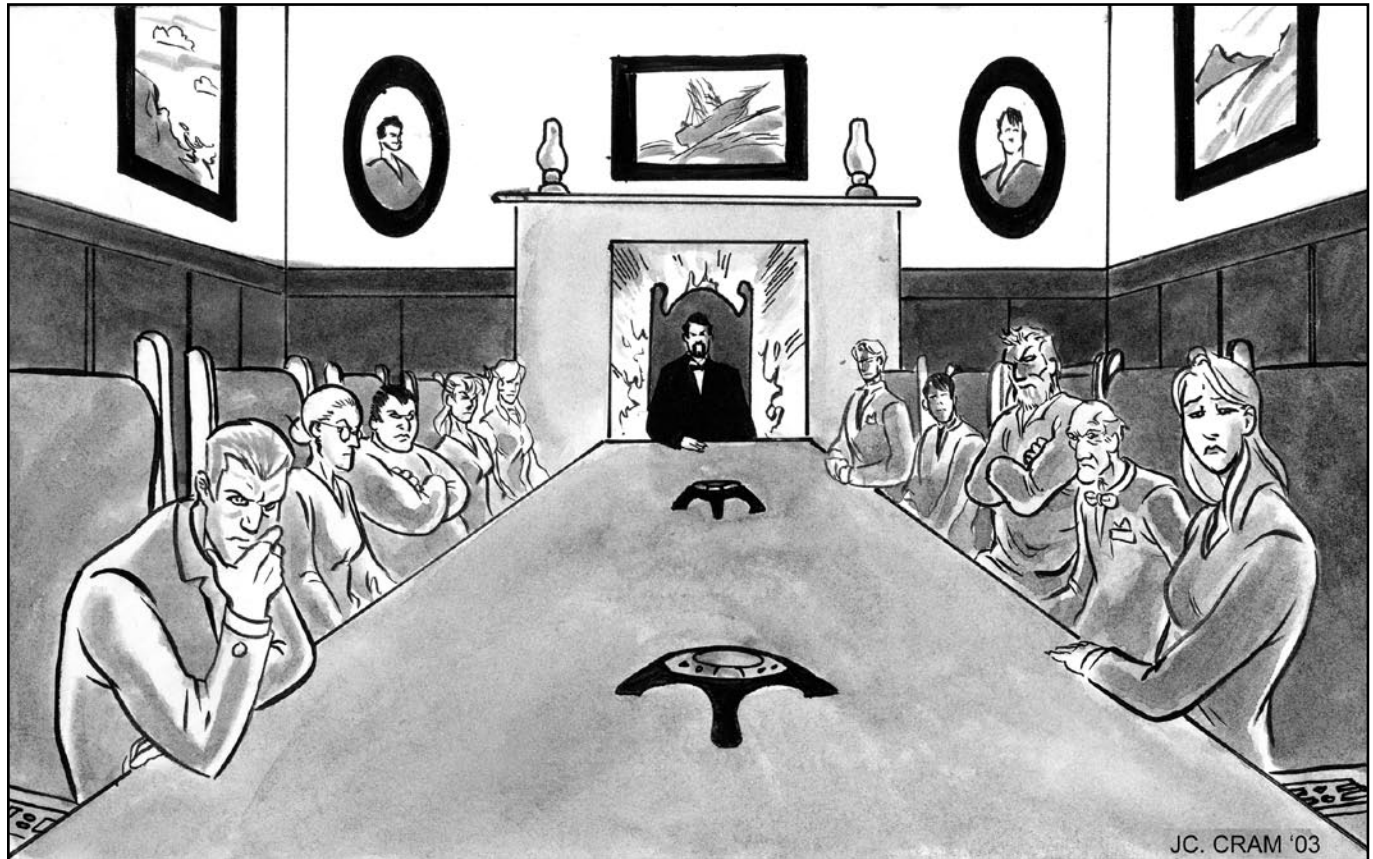
For decades, the Thirty Founders were the leaders of VIPER. They had the same problems all oligarchies have — internal dissent, one part of the organization not being fully aware of what other parts were doing, struggles for dominance among the members — but it held VIPER together until the 1980s. By then, most of the Thirty Founders were old; a few had died and been replaced by their chosen successors or persons the rest of the group elected to put in their place. Their long struggles against the law (and sometimes each other) had weakened them, making the local Nest Leaders more of a force within the organization than its supposed leaders.

The coming of the Supreme Serpent reversed this trend. After he convinced the Thirty to support him — sometimes by eliminating those who did not agree to his rule voluntarily — he brought the Nest Leaders back in line and changed the oligarchy to the Council Of Thirty. Today the Council's members enjoy more power within VIPER, and thus the underworld, than they ever have in the organization's history.

Place And Role Within VIPER

The Council Of Thirty (also known as the "High Serpents") has one primary responsibility: to assist the Supreme Serpent with running the organization. As such they are VIPER's "sub-leaders," if you will — a group wielding awesome power, but ultimately beholden to a superior who's more powerful than any of them. Those of the Thirty who maintain "secret identities" also have great power and wealth within legitimate society.

Following his reorganization, the Supreme Serpent divided the world into thirty geographic "districts" varying in size and importance based on the wealth of, and criminal opportunities in, the region in question. For example, North America and Europe both have multiple districts; Africa



and Central Asia comparatively few. A member of the Thirty oversees each district. The Nest Leaders in each district may or may not report directly to their member of the Thirty; some don't even know who their member of the Thirty is! But very little goes on in a district that the member of the Thirty doesn't know about and approve of, and certainly no one ever attains the position of Nest Leader without the consent of the appropriate Council member. For the most part, a member of the Thirty can do as he likes within his "fief," right down to countermanding Nest Leader orders or killing/deposing Nest Leaders at will. As long as VIPER continues to prosper in the region and the member's activities don't attract undue attention from law enforcement, the Supreme Serpent is highly unlikely to get involved.

A Council member's day-to-day involvement with VIPER depends solely on his own preferences and the Supreme Serpent's orders. Some have their own Nests and conduct criminal operations (if so, these Nests are "outside" the normal Nest structure; they're never the "main Nest" in a city or the like). Others remain aloof from direct participation in crime, communicating orders to their underlings via various secret and highly secure methods. Some are famous; others are names few people outside their fields of expertise would recognize. But they all have this in common: they're skilled, smart, competent, powerful, and utterly ruthless.

JOINING THE THIRTY

Like a hydra, the Thirty always remains alive and vital; cut off one head, and another shall take its place. As of 2003, most of the Thirty — 19 of

them — were among the Thirty Founders who created VIPER and have belonged to it ever since. The other eleven replaced members who died or somehow "went missing."

Prior to the coming of the Supreme Serpent, vacancies among the Thirty Founders were filled by election. The remaining members nominated people (generally Nest Leaders) whom they felt were worthy of elevation to the Thirty, and votes were taken until one person received a majority of the votes. Since 1992, the Supreme Serpent either fills the vacancy with someone he selects, or he asks the Council to provide a list of recommended members and picks one of them.

Unlike the Thirty Founders, latecomers to the Council have not sworn the oath of the Serpent Lantern, nor received the Mark of Nama. They remain free to betray the other members... which makes the old guard nervous.

Noteworthy Among The Thirty

Some of the most interesting members of the Council Of Thirty as of 2003 include:

DUCHESS HENRIETTA VON DROTTE

Perhaps the most powerful member of the Council Of Thirty, and certainly the most powerful woman, is Henrietta Von Drotte. Heir to an obscure German duchy, she is known in business circles (and VIPER) by her title — the Duchess.

Born in 1918, at the end of World War I, Henrietta Von Drotte grew up in genteel poverty. Her family's title had never amounted to much, and the family's chief asset, Von Drotte Industries, was vir-

WHAT LAW ENFORCEMENT KNOWS

The world's law enforcement organizations, including UNTIL and PRIMUS, know that a council leads VIPER, though reports in their files put the number of members at anywhere between nine and 50 (since the Council itself works hard to conceal information about its true size and nature). Since 1992, they have kept track of rumors and other information about the rise of the "Supreme Serpent." While some scholars maintain the Serpent is a ruse, a figurehead concocted by the High Serpents to support their policies, the organization's increased level of activity and efficiency since 1992 makes most police agencies believe the Supreme Serpent is real.

Law enforcement's chief theory about the Council Of Thirty is that it consists of the most powerful and influential Nest Leaders from around the world. The agencies believe the Council runs the organization by majority vote or some other easily-verified method; otherwise it would become too cumbersome. Some experts suspect the truth, or have at least theorized about it, but since no one has ever come close to capturing a member of the Council (or even one of their top assistants), all these suppositions remain just that — supposition.

tually destroyed by the war and the rampant inflation that ravaged the Weimar Republic afterward. Proud and envious, Henrietta looked on bitterly as the nations of the world prospered at the expense of Germany... and, more importantly, herself.

Henrietta married in 1939, shortly after her parents died in a motoring accident and left her the meager remnants of the family fortune. With World War II looming, she renamed Von Drotte Industries "Duchess Industries" and put the company on a war footing. But though she planned to profit from the war, she hedged her bets, giving her husband Conrad nominal control of the company.

As Germany's need for war materiel soared, so did the earnings and power of Duchess Industries... and the Duchess herself. Although she cared but little for Nazi philosophies, she mouthed the slogans to gain access to the National Socialist inner circle. Still, she concealed her power well, rarely appearing in public without her husband.

When the war ended, she conveniently arranged to go into hiding while her husband faced judgment and execution at Nuremberg. When the time was right, she re-appeared, claiming to have known little about her company's activities. Between her persuasive manner and a few hefty, well-placed bribes, she regained control of Duchess Industries with little difficulty. Now she supplied industrial goods to the Allied nations, but also covertly involved the company in many criminal enterprises.

By the mid-1950s, the Duchess was one of the most powerful people in Europe, both in legitimate society and in the underworld. Because her great-grandfather had belonged to the Unholy Order, she became one of the Thirty Founders and was instrumental in the formation and early activities of VIPER. She has frequently used the organization's assets and influence to aid Duchess Industries, which accounts in part for the conglomerate's phenomenal success in the post-war world. The Duchess's influence and power in legitimate society have done much to advance VIPER's cause.

When Roger Essec presented his father to the Thirty Founders, the Duchess was the first to recognize what he could mean to VIPER, and to support him. For that she has earned even more favor and power within the organization. However, rumors that she is the Supreme Serpent's mistress are absolutely untrue — she is no one's mistress, men serve her and then she casts them aside when she's done with them — and anyone she finds spreading such tales immediately earns her considerable anger.

While many people have quarrels with Duchess Industries itself (see page 40 for more on the corporation), few people think ill of the Duchess. Through cleverness, cunning, and attention to detail, she has kept even the hint of scandal from her person for over five decades. She donates lavishly to charity, makes frequent appearances at social galas, and otherwise takes pains to make her public persona differ from her private one. Only those who have negotiated with her in the business arena know how predacious and cruel she can be.

If the Duchess has a weakness, it's that she's

so well-known. Every member of the Council Of Thirty knows who she is and can track a lot of her movements just by reading the society column of the newspaper. It wouldn't take too many tips to UNTIL for the sordid past of the Duchess and her company to come to light... though she'd tie things up in court for years, if necessary.

The Duchess is a regal-looking woman of German descent who's in her 80s, but looks as if she's in her early 40s due to age-retarding treatments. She wears elegant but understated clothes and keeps her blonde hair slightly below shoulder length (it's mostly straight, not curly but perhaps with a few tasteful waves). She's still beautiful enough to turn the heads of men who don't realize she's old enough to be their grandmother. More than a few people have wondered how she can still look so young.

DUCHESS HENRIETTA VON DROTTE

10 STR	12 DEX	12 CON	10 BODY
23 INT	20 EGO	23 PRE	14 COM
3 PD	3 ED	2 SPD	4 REC
24 END	21 STUN		

Abilities: Life Support (Longevity: ages at half normal rate), Mental Defense (10 points total) Contacts and Favors (400 points' worth in the business and political communities, primarily in the U.S. and Europe), VIPER Membership Perk, Money (Filthy Rich), Bureaucrats 14-, Concealment 14-, Conversation 14-, High Society 14-, KS: Business And Finance 15-, KS: The Business World 16-, KS: The Political World 14-, KS: UNTIL 11-, KS: VIPER 15-, Persuasion 14-, PS: Businesswoman 14-, PS: Criminal Mastermind 14-, Seduction 14-, Streetwise 14-, Linguist (German is native, all the



following at “fluent conversation” level: English, French, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Russian, Spanish, Swahili).

50+ Disadvantages: Distinctive Features (Mark of Nama on her inner left wrist); Hunted (Watched by the Supreme Serpent); Psychological Limitation: Egotistical And Vain; Psychological Limitation: Ruthlessly Powerhungry; Social Limitation: Famous; Rivalry (Professional, other members of the Council Of Thirty), Rivalry (Professional, business competitors).

Notes: If necessary, you can equip the Duchess with just about any device or other resource she needs, though she despises combat and would almost certainly surrender before fighting.

SENATOR ARTHUR BOLTON

Senator Arthur Bolton, D-NY, and one of the United States Senate’s most prominent members, also belongs to the Council Of Thirty (having been elected to it in the early 1980s to replace a member who died). He serves as the *de facto* leader of VIPER’s Political Division (see below).

Now in his fourth term, Senator Bolton enjoys a high popularity rating among not only his constituents, but the American public in general (due in part to the machinations of VIPER). Despite coming from one of the country’s wealthiest families, he seems to have a knack for knowing how to talk to everyday people and assuage their concerns even when he can’t satisfy them completely. With his telegenic, MacArthur-esque good looks, he’s become a darling of the media, and frequently appears on the evening news to speak in favor of his positions.



As a member of the Foreign Affairs and Paranormal Affairs committees of the Senate, Bolton is in an excellent position to manipulate various governments on VIPER’s behalf. He can exert influence over both PRIMUS and UNTIL, slashing their budgets or giving them additional responsibilities to distract them from the war on VIPER. His control of the foreign aid purse-strings has many a nation in his debt and willing to do whatever he asks to ensure that American dollars continue to flow into VIPER’s coffers.

ROGER ESSEC

Now in his seventies, Roger Essec is the son of Edgar Essec, the Supreme Serpent — though one would think it the reverse, judging by their appearances. Nevertheless, Roger is scarcely less evil than his father. He absorbed his father’s hateful philosophies and emphasis on “superiority” throughout childhood, and embraced them wholly. As the descendant of a member of the Unholy Order and the leader of a powerful family business (Transvaal Resources, Inc.), he was a natural to join the Thirty Founders.

To the world at large, Roger Essec seems nothing more than an extremely prosperous South African businessman with a large family (including a son, Richard, who belongs to VIPER and works in his father’s “Nest” [really more of an office]). Although he stridently opposed the ending of apartheid, Roger has made the best of the new realities as he manages Transvaal Resources. He remains a powerful force in southern African business.

Roger suffers from a rare, and incurable, form of cancer. Although his doctors say he still has several years left, he’s beginning to feel the effects. He has sought VIPER’s help, but VIPER physicians have had no success devising a cure. As his time nears, Roger’s efforts to locate a cure may become more frantic.

MARCUS CHURCHWARD

Born in 1921 to a Brooklyn bricklayer and his wife, Marcus Churchward was trouble almost from day one. Although smart enough to get straight As if he wanted, he usually skipped school and was constantly in danger of flunking out. When not on the run from the truant officer, he was fleeing from the local beat cop after stealing candy from stores.

The 1938 Nazi experiments that created the first superhumans led to the awakening of latent superpowers in Churchward — but unlike Don Randall, he chose not to devote his powers to the betterment of humanity. Throughout the war years, Churchward used his powers to become a successful and wealthy thief and blackmailer. Tiring of the potential danger of that career, he plowed his money into investments and soon became a skilled, and even wealthier, financier.

Churchward soon discovered an interesting “side effect” of his powers. Apparently every time he teleports he somehow breaks down and re-assembles his entire atomic structure. As a result, he renews and rejuvenates all the cells in his body. Not only does this allow him to heal injuries with great

speed, it effectively makes him immortal — the cellular damage ordinary people accumulate through aging has never affected him. To keep anyone outside VIPER from discovering his teleportation powers, in the early 1990s he faked his death and stepped to the head of Churchward Financial Services as his “son,” Marcus Jr.

Since his grandfather had belonged to the Unholy Order, Churchward got an invitation to become one of the Thirty Founders in 1954. He joined gladly, having no scruples against criminal activities and seeing in VIPER a mechanism by which he could become ever more rich and powerful. He maintains a Nest in the New York City area, though he conceals his identity from his underlings and does not commit crimes himself or accompany them on missions.

Churchward has carefully kept the secret of his teleportation powers from the rest of the Council — they know of his longevity, but that’s all. He figures they’re an “ace in the hole” should a rival within VIPER ever threaten his life.

MARCUS CHURCHWARD

10	STR	14	DEX	13	CON	12	BODY
18	INT	15	EGO	20	PRE	10	COM
6	PD	8	ED	4	SPD	8	REC
35	END	30	STUN				

Abilities: Teleportation 10-, Defensive Teleportation (+3 DCV, Costs Endurance), Healing BODY 4d6 (Regeneration, 4 BODY per Turn, limited to the number of times Churchward has used his Teleportation power in the past Turn), Life Support (Longevity: Immortality), VIPER Membership Perk, Money (Filthy Rich, owner of Churchward Financial Services), Bureaucratics 13-, Conversation 13-, KS: The Business World 15-, KS: High Finance 16-, KS: Stamp Collecting 14-, Persuasion 13-, PS: Sailing 11-.

50+ Disadvantages: Distinctive Features (Mark of Nama on his inner left wrist); Hunted (Watched by the Supreme Serpent); Psychological Limitation: Greedy; Rivalry (Professional, other members of the Council Of Thirty), Rivalry (Professional, business competitors).

Notes: Marcus Churchward (or “Marcus Churchward, Jr.” as he’s now known) is over 80 but looks like he’s in his mid-20s. He has blonde hair, blue eyes, and the build of a man who spends an hour or two exercising every day. His hobbies include yachting, skirtchasing, and stamp collecting.

AKIRO YAMAMOTO

One of the newest members of the Council — he replaced a former member whom the Supreme Serpent killed for not supporting his takeover of VIPER — Akiro Yamamoto first joined VIPER as a young man in the 1970s. While seeming to all the world as nothing more than the head of the powerful and prosperous Yamamoto Electrics, he was in fact a member of VIPER’s Financial Division.

Thanks to Yamamoto’s deft manipulation of VIPER’s financial assets in the Far East, VIPER has become much more powerful in that part of the

world over the past 25 years. Yamamoto’s successes brought him to the Council’s attention, and it put his name on the “short list” to fill the vacancy left by the death of Marjorie Holcomb. Although not pleased with the idea of elevating an Asiatic to the Thirty, the Supreme Serpent could not deny Yamamoto’s record of achievement, and chose him.

Yamamoto has thrived as he helped VIPER thrive; his own fortune, and that of Yamamoto Electrics, has increased enormously due to his involvement with the criminal organization. Many of his competitors in Japan openly suspect him of membership in VIPER, though no one can prove anything and Yamamoto won a 1999 defamation suit against a rival who dared to take his suspicions to the press.

For Yamamoto, membership in VIPER is a family affair. His son Tadataka is the Nest Leader of one of the Tokyo Nests, and his daughter Ishimaki works with him in the Financial Division. His wife, though disapproving of the whole affair, keeps quiet.

THE DIVISIONS

Below the level of the Council Of Thirty, VIPER organizes its resources into four *divisions*: Political; Financial; Technical; and Criminal. All VIPER activities and missions fall into at least one of these divisions.

For the most part, the divisions exist primarily for administrative and logistical purposes; they do not maintain separate bases or Nests. In a given Nest, the commander might handle duties for all four branches, or might concentrate on one, delegating the duties for other branches to his underlings. In some cases the Council or the Supreme Serpent dictates the divisional composition of a Nest; for example, Nests in London, Hong Kong, and New York have much higher complements of agents devoted to Financial operations than Nests in less commerce-intensive locations such as South America or the Middle East.

Political Division

The most “prestigious,” but also smallest, division of VIPER is the Political branch. Agents primarily assigned to this branch, most of whom do not wear the green and yellow uniform so commonly associated with VIPER, work among and with the governmental officials of the United States, Europe, and other nations and regions around the world to strengthen the organization’s position, increase its assets, and deflect any threats to it. They bribe and otherwise corrupt officials (particularly those in law enforcement), obtain blackmail information on world leaders (and, if necessary, use it to get what they want), covertly lobby for the passage of laws that somehow favor or help VIPER, make donations to the campaigns of VIPER-friendly politicians, and even recruit new members. Thanks to their efforts, VIPER effectively controls a number of Third World nations, and operates with virtual impunity in many more.

The Political Division organizes its activities by the same 30 regional districts that circumscribe the Council members' spheres of influence. A commander holding the rank of General or Major General heads each section, under the overall command of Sen. Arthur Bolton (see above).

Financial Division

VIPER's vast economic holdings come under the purview of the Financial Division. Any business interest, professional firm, board of directors, commodities resource, or other asset VIPER owns or controls ultimately takes its orders from Financial Division. Financial also launders VIPER's massive illegal profits, brokers deals with other criminal organizations, sets up front companies and fake charity organizations, arranges legal representation for captured agents, commits financial crimes, and so forth.

Much of the Financial Division's efforts actually go into hiding its traces. The last thing VIPER wants is for nosy investigators or superheroes to uncover its involvement in Oxmore Oil or the Pierson Franklin investment house through careful analysis of financial and administrative records. Every move Financial makes gets covered up by layer after layer of paperwork, dummy addresses, shell corporations, blackmailed businesses, wholly-owned subsidiaries, offshore accounts, and encryption. Financial Division hires the best accountants and attorneys money can buy, and pays them *very* well to keep its monetary activities concealed from the prying eyes of the law.

Like Political, Financial has subdivisions organized by the 30 districts. While it focuses its efforts on regions with high levels of commerce (United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Europe, Hong Kong, Taiwan, China, Japan), it has found that many Third World countries will create broad "banking secrecy" laws VIPER can take advantage of in exchange for large bribes and other investments. A commander holding the rank of General or Major General heads each section, under the overall command of Gerald Fleetwood.

GERALD FLEETWOOD

According to all official records, Gerald Fleetwood, formerly a partner at a major Wall Street investment firm, died in an automobile accident fifteen years ago — shortly before the Securities and Exchange Commission began investigating his dealings with an industrialist who committed suicide. In reality he left his boring normal life behind to join VIPER, first as a high-ranking member of the Financial Division, and since 1992 as the Council member in charge of it. When he needs to show a face to the outside world, it's that of Thomas Mortewick, a bachelor financier Fleetwood murdered shortly after his faked death so he could assume his identity. The rest of the world thinks of Mortewick as a brilliant, if eccentric, financial genius who seems to earn his money as much by luck as by skill.

To most people, "Mortewick" presents the picture of an ordinary, if somewhat dapperly dressed, accountant/banker type. Only those who have crossed him know just how vindictive, vengeful, and cruel he can be. He delights in ruining people — breaking their credit ratings, self-esteem, confidence, and willpower. He conceals his razor-sharp intelligence and perceptiveness behind a bland facade of competence and efficiency.

Fleetwood makes his headquarters at one of the Nests in New York City, since that places him right in the heart of the financial capital of the world. He has taps on the computers and phones of some of the biggest investment firms and brokerages, using elaborate software to sift through the barrage of information to glean data he can use to keep VIPER's coffers filled.

Technical Division

The Technical Division, once a part of Financial but converted into a separate division by the Supreme Serpent when he took over, is one of the most important sectors of the organization. Huddled inside their laboratories and testing areas, the biologists, chemists, physicists, engineers, and weaponmiths of VIPER constantly experiment with new devices and techniques, develop weapons and technologies for field agents, analyze captured gadgets and superbeings, and search for ways to induce mutations in humans.

VIPER has always recognized the importance of technology to its operations — indeed, the message from Nama to the Thirty Founders stressed technology's place in VIPER's plans. Without the blaster weapons, hovercraft, body armor, computer hardware and software, and construction technology developed or stolen by Technical, the organization would soon find itself on the losing end of its battles with superheroes and law enforcement. The men and women of Technical remain ever alert for the next bleeding-edge development or new application that will give VIPER an advantage in its ongoing conflict with the authorities. Scientists who succeed at such tasks earn rich rewards from their masters; those who consistently fail wind up as experimental subjects for their more successful brethren.

Although Technical has facilities throughout the world, all linked by VIPER's sophisticated Serpentine computer network, its major centers of operation include:

- a kinesiology laboratory at VIPER Academy, which studies the mechanics of the human body with an eye towards improving the combat skills of VIPER agents and developing technology to enhance them
- a human genetics laboratory buried deep in the mountains of West Virginia, where VIPER engages in experiments designed to create beneficial mutations in humans, up to and including the development of superpowers
- a similar genetics laboratory in Spain

MAJOR GENERAL GUSTAVE D'COUCY

10	STR	10	DEX
12	CON	10	BODY
21	INT	15	EGO
18	PRE	13	COM
2	PD	2	ED
2	SPD	4	REC
2	END	21	STUN

Abilities: VIPER Membership Perk, +2 with Interaction Skills, Bureaucratics 13-, Conversation 13-, High Society 13-, KS: European Politics 18-, KS: VIPER 13-, Languages (Dutch, English, German, Italian, Spanish; all fluent conversation [French is native]), Seduction 14-, Streetwise 13-, WF: Small Arms.

Disadvantages: Hunted (Watched by Arthur Bolton and the Supreme Serpent); Rivalry (Professional, other high-ranking members of Technical Division), Social Limitation: Subject To Orders

Notes: A former member of the French government, Major General d'Coucy serves VIPER as the leader of several of the European districts of the Political Division. His responsibilities include maintaining contacts in, and watching over, the governments of Great Britain, France, Spain, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, and the Low Countries, monitoring the activities of Eurostar and organized crime groups within Europe, and blocking the passage of laws inimical to VIPER.

D'Coucy fancies himself a connoisseur and patron of the arts. He spends lavishly on food, wine, women, entertainment, and works of art, creating for himself an identity as a wealthy semi-retired playboy. He also considers himself a lady's man — though he has yet to try his seductive wiles on any superheroines.

- the Proving Grounds, a facility in Eastern Africa where VIPER tests its latest weapons designs without fear of the authorities
- a vehicle design and testing facility somewhere in the wilds of the American Southwest
- a weapons design and manufacturing plant in Canada
- an experimental physics laboratory in eastern Russia

MAJOR GENERAL LORELEI TANNHAUSER

A native of Germany, Lorelei Tannhauser served as a technician with the Stasi (the East German secret police) until a few years before the collapse of communism, when she saw the writing on the wall and defected to VIPER ahead of many of her colleagues. Her talents with surveillance devices and automated weapons systems earned her the favor of her superiors, though her harsh temper and icy sarcasm did little to endear her to her fellow scientists. When the Supreme Serpent elevated her to the head of Technical Division, there was considerable bitter, jealous muttering among the laboratories of VIPER. The three assassination plots Tannhauser has survived since then have only made her more prone to fits of rage and suspicion.

Tannhauser, who wears her long black hair pulled back in a severe bun, rarely associates with other VIPER personnel outside of work. A solitary person, she prefers to spend her off hours reading and listening to music. She sometimes leaves whatever Nest she's currently staying at to attend the symphony or opera.



MAJOR GENERAL LORELEI TANNHAUSER

10	STR	12	DEX	12	CON	8	BODY
18	INT	13	EGO	15	PRE	10	COM
3	PD	4	ED	2	SPD	4	REC
24	END	20	STUN				

Abilities: VIPER Membership Perk, Bugging 16-, Bureaucratics 13-, Computer Programming 15-, Cryptography 14-, Deduction 14-, Demolitions 14-, Electronics 14-, Inventor 13-, KS: Classical Music 11-, KS: Opera 13-, KS: Superpowers 14-, KS: VIPER 13-, Mechanics 14-, Security Systems 16-, Stealth 12-, Streetwise 12-, Systems Operation 14-, WF: Small Arms, Weaponsmith (Firearms, Missiles & Rockets, Chemical Weapons, Biological Weapons, Incendiary Weapons, Energy Weapons) 15-, Scientist and 25 points' worth of appropriate Science Skills

50+ Disadvantages: Hunted (Watched by the Supreme Serpent); Rivalry (Professional, other high-ranking members of Technical Division), Social Limitation: Subject To Orders

Criminal Division

All VIPER activities not specifically assigned to the other divisions come under the jurisdiction of Criminal Division. Criminal is responsible for most of the operations people commonly associate with VIPER — squads of agents robbing banks, attacks upon superhero teams, threats to blackmail the world with super-weapons, and terrorist activities of all kinds. Almost all agent-level members of VIPER work primarily for this division; as they like to put it, it's the division that "gets the *real* work done around here." And they're right. Without the profits from Criminal's activities, Financial would have nothing to work with; without Criminal's existence, Political would have little reason to exercise its influence. Ultimately, VIPER is a criminal organization, and Criminal Division never lets the other divisions forget that.

Criminal has no specific division head or leader, except perhaps the Supreme Serpent himself. To some extent virtually all VIPER leaders involve themselves in Criminal activities. Nor does Criminal maintain specific districts or sections; it simply merges with the normal Nest structure.

DRAGON BRANCH

Perhaps the most important part of Criminal Division, and certainly the most flashy, is Dragon Branch — VIPER's squad of superhuman thugs, enforcers, soldiers, and sneaks. See Chapter Six for more information.

Nests

Below the level of the divisions exist the local manifestations of VIPER's power: its *Nests*, or bases. See Chapter Four for more information about Nest structure, function, and activities.

AGENT RANKS

Below the Council Of Thirty, VIPER organizes its personnel by ranks, similar to a military organization. From highest to lowest, the ranks are:

Serpent-General: VIPER's "war chief" — the supreme commander of its forces in the field. Only a member of the Thirty, or the Supreme Serpent himself, can override the Serpent-General's commands... and they rarely do. Warren Cliffe holds this rank.

Major General: A high rank usually reserved for the heads of the four divisions and other personnel with authority over an area of significant responsibility.

General: VIPER uses this rank for commanders given authority over all the Nests in a city or region, agents responsible for prominent subdivisions within a Major General's sphere of authority, and the like.

Commandant: The rank for most Nest commanders, though many prefer the title "Nest Leader" or a personal designation (such as "the Russian") instead of "Commandant."

Captain: The leader of a major group of agents within a Nest. Most Field, Intelligence, and Security Commanders hold this rank.

Lieutenant: The lowest of the "officer" ranks, a Lieutenant is an agent with significant field command responsibilities. Most Squadron commanders hold this rank.

Sergeant: A rank used for experienced, loyal agents who assist Lieutenants and Captains.

Agent, Elite: A highly-trained, highly competent agent trusted by the organization. In game terms, any agent with a Package Deal other than General Combat Specialist, General Intelligence Specialist, or General Technical Specialist.

Agent, Basic: The lowest-level "grunt" agents — the ones with the least training and competence, whom VIPER saddles with the least desirable, most dangerous jobs. The average VIPER agent encountered by superheroes and law enforcement is a Basic Agent.

GAINING RANK

An agent who graduates from VIPER Academy receives the rank of Basic Agent. Most agents remain at the Basic level, but those with enough talent and drive attract the attention of their superiors and get sent back to the Academy for advanced training. Upon completion of advanced training, they become Elite Agents. Elite Agents must earn all further ranks — usually through merit and accomplishment, but sometimes through bribery, blackmail, murder, or other illicit means. See page 48 for more information.

When deciding whether to promote someone, a VIPER officer looks at two things. The first is the agent's record: has he performed missions well, followed orders, achieved the objec-

tives given him, and not accumulated too many disciplinary infractions? Second, how much money has the agent made for the organization? An agent who rates high on both criteria can expect a promotion when there's an opening in the ranks; one who does not remains stuck at his present rank.

VIPER MEMBERSHIP

Here are the value for the *Membership* Fringe Benefit for VIPER:

Value	Membership Level
10	Supreme Serpent
9	Council Of Thirty member
8	Serpent-General
8	Major General
7	General
6	Commandant
5	Captain
4	Lieutenant
3	Sergeant
2	Agent, Elite
1	Agent, Basic

CONFLICTS OF RANK

Because VIPER operations tend to remain discrete to a single Nest (*i.e.*, only the agents from a single Nest perform a mission), usually no conflicts of rank arise. In the event two or more Nests coordinate for an operation, typically the Nest Leaders order that the agents preserve the chain of command. Thus, a Captain from Nest A can give orders to a Sergeant from Nest B and the Sergeant must obey them, even if a Lieutenant from Nest B orders the Sergeant to do something else. To minimize conflicts, the Nest Leaders usually agree to assign tactical command to a specific officer and his staff; that way two Captains don't end up butting heads and paralyzing the operation with arguments about who's in charge.

SERPENT-GENERAL WARREN CLIFFE

15 STR	17 DEX	16 CON	15 BODY
18 INT	15 EGO	23 PRE	10 COM
8 PD	6 ED	4 SPD	8 REC
32 END	35 STUN		

Abilities: +1 PER with all Sense Groups, Running +1, VIPER Membership Perk, +2 with All Combat, KS: Superheroes 16-, KS: Superpowers 15-, KS: Supervillains 13-, Martial Arts (VIPER Brawling, all maneuvers plus four Extra DCs), Stealth 13-, Tactics 15-, Two-Weapon Fighting (Ranged), WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons, Small Arms, all Uncommon Modern Weapons

50+ Disadvantages: Hunted (Watched by the Supreme Serpent and the Council Of Thirty); Psychological Limitation: Stubborn; Psychological Limitation: Lecherous; Rivalry (Professional, other high-ranking members of VIPER), Social Limitation: Subject To Orders

VIPER RANK INSIGNIA

VIPER uses the following insignia to indicate an agent's rank. Insignia are worn or sewn onto the left breast of the front of the agent's uniform, and the top center of the back of the uniform. (Some Nests also issue Nest insignia, which the agent wears on the collar of his uniform and division patches worn at various places.)

Serpent-General: Three gold VIPER symbols and a bar above the VIPER symbol patch.

Major General: Two gold VIPER symbols and a bar above the VIPER symbol patch.

General: One gold VIPER symbol above the VIPER symbol patch.

Commandant: Two silver VIPER symbols and a bar above the VIPER symbol patch.

Captain: One silver VIPER symbol above the VIPER symbol patch.

Lieutenant: One diamond gold pip above the VIPER symbol patch.

Sergeant: Two circular gold pips above the VIPER symbol patch.

Agent, Elite: One circular gold pip above the VIPER symbol patch.

Agent, Basic: None (just a standard VIPER symbol patch).

*See illustrations on pages 68-69.



Notes: A 20-year veteran of the United States Army who quit shortly after Desert Storm when threatened with over a dozen charges of sexual harassment, Warren Cliffe drifted into the shadowy world of the mercenary for a few years before joining VIPER. His knack for small-unit tactics and ability to get results (even if it meant sacrificing men) earned him multiple promotions, until eventually the Supreme Serpent tapped him to become the Serpent-General — commander of VIPER's military forces. As Serpent-General, Cliffe has become an expert on fighting superhumans; he keeps dossiers on all known superheroes (and many villains), listing their powers, habits, and weaknesses.

Called "Steelhead" by his men (though not in his hearing) because of his shiny bald pate, Cliffe is as stubborn as a Missouri mule and as tenacious as a barracuda. When he wants something, he gets it, no matter how many people he has to disgrace, brutalize, or kill. His extensive, and seemingly insatiable, sexual appetites have made him less than popular with the female contingent of VIPER agents.

Tall, heavily-muscled, bull-necked, and completely bald, Cliffe wears a standard VIPER officers' uniform in "relaxed" cut, with a blaster holstered on each hip.

VIPER WORLDWIDE



Although most of VIPER's more spectacular or infamous crimes take place in the United States or Europe, the organization actually operates throughout the world. It threatens the security and stability of nations on every continent of Earth. Here's a review of what VIPER's up to in various places around the world as of 2003. As time passes, some schemes may come to fruition, while VIPER abandons others as unworkable and loses others to superhero or law enforcement activity.

NORTH AMERICA

VIPER conducts more criminal operations in North America than anywhere else.

The United States

VIPER has always had a stronger presence in the United States than any other nation, and Americans hold slightly over half of the positions on the Council Of Thirty. The general opinion among VIPER's leadership is that "As America goes, so goes the world" — thus it only makes sense to concentrate much of VIPER's resources there. Furthermore, the general level of freedom prevalent in

the United States gives VIPER greater mobility and security than it often has elsewhere. For example, lawyers working for VIPER have become adept at exploiting the general nature of, and loopholes in, the American legal system for the organization's benefit. Similarly, several Nests take advantage of the United States's extensive borders and relatively lax border security to engage in smuggling worth millions of illegal dollars every year.

The two largest Nests in the United States are the main Nests in Los Angeles and New York City. Major Nests also exist elsewhere in those two cities, and in Millennium City, Chicago, Seattle, Dallas/Fort Worth, San Francisco, St. Louis, Vibora Bay, Philadelphia, Boston, Washington D.C., Atlanta, New Orleans, and Miami. Cities with lesser Nests include San Diego, Portland, Phoenix, Las Vegas, Houston, Kansas City, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Louisville, Pittsburgh, Albany, Buffalo, Baltimore, Charlotte, and Jacksonville.

Canada

It didn't take VIPER long to expand from America into Canada. Toronto, Ottawa, and Vancouver all gained their own VIPER Nests in the 1960s, and soon thereafter VIPER became a fix-

ture of the Quebec and Montreal underworlds as well. According to some reports, VIPER has used its behind-the-scenes influence to support the cause of Quebecois independence for the past two decades. The authorities correctly believe VIPER is simply using the more radical elements of the Quebec independence movement as patsies for its own criminal activities. VIPER's leadership believes societal divisiveness in Canada can only assist the organization's operations there. After all, why take the blame for a murder-robbery attack when you can dress your men in black sweaters, shout a few partisan slogans in French, and throw the police off your trail?

In the past few years, Canadian law enforcement officials have noticed an alarming VIPER trend: a move away from Canada's major cities and into its smaller urban areas, and even rural regions. Much of Canada remains wild and open, with few or no people inhabiting enormous areas. What better place for VIPER to establish a secret base to develop and test new weapons, or a launch site for a VIPER satellite? For example, in 2002 police in the small British Columbia town of Abbotsford were shocked to discover a major VIPER propaganda and smuggling ring operating out of their normally peaceful hamlet.

REDSTONE

15 STR	18 DEX	15 CON	10 BODY
18 INT	14 EGO	18 PRE	10 COM
7 PD	6 ED	3 SPD	7 REC
30 END	30 STUN		

Abilities: Running +2", Leaping +2", +3 HTH, Acrobatics 13-, Breakfall 13-, Bureaucratics 13-, Climbing 13-, Contortionist 13-, Disguise 13-, Electronics 8-, Lockpicking 13-, Martial Arts (Kung Fu, 20 points' worth of maneuvers), Persuasion 13-, Security Systems 13-, Sleight Of Hand 13-, Stealth 14-, Streetwise 13-, Tactics 13-, WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons, Small Arms

50+ Disadvantages: Hunted (Watched by the Supreme Serpent and the Council Of Thirty); Psychological Limitation: Stubborn; Rivalry (Professional, other high-ranking members of VIPER), Social Limitation: Subject To Orders

Notes: Redstone (real name: Rick Baumgardner) became the Commandant of the Vancouver VIPER's Nest in 1998 after killing the former Nest Leader, whom he viewed as weak. The Council Of Thirty apparently agreed, since it approved his "promotion" (though it kept a close eye on him for a few years to make sure he could handle the job).

A skilled cat burglar before he joined VIPER, Redstone tends to favor stealth, sneakiness, and guile over direct confrontation. When dealing with him, one can never be sure what his true objective is or how he intends to achieve it; he usually seems to have plans within plans within plans.

Redstone wears a VIPER uniform, but in red and gold instead of green and yellow. He has dark hair and green eyes and an athletic build.

Mexico

South of the United States, in the often chaotic and semi-lawless nation of Mexico, VIPER has established a major presence in the past two decades. In a society where corruption often prevails, and a substantial portion of the populace lives in poverty, VIPER can thrive. Its alliances with the powerful Mexican drug cartels have brought it great wealth. It hides several of its largest and most important illegal manufacturing facilities in isolated areas of Mexico, where the high wages it pays to local workers ensure their silence and loyalty. The Mexico City Nest, run by a powerful leader who calls himself *El Crabrón* ("the Hornet"), controls all of the VIPER activity in the country. Tijuana, Matamoros, Durango, Chilpancingo, Veracruz, and Chetumal, among others, also have Nests.

ASIA

Although VIPER initially ignored Asia, that continent's rise in global financial and political circles over the past half-century soon attracted its attention. Today VIPER has a strong presence in Japan, the Philippines, and India, including many Financial Division agents; it is less prevalent in Singapore, Myanmar, and China.

Japan

Given its emphasis on developing and using high technology, VIPER made inroads into Japan fairly early in the organization's history — a Nest was established in Tokyo in 1968 according to VIPER records (though law enforcement officials remained unaware of its existence until 1972). VIPER tends to conduct lower-key operations in Japan than in North America; Japanese Nests eschew violent robberies or like crimes for subtle and sophisticated thefts of technology and data. Smuggling of drugs, weapons, pornography, and other items also earns them vast profits.

Since the mid-1980s, VIPER Japan has fought an underworld war with several of Japan's largest yakuza syndicates. Apparently resenting the intrusion of a foreign organization into "their" territory, Japanese gangsters have turned up the heat on VIPER, killing agents, disrupting operations, and anonymously tipping off the police about VIPER activities. VIPER has responded in kind, using its superior firepower to cause considerable damage to a number of gangs. In the past several years the fighting, which has created an uproar in the Japanese press, has escalated to the use of supervillains; the clashes between yakuza enforcers like Ishi ("Stone") and Hotaru ("Firefly") and VIPER agents such as Boruto ("Volt") and Hayaikaze ("Swiftwind") have caused millions of dollars of property damage and nearly two dozen deaths.

PROJECT CHINESE SERPENT

VIPER's most recent major effort to establish a beachhead in China was a small genetics laboratory hidden in the back alleys of Beijing. Some of VIPER's biologists had developed a mutative process that seemed most effective on persons of Chinese ancestry. Thinking this would be a good way to create squads of super-powerful agents quickly, VIPER set them up with a clandestine facility in the Chinese capital and told them to get to work.

Initially, the process was a success; the kidnapped victims who underwent the "Chinese Serpent" treatment mutated into three-fingered, two-toed serpent-human hybrids with unusually high strength, agility, and resistance to injury. Unfortunately, they also proved mentally unstable. During training they turned on their captors, killed them, and escaped into the streets of Beijing to wreak havoc. Squads of normal VIPER agents scrambled to try to recover them, but to no avail — the incident attracted the attention of the Tiger Squad, which attacked both groups. Several hours later, the Squad had rounded up and imprisoned the agents, and "hospitalized" the mutants.

Efforts to "de-mutate" the altered people have so far failed. VIPER remains in possession of the full data on the transformation process and hopes to refine and re-use it.

China

VIPER has never enjoyed much success at infiltrating China. The harsh, autocratic regime there has taken extraordinary measures to ensure that VIPER cannot obtain a foothold throughout its territory. Chinese authorities have executed dozens of people on the mere suspicion of involvement in VIPER, often without even the pretense of a formal trial; the Tiger Squad, official hero team of the People's Republic, has smashed nascent Nests on several occasions. As the nation slowly opens itself up to the outside world and initiates democratic reforms, VIPER may, along with other Western institutions and traditions, find a way to establish itself there. The Supreme Serpent certainly has plans in this regard. But at present, most of China remains VIPER-free.

Two areas constitute exceptions to that general rule: Shanghai and Hong Kong. Shanghai, one of the country's busiest ports and most Westernized cities, has had a reputation for vice and crime for decades (if not centuries), and not even the draconian attention of Communist officials has stamped out its underworld. VIPER established a Nest there in the late 1970s, and through a carefully-planned and orchestrated program of stealth, violence, bribery, and influence-peddling has kept it alive and thriving. The Nest's leader, who calls himself Hēide Miànjù ("The Black Mask") after an obscure character from Chinese opera, has a reputation as one of the most clever and devious Nest Leaders in all of VIPER. According to some internal rumors, in daily life he is one of the richest, most successful businessmen in modern China, and has ambitions to obtain even greater wealth and power (both legitimate and illegitimate).

Hong Kong, only a Chinese property for the past several years, includes one of the first VIPER Nests established outside of the United States. Specializing in financial crime, computer crime, and smuggling, its agents often lend their expertise to other Nests — for an appropriate fee, of course. For years the Nest has struggled against the native organized crime groups, the Triads, but its shadowy influence among the business community and certain corrupt officials, not to mention the services of a powerful telekinetic superhuman called Jī nǐ ("Goldforce"), have kept it going.

North Korea

Since the early 1970s, VIPER has considered the renegade government of North Korea an ally. Eager for dollars and high technology, North Korea allowed VIPER to establish several Nests throughout its territory in exchange for ongoing payments of money, weapons, and technical data. VIPER also employs a large number of locals at its manufacturing centers in the country, providing a much-needed infusion of cash for the North Korean consumer economy. Se Sang-mun, the head of North Korean VIPER operations, is reputedly a close friend of several of North Korea's leaders, including Kim Jong-il, and according to CIA reports has

worked actively to derail the improving state of relations between North and South Korea.

Southeast Asia And India

Generally impoverished and often corrupt, the nations of Southeast Asia are prime territories for large-scale VIPER operations. While generally avoiding the more progressive and/or authoritarian areas, such as Singapore and Malaysia, VIPER has set up several Nests to exploit resources, smuggle, steal, establish vice rings, and so forth. According to some reports it has even propped up shaky regimes to keep its own operations safe, and has stirred up international troubles in the region (such as the dispute over ownership of the Spratly Islands) to give itself even more room to maneuver.

Moving westward, VIPER has major Nests in Calcutta, Bombay, and New Delhi, all established in the early to mid-1980s and since bolstered by the Supreme Serpent's interest in the region. Exploiting cultural, class, and religious strife to create opportunities for crime or cover their tracks, these Nests have committed numerous robberies, assassinations, and terrorism for hire attacks. Local officials fear VIPER may become more aggressive, using its wealth to recruit hundreds or thousands of new agents from among India's poor and disaffected to enhance its operations both in the subcontinent and elsewhere throughout the world. (However, Dr. Destroyer has strong interests in this part of the world as well, and may not care for the serpents' "intrusion" there if they become too active....)

AFGHANISTAN AND THE MIDDLE EAST

During the 1970s and '80s, VIPER took advantage of the confusion and warfare in the Middle East to engage in weapons sales and smuggling, heroin manufacturing and smuggling, terrorism and assassination for hire, and other profitable activities. During the Soviet war in Afghanistan it studied recent developments in Soviet weaponry, and tested out some of its own designs by providing prototypes to the Afghan resistance. According to American intelligence reports, it did the same thing during the Gulf War and the American war against Iraq by providing weapons to Saddam Hussein's forces.

Today, with the region a hotbed of American military activity following the overthrow of the Taliban, VIPER has scaled back its activities there. VIPER advisers remain in Syria and Iran, hoping to goad those regimes into geopolitical maneuvers that will destabilize the Middle East and create more opportunities for extensive criminal operations.

VIPER's largest Nest in this region is in Istanbul, Turkey, where VIPER directly or indirectly controls a substantial chunk of the underworld. Other prominent Nests include those in Damascus and Tel Aviv. In 2001, the Saudi superhero Desert

Cat smashed Nests in Riyadh and Beirut, creating a “VIPER vacuum” in Saudi Arabia and Lebanon that VIPER has yet to fill.

AFRICA

VIPER has little presence in northern Africa except in Egypt. New Karnak, the large and powerful VIPER's Nest in Cairo (which includes several superhuman agents), controls all of the organization's activities in the Saharan region. Led by a man who calls himself the Pharaoh, it often works closely with various Middle Eastern Nests.

Sub-Saharan Africa, on the other hand, is a VIPER playground. Not only does VIPER maintain its world headquarters in the Mbang Mountains of Cameroon, it takes advantage of the chaotic nature of African life. Beset by political unrest, ethnic conflict, numerous ongoing wars, and rampant corruption, the region serves as a perfect hideout, testing ground, and base of operations for VIPER. Only the presence of a large UNTIL facility in Kinshasa keeps VIPER from dominating all of southern Africa with a “shadow government”... but even UNTIL may not be able to stop Project Unity, VIPER's ultimate plan to take over the continent (see page 18).

With major Nests in Johannesburg and Lagos, VIPER can exploit the region's rich natural resources (or shake down companies that do), sell weapons and services to either or both sides in any number of brush wars, test weapons and other devices, and conduct scientific programs impossible elsewhere. For example, a large number of the persons who go “missing” during wars or episodes of “ethnic cleansing” actually end up as guinea pigs in VIPER's African labs. Agents quietly dispose of the corpses of most of them, while a few gain temporary superpowers which burn out their bodies and kill them after they've served VIPER for a short time. A lucky few become full-fledged superhumans, and usually end up brainwashed by VIPER psychics to remain loyal to the organization.

In addition to the Johannesburg and Lagos Nests, VIPER also has Nests in Nairobi and Somalia, as well as many smaller facilities hidden away in bush, jungle, and mountain. The leader of the Johannesburg Nest, Roger Essec, theoretically controls all VIPER activity below the Sahara, but several other prominent agents, including Commandant Howard Petrie (Nest Leader in Lagos) and the supervillain Iron Lightning, wield far more influence than Essec is comfortable with.

EUROPE

After the United States, Europe is VIPER's territory of greatest activity, though the VIPER-Eurostar War sapped more of its strength there than it would like. With large Nests in Paris, Berlin, Geneva, Zurich, Warsaw, and Budapest, VIPER has a more cohesive network in Europe than the Mafia or any organized crime group. It uses this resource to steal valuables from museums, companies, and

private collections; commit large-scale fraud; smuggle goods across Europe's many national borders; provide weapons to Balkans combatants, German right-wing paramilitarists, and the many small terrorist groups that still infest parts of the continent; and engage in many other criminal activities.

The British Isles

VIPER has made relatively few inroads in the British Isles compared to continental Europe, though it has a major Nest in London and minor ones in Edinburgh and Dublin. General Barbara Jamison, Leader of the London Nest since 1994 and overall commander of VIPER activities in the U.K., has ambitions to expand VIPER's resources in the Isles, but so far her plans have come to naught. Somehow the New Knights of the Round Table, the London Watch, or other British supers seem to foil her every plan. But she's disciplined and determined, and no doubt already has another scheme in the works.

GENERAL BARBARA JAMISON

15 STR	15 DEX	15 CON	12 BODY
15 INT	14 EGO	20 PRE	12 COM
5 PD	4 ED	3 SPD	6 REC
30 END	30 STUN		

Abilities: Luck 2d6, Contacts (20 points' worth, throughout VIPER), VIPER Membership Perk, Breakfall 12-, Bribery 13-, Bureaucratics 13-, Deduction 13-, Fast Draw (Small Arms) 12-, Martial Arts (VIPER Brawling, all maneuvers), Oratory 13-, Persuasion 13-, PS: Play Chess 14-, Stealth 13-, Streetwise 13-, Tactics 13-, WF: Small Arms

50+ Disadvantages: Hunted (Watched by the Supreme Serpent and the Council Of Thirty); Psychological Limitation: Powerhungry; Rivalry (Professional, other high-ranking members of VIPER); Social Limitation: Subject To Orders; Unluck 1d6

Notes: A dark-haired, green-eyed woman in her mid-40s, Barbara Jamison joined VIPER in the late 1970s after several brushes with the law. Her intelligence, analytical abilities, and self-discipline have helped her rise through the ranks to her present position — but she's not done yet. She covets a position on the Council Of Thirty, and will do whatever she must to obtain it.

When not working, Jamison is a devoted chess player. Everyone in her command long ago learned not to play against her, so she matches wits with a computer or meets with other chess aficionados in public settings. She also enjoys similar games, such as go, but chess is her consistent favorite.

Russia

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia, once an area that saw little VIPER activity, has become one of the organization's most active and profitable regions. With the nation virtually a kleptocracy, VIPER has almost a free hand to loot, pillage, steal, and murder. VIPER leaders often reassign agents

COMMANDANT RICHARD SANJIVA

20 STR	18 DEX
20 CON	20 BODY
15 INT	12 EGO
20 PRE	10 COM
14 PD	14 ED
4 SPD	10 REC
40 END	40 STUN

Abilities: Damage Resistance (8 PD/8 ED), HA +4d6, Bureaucratics 13-, Computer Programming 12-, Contortionist 13-, Conversation 13-, Martial Arts (VIPER Brawling, 10 points' worth of maneuvers), Persuasion 13-, Seduction 13-, Stealth 14-, Streetwise 13-, WF: Common Melee Weapons, Small Arms

Disadvantages: Hunted (Watched by the Supreme Serpent and the Council Of Thirty); Psychological Limitation: Wants To Be Liked; Rivalry (Professional, other high-ranking members of VIPER); Social Limitation: Subject To Orders

Notes: Leader of the Bombay Nest, Richard Sanjiva enjoys enormous popularity among his agents. Willing and eager to lead missions himself, he frequently joins them when they commit crimes, taking the same risks they do and looking out for their welfare. Compared to the average Nest Leader, he's practically a populist... though he punishes disobedience or dereliction of duty harshly.

Sanjiva is a low-level mutant, with minor resilience powers — his skin is tough enough to bounce bullets (most of the time), and his bones so hard that his punches do more damage than usual. He believes the proper treatments could transform him into a full-fledged “brick,” but the possibility of undesirable side effects (including death) has deterred him from seeking them so far.

wanted for major crimes in other countries to the Moscow Nest until the heat cools off, since Russia has never located it, much less captured and extradited a wanted VIPER agent.

The Moscow Nest, though only a little over a decade old, has already become one of VIPER's wealthiest Nests, spawning "subsidiaries" in St. Petersburg, the Crimea, and several nations formed from parts of the former Union. General Piotr Krilov, leader of the Moscow Nest, is one of VIPER's rising stars. Some predict he'll succeed to a place on the Council Of Thirty when a vacancy next arises. Rumors among the other Nests say Krilov doesn't want to wait that long; he may take matters into his own hands and "arrange" a vacancy soon.

A few international security experts have expressed fears that VIPER may have become a major player in the thriving Russian black market in arms — specifically, nuclear weapons. Law enforcement and/or military officials have foiled a few attempts by various criminals to sell or buy parts of Russia's nuclear arsenal, but a disturbingly large amount of weapons-grade material remains unaccounted for. The possibility that VIPER may have obtained some of that material, or even entire working missiles, and become the world's first nuclear-capable criminal organization, has led to many sleepless nights among certain governmental officials.

SOUTH AND CENTRAL AMERICA

The seemingly endemic corruption and revolutions which characterize South and Central America and the Caribbean have long provided a cover for many VIPER operations. As in Africa, VIPER establishes manufacturing and testing facilities in wild and unmonitored areas, sells weapons, smuggles drugs and commodities, and corrupts officials. Nests in Buenos Aires, Asunción, São Paulo, Santiago, Caracas, and Managua ally themselves with the cocaine cartels, support FARC and other rebel groups to ensure the region remains in a state of unrest, and earn vast sums from the continent's thriving assassination market. At present, though, the power struggle going on in the upper echelons of the region's agents (see pages 44-45) has diminished VIPER's effectiveness in South America somewhat.

OCEANIA AND AUSTRALIA

VIPER has relatively little presence in this part of the world. Minor Nests in Sydney and Perth control all of the organization's operations in the Pacific, but generally speaking VIPER sees little in this region worthy of its attention. However, VIPER has established some testing or manufacturing bases on a few isolated islands, if necessary bribing the locals to keep quiet. Some VIPER scientists have also proposed the construction of an under-sea base somewhere in Micronesia, but as yet the organization's leadership remains lukewarm, at best, to this idea.

OUTER SPACE

The VIPERSAT-1 plot, which the Justice Squadron uncovered and foiled in the mid-1970s, remains VIPER's only attempt to enter space as far as most authorities are concerned. But the authorities are wrong. Though not an active participant in any "space race," VIPER has not ignored the high frontier. The VIPERSAT-3 series of four "stealth satellites," launched in 1985-87, remains both hidden and functional, providing VIPER with a communications capability unmatched by any other criminal organization. The Supreme Serpent plans to replace the VIPERSAT-3 system, now a somewhat outdated device, with the new VIPERSAT-6 sometime in the next several years. VIPER has also experimented with some space vehicles of its own, though these remain unique and unreliable.

DUCHESS INDUSTRIES

One of VIPER's most important "allies" — or resources, if you prefer — around the globe is Duchess Industries, the multinational conglomerate owned and controlled by Henrietta Von Drotte (page 29). Among the top ten largest corporations



in the world, Duchess Industries has its fingers in just about every type of moneymaking enterprise: manufacturing, mining, chemistry, biotechnology, computers, robots, aerospace, energy, and more. As a privately-owned corporation headquartered in Bonn, Germany, it escapes a lot of the regulations imposed on publicly-held companies.

Duchess Industries and VIPER have an almost symbiotic relationship. Without VIPER, Duchess would not have reached the pinnacles it has attained in the modern world; the criminal organization's assistance with industrial espionage, sabotage, and illegal experimentation has enabled Duchess to leap ahead of its competitors on numerous occasions. Conversely, Duchess often offers VIPER a legitimate front through which to conduct operations, launder money, and increase its influence over the business world.

As a business entity, Duchess Industries has simple goals: remain on the top of the corporate heap; and increase profits. But unlike most corporations, it lacks even the tiniest scruples about how to attain those goals. The only thing that reins Duchess in is fear of being caught (which would not only mean jail terms for those involved, but a tremendous PR blow). As long as the corporation's officers feel confident they can get away with it, they'll use all the weapons available to them: assassination; violation of environmental regulations; fraud; spin doctoring; blackmail; intellectual property theft. The average employee knows nothing of this, and would be shocked and dismayed to find out about it — but within the heart of Duchess lies a vast and vicious criminal conspiracy whose true bounds and full scope of activities are known only to Henrietta Von Drotte.

Of course, Duchess takes great pains to present a “friendly and responsible” corporate face to the world. Its tens of thousands of employees receive generous compensation and benefits, it donates millions of dollars to charity every year, and it promotes its “environmentally sensitive” policies. But even then, it often has a hidden agenda, such as running less well-funded competitors out of business due to the increased overhead brought on by expanded environmental regulations Duchess lobbied for.

Duchess Personnel

Besides the Duchess herself, some of the most prominent and important employees of Duchess Industries include:

EDWARD WARWICK, M.D.

The president and C.E.O. of Duchess North America, Warwick was once a practicing physician who lost his medical license due to a few too many malpractice suits. He drifted into research, where some of his ideas — not to mention his willingness to exploit research subjects for personal gain — eventually landed him a job at Duchess Industries. From there he worked his way up the corporate ladder, transitioning from research to management as he “arranged” vacancies with a surgeon's precision.

Although he's responsible for all of Duchess's operations in North America, Dr. Warwick usually has one or two “pet projects” that occupy a lot of his attention. Currently he spends much of his time with Project Bumblebee, a secret project within the company's biochemical research laboratories to determine the genetic or other factors responsible for the creation and development of superpowers (primarily mutant powers). Duchess scientists have begun a comprehensive study of superhuman abilities, often using data covertly gathered by VIPER operatives during conflicts with superheroes and passed on to Duchess through “channels.” If Warwick unlocks the secret of what causes superpowers, VIPER could very well become unstoppable.

JENNIFER KINKAID

Looking for all the world like a model instead of a corporate executive, Jennifer Kinkaid, the head of Duchess Industries public relations worldwide, conceals the temperament of a shark behind her winning smile. She's got a steel-trap mind and a vicious streak that makes her a perfect weapon in the Duchess's hands. Whenever Von Drotte wants to ruin an enemy or publicly humiliate a rival, she turns Kinkaid loose on the problem.

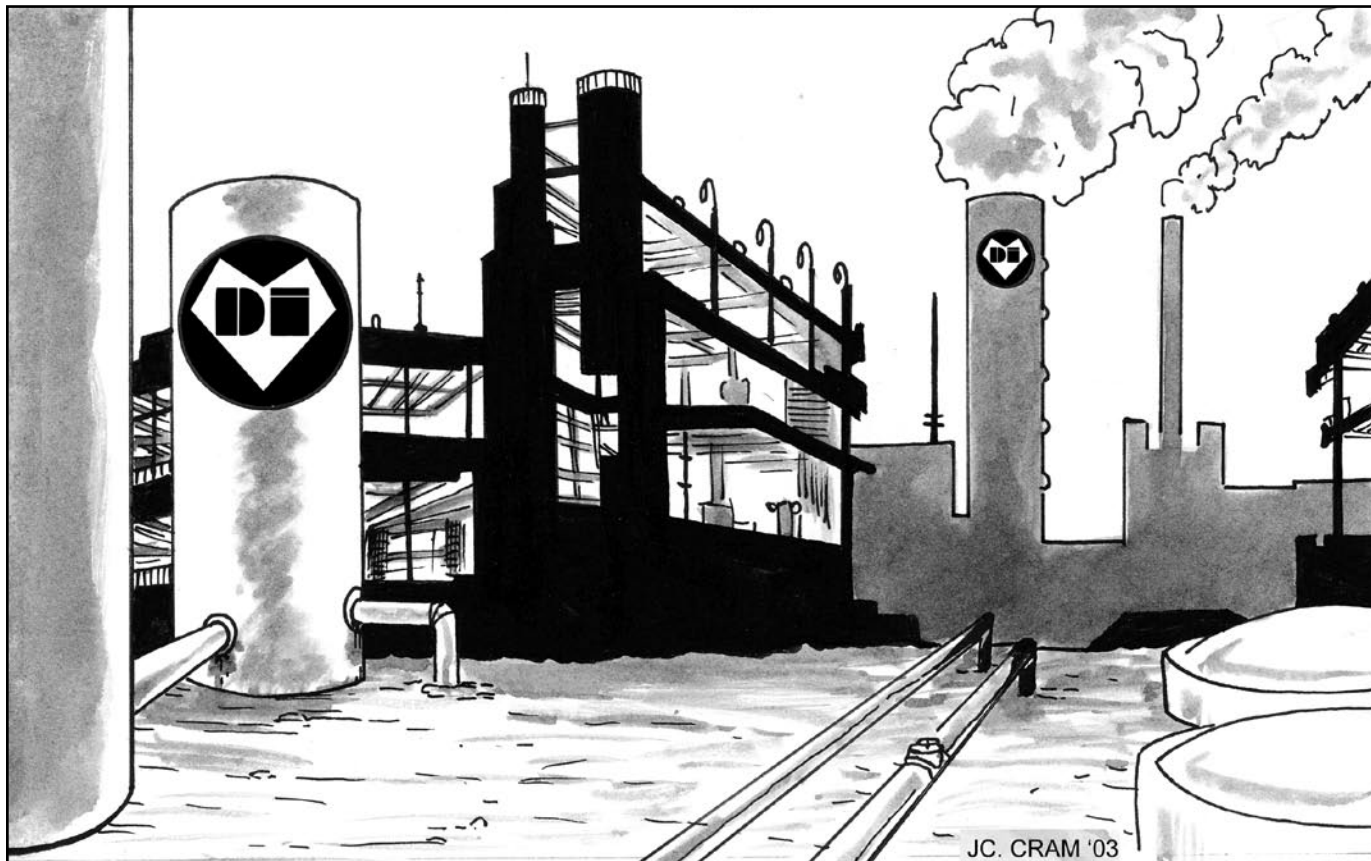
Based in Duchess's Washington, D.C. office, Kinkaid also oversees the company's lobbying efforts (both the direct ones, and the indirect ones through various shell corporations and dummy charities it sets up to conceal its interest in a particular issue). She knows the corridors of power in Washington well, and won't hesitate to trade on the many favors and contacts she (and the Duchess) have accumulated over the years.

Kinkaid's husband, Michael Morgan, is a partner at a powerful Washington law firm that does a great deal of work for Duchess Industries. Together they're a potent combination and two of Von Drotte's favorites. They're often among the select few asked to join the Duchess at “corporate retreats” in her lavish Swiss chalet.

LOGAN HENDRICKS

This tall (6'6”), broad-shouldered, muscular Canadian and former VIPER Nest Leader serves as Duchess's Head of Security. He's saved the Duchess's life on two occasions, and she trusts him as much as she trusts anyone. He knows most of her (and Duchess Industries's) secrets, though he's never once let one slip or showed any sign of disloyalty to Von Drotte. (And a good thing, too — she secretly planted a cortical bomb in his brain so she can kill him instantly if she has to.)

Although nominally headquartered at the main Duchess facility in Bonn, Hendricks usually goes wherever the Duchess goes so he can oversee her security arrangements personally. He has a reputation among his men for absolute fearlessness, and while he knows that's not true, it's an image he carefully cultivates. If necessary, he'd even take on a superhuman one-on-one to prove to his security personnel (and the Duchess) that he doesn't back down from anything.



Hendricks commands a force of nearly 5,000 security “troops” worldwide, more than a few (but by no means most) of them former VIPER agents. His men have the best equipment he can reasonably buy, excellent pay, and wide latitude about “busting skulls” when they think it’s necessary. He’d rather Duchess suffer a few “brutality” lawsuits (and beat them in court, usually) than run the risk of a security breach.

Duchess Projects

At any given time, Duchess Industries has thousands of research projects, corporate initiatives, and business plans in the works. Some of the more intriguing current ones include:

DI DEMOGRAPHICS RESEARCH, INC.

This branch of Duchess Industries purports to provide demographic research, public opinion polling, and related services for businesses, the better to enable them to predict future trends and plan their future products. DIDR does that... and more. In addition to helping Duchess Industries and other companies exploit the masses, DIDR researches the subject of group psychological manipulation. Its scientists, some of whom possess mild psionic powers, want to know the best ways to alter peoples’ perceptions through propaganda, control of the media, and even more direct means (brainwashing, mind control). VIPER has occasionally used DIDR’s findings when interrogating captured superheroes and UNTIL agents.

DIDR also helps Duchess maintain its edge in a sneakier way: it sometimes gives mildly incorrect

data to its customers. Given the broad trends it predicts, a change of just a few percentage points can have an enormous effect on profits, leaving Duchess in the black but its competitors in the red.

LABORATORI DI UNITA

An Italian subsidiary of Duchess Industries, Unita is a biotechnology firm working on solutions to global hunger. It wants to reduce, or better yet eliminate, the problems of starvation in sub-Saharan Africa, India, and other places through higher crop yields, development of new food sources, and the like.

But of course there’s more to this altruistic effort than meets the eye. Unita is the public face of Project Unity, a VIPER-Duchess effort to unite the sub-Saharan region of Africa into a single empire for VIPER to rule behind the scenes (page 18). The Duchess hopes to place herself on the throne of that empire, though the Supreme Serpent, who takes a proprietary interest in Africa, may have something to say about the matter.

PROJECT DOVE

In recent years, the Duchess has become extremely interested in the Warlord and his technology. She suspects it may have its basis in alien science, but has no definitive proof. Eager to get her hands on it, and use it to provide VIPER with new weapons, she has begun a covert campaign against him and his organization. She has dummy corporations hire him for fictitious jobs and then vanish (thus consuming his resources to no end), tries to lure him into situations where he’s vulnerable to counterattack, and so on. When appropriate, she

secretly tips off superhero teams to his activities. She figures it won't take long for someone to apprehend him, then she can easily steal his weaponry from the authorities. If she realized the supervillain Devastator was using Warlord-inspired technological designs, she'd make him a target, too.

PROJECT SILENT PARTNER

In the latter quarter of the twentieth century, when super-technology-wielding heroes became ever more common, the Duchess had an intriguing notion: steal their technology. A hero who maintains a secret identity can't patent his inventions, so if Duchess could obtain them it could register them itself and make money from them without incurring R&D costs. And so was born Project Silent Partner, a joint VIPER-Duchess operation that goes into effect whenever project analysts find a hero with the appropriate attributes: (a) has technology Duchess could use which he has not patented; and (b) is vulnerable to attack. The project scrambles a special team of VIPER agents armed with capture and restraint weapons as well as devices that can temporarily neutralize technology and crack open suits of powered armor. If all goes well, the agents return to their European base of operations in just a week or two with new gadgets for the Duchess's scientists to study and replicate.

VIPER AND WORLD SUBCULTURES

Many "worlds" or subcultures intersect with the Superhuman World. In many ways, VIPER is the jack of all trades of the Champions Universe; while it doesn't particularly dominate any one specific area, there are a couple of areas where it has major involvement, and it dabbles in nearly every aspect of society.

THE BUSINESS WORLD

From behind the scenes, VIPER is a huge player in the business world of the Champions Universe. Many members of the Council Of Thirty own multibillion dollar corporations and work together to keep each other wealthy and powerful. Some experts have described VIPER as "a business cartel that commits crimes on the side" and that's not very far from the truth in many respects. And in some cases, what VIPER can't steal, it can acquire; companies like Duchess Industries are *very* aggressive purchasers of high-tech research firms, because you never know when some superhero or rogue villain will hide his technical secrets in a small start-up firm.

THE ESPIONAGE WORLD

Some people believe one out of every three people in the American government is a VIPER spy. This is nonsense, but VIPER has its proverbial fingers in as many pots as it can. In most defense- and research-related department of government, VIPER has a deep cover agent planted somewhere; in nearly every major industrial firm that VIPER doesn't own, there's someone secretly working on its behalf. (Of course, watching an R&D department of a major governmental agency or corporation is a huge task, and many projects slip under VIPER's radar.)

The nation that's proven the greatest challenge for VIPER to infiltrate has been China. VIPER hopes the increased world commerce with China will open its bureaucracy as well as its markets to VIPER infiltration.

THE MARTIAL WORLD

Although VIPER's martial arts specialists, the Takara-Shinja, are extraordinary by normal standards, there's no single VIPER martial artist in the league of people like Fiacho, Jade Phoenix, and Nightwind (though the Supreme Serpent comes close in some ways). VIPER prefers to focus on developing better weapons for its agents, rather than better fighting techniques.

THE MERCENARY/MILITARY/ TERRORIST WORLD

VIPER keeps a careful eye on the mercenary and terrorist world, but rarely employs "outside talent" (as they refer to mercenaries) or "local lunatics" (as they refer to terrorists) — though it does sometimes sell weapons to both groups. VIPER has no problems with raiding either community for talent, but otherwise holds modern Mideast terrorism in contempt. It's a backward, reactionary force with no relationship to VIPER's goal of world advancement.

THE MYSTIC WORLD

VIPER has little to do with the occult. VIPER in the United States is generally anti-magic, but elsewhere (particularly given the organization's roots) it can't completely reject the Mystic World. Worldwide, VIPER includes African cultists, arcanologists who pursue mystical artifacts, and the like, and it makes no apologies for them. VIPER's standing in the mystical community is quite low; mystics treat agents as artifact scavengers and thieves, and no self-respecting occultist deals with them.

VIPER INTERNAL POLITICS



BREAKING THE OATH

If one of the Thirty Founders breaks the Oath Of Nama — if he directly or indirectly betrays another of the Thirty, or VIPER as a whole — then he dies. This is a plot device, pure and simple, so there are no game statistics for it; it just happens, and nothing can save the Founder from his fate.

None of the Founders is magically prevented from betraying the organization. Any one of them could do so if he chose; it would simply be a form of suicide. It's even possible the PCs could trick a Founder into betraying VIPER, or somehow egg him on to do it (perhaps by triggering a strong Enraged or Psychological Limitation). However, if the PCs use Mind Control or similar methods to *force* a Founder to "betray" VIPER, the Oath does *not* take effect; Nama's not that foolish.

Though far better disciplined and organized today than in the past, VIPER remains an organization of criminals. As such, it's subject to internal feuds, power struggles, stealthy assassinations, and other forms of competition between members. A group of greedy, unprincipled, ruthless people doesn't always function smoothly.

COUNCIL OF THIRTY POLITICS

The most important rivalries within the organization are the ones between the members of the Council Of Thirty. While none of the Thirty would dare challenge the Supreme Serpent for leadership of VIPER, all of them jockey for power and influence. Each uses spies, surveillance technology, and a thousand other schemes to increase his own authority and resources, or weaken those of his rivals.

One important check exists on this sort of activity: the oath sworn by the Thirty Founders, which the mystic power of the Serpent Lantern enforces on them. This means one of the Thirty Founders cannot directly or indirectly "betray" another Founder or the organization as a whole. But the oath is not without its limits. First, "betray" has a relatively narrow meaning. A Founder cannot inform the authorities about another Founder's activities (or those of his underlings), nor attack that Founder (or his interests) in any way. But he can refuse to help another Founder, attempt to out-do another Founder within the organization, or indirectly weaken him by siphoning off his resources in some way. Second, the oath does not extend to newcomers to the Council — persons appointed to it to fill vacancies among the Thirty Founders. Those persons can betray other Council members, and be betrayed by them in turn, making for interesting internal machinations indeed.

Two Council members are the special targets of many of their peers: the Duchess and Roger Essec. Many of the Thirty view Essec as "daddy's boy," even though he was a member of VIPER long before his father returned to the world, and they resent the influence and prestige this gives him. They know he would be next in line for the throne if the Supreme Serpent had his way, so they want to remove him from the picture to give each of them a better chance. As for the Duchess, she's simply too powerful for any of the other Council members to remain comfortable with. They're particularly concerned about her Unita project and the possibility she might come to rule a sizable portion of Africa.

BRANCH AND NEST POLITICS

Similarly, each of the major branches of VIPER fights with the others for the place of prominence within the organization. All four make their own claims to be "the most important part of VIPER," and do their best to prove it by showing the others up. Within a given Nest, agents often align themselves among the branches, denying their rivals equipment, services, or financing, or perhaps dis- posing of an enemy with an anonymous phone call to the police.

Individual Nests often compete, openly or covertly, for power, profits, and prestige. A successful, high-earning Nest gains more influence within the organization than a weaker, less profitable one, and some try to improve their own track records by stealing from or hindering other Nests (secretly, of course — the Supreme Serpent would kill any agents caught stealing from any part of his organization).

Smaller-scale struggles and rivalries often occur within individual Nests. Since an agent moves up the VIPER ladder either when his superiors prove themselves incompetent, or he fills a vacancy above him based on his own abilities, VIPER's own culture and rules exacerbate this behavior — the best way to find a vacancy to fill is to create it yourself. Many a Nest Leader sleeps with one eye open, knowing any number of contenders for his position may try to advance their cause by killing him. A clever leader learns how to play various factions in his Nest off against each other, keeping himself secure by deflecting his enemies' attention.

The two most rivalry-fraught regions in VIPER are Africa and South America. In Africa, Roger Essec's authority over the continent has come under quiet siege by two people. The first, Commandant Howard Petrie, controls all VIPER operations in Lagos. Petrie thinks he, not Essec, should run Africa. The claim of the other rival, a superhuman known as Iron Lightning, rests on naked power — since he is, arguably, the single most powerful VIPER agent in Africa, "I.L." (as he's widely known by rank-and-file agents) thinks he should command the others. The Supreme Serpent, preferring to have the strongest and most capable leader at the helm in Africa, has chosen to let them fight it out among themselves; he seems strangely unconcerned about the danger to his son.

The situation in South America isn't much different. The leaders of the region's main Nests (see above) have fought each other for power for years, often to the point of refusing to cooperate in joint

operations. As of 2003, the leader of the Buenos Aires Nest, Commandant Rafael Carlos Mendez, widely considered a favorite of the Supreme Serpent's, seems to be in the lead, but events could swiftly reverse themselves if he does not take care to preserve his position.

THE VIPER ECONOMY

VIPER is a huge organization, and people often wonder how anything that big can hold itself together financially. There are several reasons it can.

First, VIPER expects its Nests to remain largely self-sufficient. VIPER's central command may loan a Nest money and materiel, but only if the Council Of Thirty feels it deserves it (based on the Nest's general track record, earnings, and the like) or the Council can forward its own agenda by doing so. Nests usually have good financial backing, if only because they need to provide cover jobs for their men.

On the other hand, when the Council Of Thirty's VIPER operations show a profit, VIPER likes to spread the wealth down to the men, thereby cementing their loyalty. Rather than paying huge cash bonuses (which the agent can use to achieve a greater independence), they prefer to fly agents out to VIPER-controlled resorts and show them a good time. Particularly loyal and capable agents, however, do receive cash bonuses (often through rigged gambling winnings — VIPER's well-versed in a number of old school money laundering techniques).

More surprisingly, VIPER Nests sometimes agree to make sure that certain family members and friends of VIPER agents receive "perks." They let agents use their cover identity jobs to provide services (home repair, landscaping, low-rate mortgages...) to other agents' family for little or no cost (with the Nest subsidizing the work so the agent doesn't lose money), and in some cases even give money to the families of injured agents until the "breadwinner" is back on his feet. Some Nests, taking a cue from organized crime, adopt a neighborhood and refurbish it with new parks, schools, theaters, and clubs (all of which generate income for VIPER, and many of which may provide leads on recruits).

Second, VIPER's leadership has an economy on a much larger scale — the Council Of Thirty and the Supreme Serpent play in the big leagues. They directly or indirectly control much of the resources of west and central Africa, including the diamond and gold trade and Nigeria's oil supply. This alone gives them a resource base that generates tens of billions of dollars each year. In addition, Council wields enormous industrial might — and the "black budget" R&D of its companies gives VIPER additional funding worth \$50-100 billion dollars per year.

VIPER PLOT HOOKS

Need a quick plot to get your game going? Here are a few schemes that VIPER is, or could be, involved with that your PCs will undoubtedly want to stop.

A Man, A Plan, A Canal...: Several VIPER Nests in South America, Central America, and Mexico combine forces under Mendez's leadership to try to hold the Panama Canal hostage. They threaten to destroy this vital waterway unless they receive a \$100 billion payment within 24 hours. The PCs can either try to stop the plot through force (which involves fighting through a large group of agents, plus as many supervillains as you need), or try to exploit the rivalries and antagonisms between the Nest Leaders to make the plot unravel.

Space Race: In an effort to improve its space vehicles, and perhaps to establish some space bases to rival UNTIL's GATEWAY station, VIPER plans a series of raids on NASA and various contractors working with it. One or two initial thefts, perhaps disguised as the work of "aliens," tip the PCs off, allowing them to track VIPER's men to their next target (where the agents confront them with powerful new weapons built using technology stolen in the earlier robberies).

Apotheosis For A Day: Julie Mathewson (page 133) has a major breakthrough in her research and begins churning out new VIPER superhumans at an astonishing rate (though most lose their superpowers after a few weeks, sometimes dying as a result). A rash of kidnappings and disappearances, coupled with a wave of crime by previously unknown supervillains, eventually leads the PCs into a climactic confrontation with VIPER, and perhaps a chance to capture Prof. Mathewson.

Power Play: VIPER attempts to engineer a coup in Kirgizistan, hoping to put a puppet in control and turning the country into one vast, and completely legal, VIPER Nest. Confronted by a plot they can't defeat with sheer might, the PCs have to think fast and tread carefully to prevent VIPER from achieving its aims.

Operation Starfire: The Silicon Serpent (leader of the Steel Citadel, one of the San Francisco Nests) learns a nearby laboratory has received a government contract to study some unusual technology that may have come from a wrecked alien spacecraft. Determined to take possession of this technology, he steals the devices and data, then uses them to construct a massive energy cannon — a prototype for a new, ultra-powerful line of VIPER weapons. The PCs have to figure out what he's doing and stop him before VIPER becomes the most heavily-armed organization on the planet.



VIPER: chapter three

FANGS OF THE SERPENT

AGENT TRAINING



“What is VIPER’s most terrifying plan for world domination? It’s our least secret plan, actually. People think of our agents as cannon fodder, as disposable commodities. What they really are is a thousand seeds of carefully planted hate. And when these seeds sprout, rise to touch the sun, and blossom, who knows what dark glories these souls will inflict upon the world?”

—The Supreme Serpent

The agent is the black heart and soul of VIPER, and anyone who doubts it has never seen the cold stare in an agent’s eyes as he pulls the trigger on a defenseless hostage. Agents are *not* cannon fodder; they’re apostles of terror, and with oft-evangelical fervor they spread VIPER’s message of fear to the world. A VIPER agent isn’t that much different than a normal human being, and that makes him more terrifying. He’s what your neighbors might be, behind locked doors and lowered blinds. Underneath the smoked glass of an agent’s faceplate could be your lawyer, your teacher, even your brother. VIPER is insidious.

VIPER organizes its agents into three divisions: Cobra (Combat); Constrictor (Intelligence); and Adder (Technical) (plus a few types of agents who fall outside that structure). Each division has two or three “levels” of agents, defined by the amount of training they receive. The accompanying text box describes the general divisional structure.

STAGES OF AGENT TRAINING

Agents generally go through three, and sometimes four, stages of training.

Stage One: The Naked Agent

VIPER agents come from all walks of life. They either join VIPER through chance encounters with VIPER agents, or through recruiters. Recruiters are veteran agents — usually VIPER infiltrators in the candidate’s workplace, or professional headhunters from VIPER allied firms such as Duchess Industries. Prospective agents are most frequently recruited from the armed services, prisons, law enforcement, and like sources (see page 20). The primary qualities VIPER looks for in its agents are:

- high levels of physical fitness (see below)
- dissatisfaction with government (and a general dislike of humanity in general)

- a feeling of powerlessness in modern society
- a lack of serious mental illness
- a willingness to commit crime for personal gain
- a general lack of moral scruples

VIPER AGENT DIVISIONS

COBRA DIVISION (COMBAT)

Level I Basic Combat Agent

General Combat Specialist

Level II Combat Specialists

Air Cavalry Specialist
Demolitions Specialist
Environmental Combat Specialist
Firestarter (Fire Operations Specialist)
Heavy Weapons Specialist
Melee Combat Specialist
Night Operations Specialist
Red Guard (knife experts)
Sniper Specialist
Superhuman Combat Specialist
Vehicle Combat Specialist

Level III Combat Specialists

Athame (Anti-Magic Specialist)
Flight Commander
Scarlet Serpent (Tactical Command Specialist)
The Watch (Anti-Psionic Specialist)

CONSTRUCTOR DIVISION (INTELLIGENCE)

Level I Basic Intelligence Agent

General Intelligence Specialist

Level II Intelligence Specialists

Espionage Specialist
Infiltration Specialist
Logistics Specialist
Media Specialist
Surveillance Specialist
Underworld Operations Specialist

ADDER DIVISION (TECHNICAL)

Level I Basic Technical Agent

General Technical Specialist

Level II Technical Specialists

Communications Specialist
Computer Specialist
Crime Evasion Specialist
Medical Specialist
Science Specialist
Vehicle Maintenance Specialist

SPECIALIZED PACKAGES

Draysha
Nest Leader
Serpent Mage
Snake Cultist
Takara-Shinja

Most VIPER recruiters won't take people who are obviously schizophrenic or suffering from other serious mental disturbances, although they may recruit those who have problems they judge "workable": drug addicts, alcoholics, learning difficulties. Clinical sociopathy is *not* viewed as a problem; in fact, some Nest Leaders consider it an asset.

RECRUIT TESTING

"Yes we're VIPERs through and through! Killing folks is what we do!"

—VIPER parade ground chant

When VIPER recruits an agent, it checks for two things. First, it tests the candidate for "mental strength" (the ability to obey orders and perform heinous acts without question). Second, it puts the candidate through a rigorous series of tests to determine physical strength, agility, endurance, perception, and pain tolerance. Those who fails these tests are quietly killed. Those who pass are sent to VIPER Academy for indoctrination and training.

In most cases, the minimum Characteristics a recruit needs to pass the tests and make it into VIPER Academy are: 12 STR, 12 DEX, 11 CON, 10 BODY, 9 INT, 9 EGO, 9 PRE, 6 COM, 3 PD, 3 ED, 2 SPD, 4 REC, 22 END, 22 STUN. However, VIPER sometimes makes an exception. For example, a recruit perceived as highly intelligent and ruthless may slide by without having the physical toughness normally required; one who seems especially

unscrupulous yet disciplined might not need as much agility or intelligence. After all, part of the Academy training process involves enhancing recruits physically and mentally, so these "exceptions" soon have a chance to improve themselves to VIPER standards.

Stage Two: Death Or Glory

VIPER Academy (page 21) offers many things to the prospective agent: pain, suffering, education, the possibility of minor mutation, an official "I Have Become A Serpent" T-shirt, and a free pet snake. And it's the one place on Earth where dissatisfied rednecks and three-time losers can go to become truly deranged cult-killers.

If a VIPER agent passes VIPER Academy, he receives the rank of Agent (Basic) and an assignment to a Nest as a fully indoctrinated member of VIPER. Veterans sarcastically refer to new agents as "Baby Snakes" and "Green Fangs."

At this stage, an agent has one of the three Basic VIPER Agent Package Deals below: General Combat Specialist; General Intelligence Specialist; or General Technical Specialist. These are the base templates (both in and out of game) of all VIPER Agents.

Physical Changes During Training

While VIPER Agents train at the Academy, VIPER puts them through a grueling physical and mental training marathon, sometimes augmented with drug treatments or even a little gene splicing and surgery to correct minor physical defects. By the end of the six-month program, recruits have usually put on 20-30 pounds of muscle and increased their reflex time by as much as 50-70%. In addition, the training and drug treatments focus the agent's mind, making him calmer, smarter, and more perceptive than he was prior to the treatment. These changes usually don't go unnoticed by the agent's old friends, but they usually approve — at least until they realize how cold and detached he acts toward his former life.

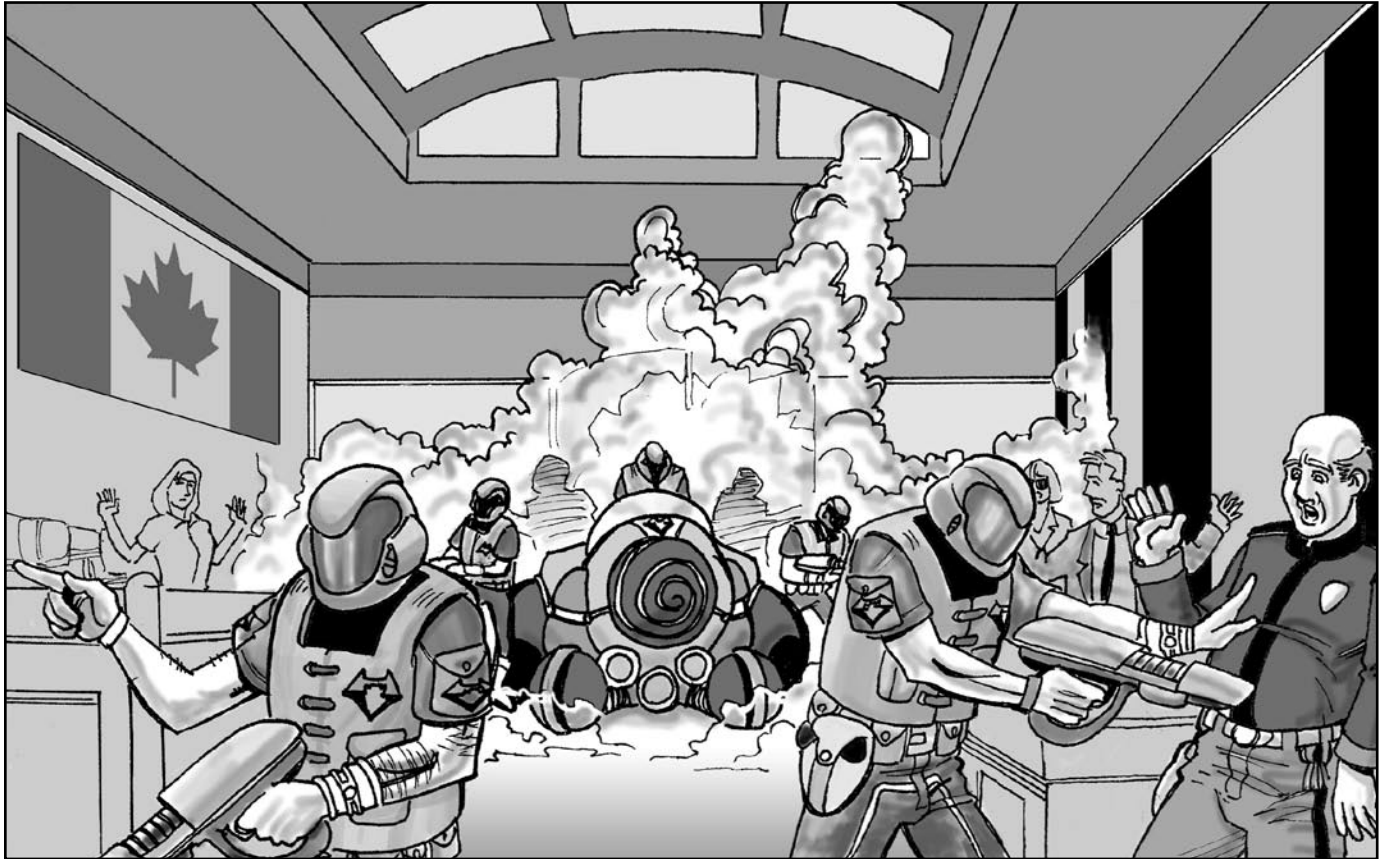
Stage Three: The School Of Hard Knocks

Being assigned to a Nest is like getting thrown into the deep end of the pool: it's sink or swim. VIPER doesn't have an "acclimation period" or "on-the-job mentoring" program for new agents; they have to learn to survive and thrive on their own.

The VIPER lexicon has two words to describe agents who remain at the General Combat Specialist level for a long period of time: *Loser*, and the ever-popular "Generally Crappy Soldier." The truth is, though, that most agents remain in the lower ranks of the Basic Agents; relatively few display the aptitude for Elite training.

If an agent *does* show promise in a particular area after at least a few months on the job, VIPER arranges to test him. If he fails, he remains





where he is; if he passes, he's sent back to the Academy for specialized training. Those who pass the training receive a promotion to Elite Agent, with improved rank and equipment. The uniform remains unchanged (except for the insignia), though some Nests issue BCUs in a deeper shade of green than normal. Elite Agents (sometimes called "Eels," particularly by Basic Agents) are the only ones eligible to advance further up the chain of command.

Stage Four: The Burden Of Command

After an Elite Agent serves for two years (or for a year with distinguished service), most Nests review whether he should receive a promotion to

the rank of sergeant, or be placed on an "officer track" for even higher rank. As noted on page 35, an agent's performance and earnings record are the criteria VIPER places the most importance on when deciding whether to promote him.

Those who receive a promotion are made second-in-command of the first squad with an opening, or put in charge of a squadron if appropriate. At least that's the theory. Most promotions *really* occur when a squadron commander has been captured or injured too badly to perform his duty.

Agents who obtain promotions aren't *that* much more innately capable than other VIPER agents. The VIPER Academy mutation process pretty much maximizes their physical capabilities at the beginning of their careers, unless they attempt stronger, riskier treatment such as the *draysha* process.

VIPER PACKAGE DEALS



BETTER RANK, BETTER TECH

As a VIPER agent ascends through the ranks, the organization typically issues him better equipment. He'll have helmet add-ons to protect or improve his senses, weapon add-ons to make his blasters better or more powerful, a force field belt to enhance his uniform's defensive capabilities, and so forth.

As a good rule of thumb, for every rank above Elite Agent (Sergeant, Lieutenant, Captain, and so forth), give an agent at least one additional or improved piece of equipment. Depending on his job profile, an officer may have even more gear.

In game terms, you need to go through a two- (or sometimes three-) step process when you want to create a VIPER agent. It all depends on how competent and skilled the agent is.

First, take a Noteworthy Normal (10 in all Primary Characteristics; see page 224 of the *HERO System 5th Edition*). Apply to it the VIPER Academy Self-Improvement Package Deal described below. This raises the agent's Characteristics to acceptable levels for a Basic Agent, but provides no Skills.

Second, apply one of the three Basic Agent Package Deals: General Combat Specialist (page 51); General Intelligence Specialist (page 57); or General Technical Specialist (page 60). These are the base templates (both in and out of game) of all VIPER Agents.

Third, if appropriate, apply one (or more) of the Specialist Package Deals for the division the agent works with. For example, an agent with the General Combat Specialist Package Deal might go on to join VIPER's flying forces as an Air Cavalry Specialist; one who's a General Technical Specialist might later train to be a Crime Evasion Specialist. If an agent receives the same Skill from two or more Package Deals, either substitute a related Skill or use the points to improve the Skill.

Because these Package Deals are intended for use in *Champions*, a Superheroic-level game in which characters pay Character Points for equipment, they include the cost of the equipment assigned to the agent (advanced agents, who have to go through basic training first, already have the appropriate Basic Agent equipment, so it's not listed as part of their Package Deal). Gamemasters can ignore this cost if they create and run VIPER agents in Heroic-level games. See Chapter Five for complete details on all items of equipment listed in Package Deals. Feel free to swap the listed weapons for others, or to add weapons, if appropriate or necessary for your game. In addition to their listed equipment, agents with specialized jobs (such as Crime Evasion or Medical agents) may carry Skill Kits (page 116) appropriate to their function.

See the Agent Templates (page 181) for some pre-generated agents built in this manner.

VIPER ACADEMY SELF-IMPROVEMENT PACKAGE DEAL

VIPER can't work with shoddy material. Before it can train a person to become a VIPER agent, that person must have the physical and mental toughness necessary to succeed in the organization. Accordingly, any recruit who comes to VIPER Academy who isn't already physically and mentally "in shape" *will be* by the time he leaves.

VIPER ACADEMY SELF-IMPROVEMENT PACKAGE DEAL

Ability	Cost
+5 STR	5
+4 DEX	12
+3 CON	6
+2 BODY	4
+3 PRE	3
+1 PD	1
+1 ED	1
+1 SPD	6
+3 STUN	3

Disadvantages	Value
None	

Total Cost Of Package: 41

COBRA DIVISION (COMBAT) PACKAGE DEALS

Cobra agents are VIPER's front-line soldiers. They're the agents most commonly encountered by superheroes and law enforcement, and they make up the bulk of the rank and file.

VIPER General Combat Specialist Package Deal

VIPER agents destined for the battlefield all take this Package Deal.

The typical Cobra agent wears a standard Basic Combat Uniform ("BCU") in green and yellow (page 114). It consists of a tight-fitting green pants and tunic, with yellow non-laced boots, belt, gauntlets, and piping. The VIPER symbol appears on the left breast and both upper arms, with rank insignia

above it. Attached to the VIPER agent's belt, and also colored yellow, are a holster for the agent's VB-S1 Blaster Pistol and a sheath for his VIPER Fang combat knife. The agent also carries a VB-A1 "Striker" Blaster Rifle. In the field, a VIPER agent wears a distinctive helmet, green with a one-way gold-colored faceplate that hides the wearer's identity, with rank insignia painted on each side.

GENERAL COMBAT SPECIALIST PACKAGE DEAL

Ability Cost

+2 with VIPER Blasters	6
KS: The Superhuman World 8-	1
KS: The Local Underworld 11-	2
KS: VIPER 11-	2
Martial Arts: VIPER Brawling (see text box)	15
PS: VIPER Agent 11-	2
Stealth	3
Streetwise	3
WF: Small Arms, Blades	3
Fringe Benefit: Membership (VIPER Basic Agent)	1
21 points' worth of Skills from the following list	21

Animal Handler (Snakes), Bugging, Combat Driving, Combat Piloting, Combat Skill Levels, Computer Programming, Concealment, Conversation, Deduction, Demolitions, Electronics, Fast Draw, Forgery, Gambling, Interrogation, Lockpicking, Paramedics, Persuasion, Security Systems, Shadowing, Systems Operation, Tactics, Teamwork, any Background Skill

Equipment

Cost Power

42	VB-A1 "Striker" Blaster Rifle
15	VB-S1 "Shorty" Blaster Pistol
12	VIPER Fang
9	VIPER BCU (Basic)
8	VIPER Helmet (Basic)

Disadvantages

Value

Distinctive Features: VIPER uniform (Easily Concealed; Noticed And Recognizable)	-5
Hunted: VIPER 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)	-10
Psychological Limitation: Amoral And Greedy (Common, Strong)	-15
Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)	-20

Total Cost Of Package: 95

Level II Cobra Division Package Deals

A Basic Agent in the Cobra division can aspire to any one of eleven Level II advanced training suites: Air Cavalry; Demolitions Specialist; Environmental Combat Specialist; Firestarter (Fire Operations Specialist); Heavy Weapons Specialist; Melee Combat Specialist; Night Operations Specialist; Red Guard; Sniper Specialist; Superhuman Combat Specialist; and Vehicle Combat Specialist.

All Level II combat specialists wear the Elite version of the VIPER BCU.

VIPER BRAWLING

The basic fighting style taught to VIPER agents is a quick-and-dirty "art" that emphasizes brutal blows and defeating the enemy as quickly as possible. It's not fancy or elaborate, but it provides the agent with much better fighting ability than the average street tough.

Maneuver	Phs	Cost	OCV	DCV	Notes
Block	½	4	+2	+2	Block, Abort
Dodge	½	4	—	+5	Dodge, Affects All Attacks, Abort
Punch	½	4	+0	+2	STR +2d6 Strike
Throw	½	3	+0	+1	STR + vel/5; Target Falls

AIR CAVALRY PACKAGE DEAL

Air Cavalry are highly-trained aerial combat agents who use the VFL-4 Jetpack to fight in the airspace above a battlefield and provide air support for agents on the ground. Their maneuverability and mobility makes them a major asset in many battles, but they have an often well-deserved reputation for recklessness and exposing themselves to enemy fire too much. Next to Nest Leaders and Vehicle Combat Specialists, Air Cavalry are often perceived as the "best" specialty agents in a Nest, so they tend to get the best equipment. They prefer laser weapons (which jostle them less in flight than other weapons and are easier to aim while airborne).

AIR CAVALRY PACKAGE DEAL

Ability Cost

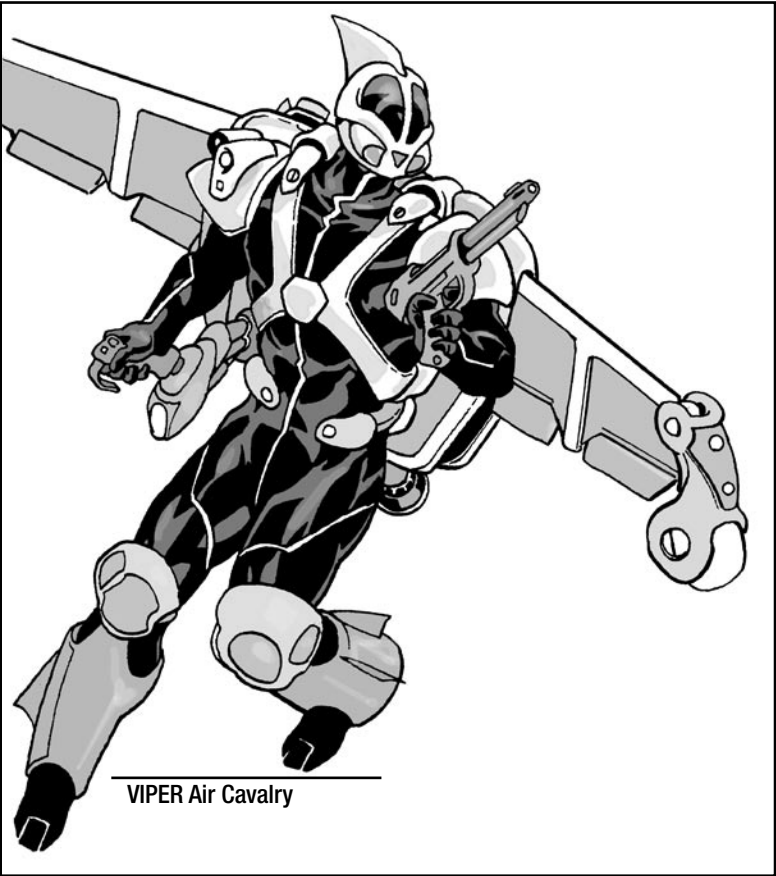
+2 DCV; Only While Using Jetpack (-½)	7
Breakfall	3
Combat Piloting	3
KS: The Pilot World 8-	1
+1 to KS: VIPER (making it an INT Roll)	1
Navigation (Air)	2
+1 to PS: VIPER Agent (making it an INT Roll)	1
TF: VFL-4 VIPER Jetpack	1
+1 to Fringe Benefit: Membership	1

Equipment

Cost Power

33	VFL-4 Jetpack
47	VL-A1 "Redline" Laser Rifle
16	VL-S1 "Redeye" Laser Pistol
16	VG-1 Frag Grenades (or other grenades)
8	VIPER Wrist Computer
20	VIPER Helmet (Elite, with Telescopic faceplate)

Total Cost Of Package: 160



ENVIRONMENTAL COMBAT
SPECIALIST PACKAGE DEAL

Ability	Cost
+1" Running	2
Breakfall	3
Climbing	3
+1 to KS: VIPER (making it an INT Roll)	1
Navigation (Ground)	2
Paramedic	3
+1 to PS: VIPER Agent (making it an INT Roll)	1
Survival (INT Roll, two environment groups)	4
TF (appropriate to a Survival environment)	1
+1 to Fringe Benefit: Membership	1

Equipment	Cost	Power
16 VL-S1 "Redeye" Laser Pistol		
16 VG-1 Frag Grenades (or other grenades)		
8 VIPER Wrist Computer		
20 VIPER Helmet (Elite, with Telescopic faceplate)		

Total Cost Of Package: 81

FIRESTARTER (FIRE OPERATIONS
SPECIALIST) PACKAGE DEAL

While VIPER Nests conduct many convoluted schemes in the pursuit of money and power, they don't neglect the bread and butter crimes, including arson and insurance fraud. These crimes alone would make a Firestarter valuable to a Nest, but Firestarters also allow Nests to set booby traps and create dangerous diversions. They're also useful to have around in case something goes horribly wrong with explosives or chemicals at the Nest. As with many other highly specialized agent types, Nests usually save the Firestarter for special operations, or send him into non-combat situations where Espionage and Surveillance Specialists watch his back.

FIRESTARTER SPECIALIST
PACKAGE DEAL

Ability	Cost
Criminology	3
Demolitions	3
KS: Arson Investigation 11-	2
+1 to KS: VIPER (making it an INT Roll)	1
+1 to PS: VIPER Agent (making it an INT Roll)	1
SS: Chemistry 11-	2
SS: Pyrology 11-	2
SS: Structural Engineering 11-	2
+1 to Fringe Benefit: Membership	1

Equipment	Cost	Power
23 VF-7 "Torchie" Flamethrower		
11 VIPER BCU (Fire-Retardant)		
15 VIPER Helmet (Basic, with Oxygen Supply)		

Total Cost Of Package: 66

ENVIRONMENTAL
COMBAT
SPECIALIST
PACKAGES

Here are a few suggested Skill packages for various types of Environmental Combat Specialists:

Aquatic
Change Running +1" to Swimming +2"
Change Navigation to (Marine)
Survival: Temperate, Marine
TF: SCUBA

Arctic
Survival: Arctic/Subarctic, Marine
TF: Snowmobiles or Snow Skiing or Iceskating

Desert
Survival: Deserts, Temperate
TF: Camels

DEMOLITIONS SPECIALIST PACKAGE DEAL

Demolitions Specialists are VIPER's experts in handling high explosives and setting charges. While Demolitions Specialists have a reputation as dumb guys who like to blow things up, it's usually not warranted — most of them are capable engineers.

DEMOLITIONS SPECIALIST
PACKAGE DEAL

Ability	Cost
Demolitions (INT +1)	5
Electronics	3
+1 to KS: VIPER (making it an INT Roll)	1
+1 to PS: VIPER Agent (making it an INT Roll)	1
SS: Structural Engineering (INT +1)	4
+1 to Fringe Benefit: Membership	1

Equipment	Cost	Power
12 VIPER Helmet (Elite)		

Total Cost Of Package: 27

ENVIRONMENTAL COMBAT SPECIALIST
PACKAGE DEAL

A relative rarity for most Nests (who tend to stay in one type of environment and don't expose themselves to wide variations in climate and terrain), the Environmental Combat Specialist agent exists for those times when VIPER has a mission to perform far afield (such as underwater or in deserts). Most work directly for a member of the Council Of Thirty, who hires them out to Nests who need them.

HEAVY WEAPONS SPECIALIST PACKAGE DEAL

These guys are the big muscle of VIPER — agents trained and equipped to handle the agency's biggest guns. VIPER looks for physical strength and toughness in these agents, then engineers them to be bigger and tougher. VIPER wants their HWSs to demonstrate coolness under fire, but unfortunately, this specialization often attracts bullies, psychopaths, and steroid addicts who are more likely to go berserk than stay cool. Within VIPER, they're called "Maulers"; they also receive the less flattering nicknames "Grunt Vipers," "Hwackos," and "Juicers," although rarely to their faces.

HEAVY WEAPONS SPECIALIST PACKAGE DEAL

Ability	Cost
+3 STR	3
KS: Military Technology 11-	2
KS: The Military/Mercenary/Terrorist World 11-	2
+1 to KS: VIPER (making it an INT Roll)	1
+1 to PS: VIPER Agent (making it an INT Roll)	1
Tactics	3
Teamwork	3
WF: Emplaced Weapons, Flamethrowers, Grenade Launchers, Heavy Machine Guns, Shoulder-Fired Weapons	5
+1 to Fringe Benefit: Membership	1
Equipment	
Cost	Power
53	VB-A4 "Jackhammer" Blaster Rifle (may substitute VB-A5 "Sledgehammer" for +15 points)
16	VL-S1 "Redeye" Laser Pistol
var	Grenades (if appropriate)

Total Cost Of Package: 90+

MELEE COMBAT SPECIALIST PACKAGE DEAL

These are the guys that no one else in the Nest messes with. They're the snakes who can take you apart with just their bare hands — the toughest, meanest, stone-cold bastards in the entire Nest. Trained to be the ultimate combat machines, they have reflexes and reaction time bordering on the superhuman. VIPER typically recruits them from martial arts studios, the military, and the underground fight circuit, then uses its own training methods to build on those skills.

VIPER usually teaches its MCS agents one of three martial arts: Karate, Snake-style Kung Fu, or Commando Training. However, if the recruit already knows a particular style (such as Muay Thai), VIPER allows him to keep training in it instead. VIPER propaganda claims MCS agents' affinity to the deadliest natural predators in the world makes them the greatest non-superhuman fighters in the world.

MELEE COMBAT SPECIALIST PACKAGE DEAL

Ability	Cost
MCS Training: +5 STR	5
MCS Training: +4 DEX	12
MCS Training: +2 PD	2
MCS Training: +1 SPD (total of 4)	6
Breakfall	3
+2 HTH	10
KS: The Martial World 11-	2
+1 to KS: VIPER (making it an INT Roll)	1
+1 to PS: VIPER Agent (making it an INT Roll)	1
Martial Arts: 20 points' worth of maneuvers	20
+1 to Fringe Benefit: Membership	1

Equipment	
Cost	Power
27	Shock Gauntlets

Total Cost Of Package: 90

NIGHT OPERATIONS SPECIALIST PACKAGE DEAL

In theory, VIPER prefers its Nests to conduct brazen daytime operations, but that theory rarely survives the anger of a Nest Leader who's suffered one too many daylight defeats. For Nests that want to commit their crimes in the dark, the Night Operations Specialist plays an important role. He's trained to use the shadows and the darkness to his advantage, and to function effectively in lightless environments.

NIGHT OPERATIONS SPECIALIST PACKAGE DEAL

Ability	Cost
Nightvision	5
Concealment	3
+1 to KS: VIPER (making it an INT Roll)	1
+1 to PS: VIPER Agent (making it an INT Roll)	1
Shadowing	3
+2 to Stealth	4
+1 to Fringe Benefit: Membership	1

Total Cost Of Package: 18

RED GUARD PACKAGE DEAL

Besides Melee Combat Specialists, the other commonly-encountered VIPER close combat agents are the members of the Red Guard, a cadre of expert knife-fighters. These cutthroats often learn the rudiments of their trade in gangs, prisons, or the underground fighting circuit before coming to VIPER — and VIPER's training makes them a threat to nearly anyone, even superhumans. Nest Leaders like to have them as bodyguards because their ability to inflict bloody and painful retribution tends to discourage assassination attempts.

Continued from last page

Jungle

Survival: Temperate, Tropical

TF: any one Ground Vehicle or Air Vehicle

Mountains

Survival: Mountains, Temperate

TF: Hanggliding or any one Ground Vehicle

VIPER
BLOODSPORTS

VIPER is not without a sense of machismo, and few activities fuel machismo like blood-sports. While VIPER normally frowns upon large gatherings of VIPER agents from different Nests, some VIPER MCS agents enjoy the thrill of beating a man to death with their bare hands. VIPER considers this good practice, so it sanctions fighting competitions.

The deadliness of the fight depends on the Nest. Some Nests stick with boxing, wrestling, or traditional martial arts battles, hoping to start underground fight networks to serve as a recruitment ground for new agents. But a few Nests like to go beyond mere sport and sanction murder in the guise of athletic competition. These Nests find some impressive street kid who thinks he's tough and offer him a lot of money for a fight. Then the Nest's best hand-to-hand fighter steps into the ring with him and cripples or kills him. VIPER generally has two rules for such activities: first, don't get caught; second, try to avoid attracting vigilante martial artists by killing the wrong guy's kid brother.

In the past, Nests sometimes settled territorial disputes with hand-to-hand fights (to the death) between designated Nest champions. After MeteorMan III busted two Los Angeles Nests in 1989 during a death match, the High Serpents issued a moratorium on inter-Nest fighting. The Council Of Thirty rescinded

RED GUARD PACKAGE DEAL

Ability	Cost
Find Weakness with Knives 11-+4 with Blades	1012
+1 to KS: VIPER (making it an INT Roll)	1
+1 to PS: VIPER Agent (making it an INT Roll)	1
Martial Arts: Knifefighting (20 points' worth of maneuvers)	20
Martial Arts, Ranged: Knifethrowing (10 points' worth of maneuvers)	10
Weaponsmith (Muscle-Powered HTH and Ranged)	3
+1 to Fringe Benefit: Membership	1
Total Cost Of Package: 58	

SNIPER SPECIALIST PACKAGE DEAL

When VIPER needs to perform a long-range assassination, or it has the luxury of setting up a battlefield in advance, it calls in the Sniper Specialists. Trained to lie low, aim carefully, and then strike from surprise with precisely-aimed blaster shots, Snipers provide excellent support fire for standard agents.

SNIPER SPECIALIST
PACKAGE DEAL

Ability	Cost
+2 with Rifles	6
Concealment	3
+1 to KS: VIPER (making it an INT Roll)	1
+1 to PS: VIPER Agent (making it an INT Roll)	1
+4 versus Range Modifier with Rifles	8
+4 versus Hit Location Modifiers with Rifles	8
+1 to Fringe Benefit: Membership	1
Total Cost Of Package: 108+	

Equipment	Cost	Power
28 VB-A1A "Eagle" Blaster Sniper Rifle (Lethal variant)		
32 VL-A1 "Redline" Laser Rifle		
var Scopes and sights necessary for the job		
20 VIPER Helmet (Elite, with Telescopic faceplate)		
Total Cost Of Package: 108+		

SUPERHUMAN COMBAT SPECIALIST
PACKAGE DEAL

VIPER takes its toughest, most level-headed, and most competent agents and trains them to fight superpowered opponents. SCS agents are often ex-military, lone wolf types who resent superheroes and pride themselves on their ability to "torch spandex." They come equipped with some of the heaviest arms and armor used by frontline VIPER agents.

Some SCS agents are *very* ambitious; many squadron commanders are trained in this specialization, and it's seen as one of the quickest ways to advance in VIPER. Unfortunately, serving as a front-line soldier against superhumans is just as likely to result in serious injury and imprisonment as promotions and glory.

SUPERHUMAN COMBAT
SPECIALIST PACKAGE DEAL

Ability	Cost
SCS Training: +3 STR	3
SCS Training: +3 INT	3
SCS Training: +4 EGO	8
SCS Training: +5 PRE	5
SCS Training: +2 PD	2
SCS Training: +2 ED	2
Breakfall	3
+2 with All Combat	16
+1 to KS: The Superhuman World (making it an 11-)	1
+1 to KS: VIPER (making it an INT Roll)	1
+1 to PS: VIPER Agent (making it an INT Roll)	1
+1 to Fringe Benefit: Membership	1

Equipment

Cost	Power
var	Choose one of the following:
68	VB-A5 Sledgehammer Blaster Rifle
29	VE-A1 "Trapper" Trapweb Launcher
33	VRD-A2 "Cottonmouth" Neural Interference Rifle
51	VRD-A3 "Brickbuster" Weakness Rifle
94	VS-A2 "Big Rattler" Sonic Rifle
16	VG-1 Frag Grenade (or other grenades)
36	VIPER Helmet (Elite, with Acoustic Shielding, Flare Shielding, Oxygen Supply, and Psionic Shielding)
24	VFF-1 Force Field Belt
Total Cost Of Package: 122+	

VEHICLE COMBAT SPECIALIST
PACKAGE DEAL

The most potent weapon in a Nest's arsenal tends to be its vehicles, and the most effective people at using them are Vehicle Combat Specialists. In addition to being deft at the controls and an expert gunner, a VCS agent is trained to assemble, repair, and maintain his vehicle (a necessary thing for an organization that often has to ship its vehicles in pieces to avoid detection).

VEHICLE COMBAT
SPECIALIST PACKAGE DEAL

Ability	Cost
Combat Driving	3
Combat Piloting	3
Electronics	3
KS: The Military/Mercenary/Terrorist World 8-	1
KS: The Pilot World 8-	1
KS: Military Vehicles 11-	2
+1 to KS: VIPER (making it an INT Roll)	1
Mechanics	3
+1 to PS: VIPER Agent (making it an INT Roll)	1
TF (6 points' worth)	6
+1 to Fringe Benefit: Membership	1
WF: Vehicle Weapons (5 vehicles)	5
Weaponsmith (VIPER Vehicular Weapons)	2
Total Cost Of Package: 32	

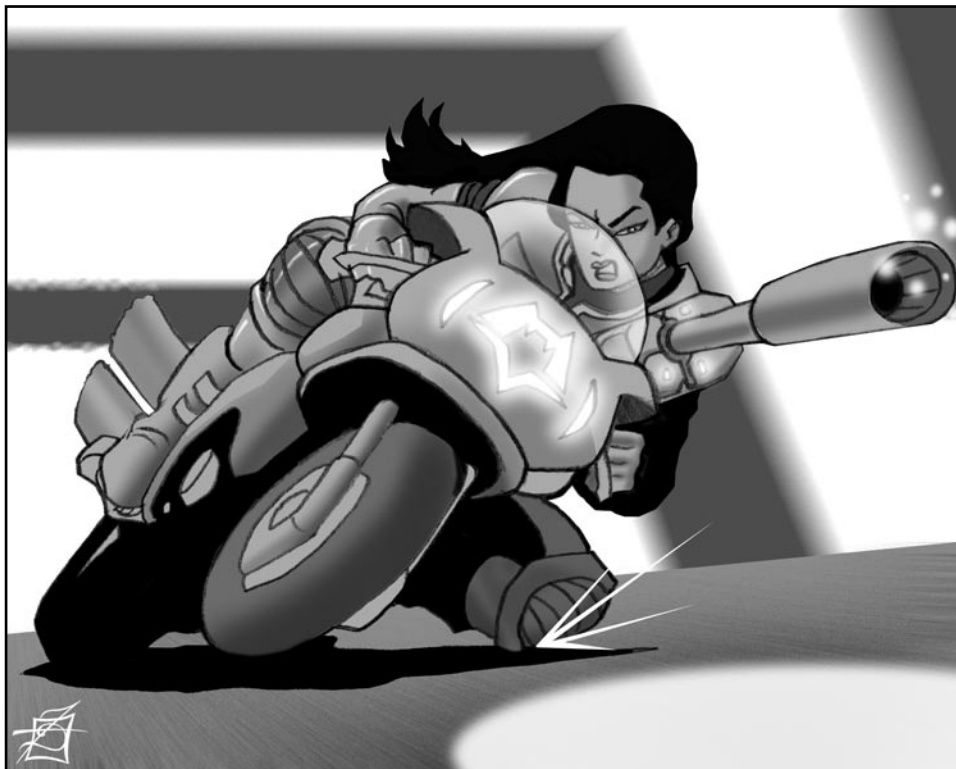
Level III Cobra Division Package Deals

Cobra division also has four Level III training packages, each requiring higher qualifications and more training than the Level II suites. Some agents go straight from Basic Agent to Level III training; others get Level II training first. All Level III combat specialists wear the Elite version of the VIPER BCU.

ATHAME (ANTI-MAGIC SPECIALIST) PACKAGE DEAL

Few things frustrate VIPER as much as the use of magic by its enemies — people and organizations like Witchcraft and DEMON can often avoid or negate VIPER's technological advantage. To counter practitioners of the arcane arts, VIPER developed its own special weapon: the Athame, or Anti-Magic Specialist.

VIPER has about a dozen Athames in service at any given time. It rarely posts them to Nests, for their services are too valuable; typically the Council Of Thirty sends them in as special



advisors to Nests who show a pressing need for them. Cold, aloof, and suspicious of everyone, they're unpleasant people whom other agents tend to dislike... but they get the job done.

FLIGHT COMMAND SPECIALIST PACKAGE DEAL

Flight Command Specialists are VIPER's most highly-trained aerial agents. Most command wings of three to five Air Cavalry agents, but some serve as the "honor guards" of flying VIPER supervillains.

FLIGHT COMMAND SPECIALIST PACKAGE DEAL

This Package Deal adds to the cost of the Air Cavalry Package Deal.

Ability	Cost
+1 to Combat Piloting	2
+2 with Flight	4
+2 versus Range Modifier with all weapons	6
Tactics	3

Total Cost Of Package: 15

ATHAME PACKAGE DEAL

Ability	Cost
<i>Magical Sense</i> : Detect Magic (INT Roll) (no Sense Group), Discriminatory, Analyze, Range, Sense, Targeting	32
<i>Mystic Wards</i> : Armor (5 PD/5 ED); Only Works Against Limited Type Of Attack (magic; -¼)	12
<i>Protected Mind</i> : Mental Defense (10 points plus EGO/5); Only Works Against Limited Type Of Attack (magic; -¼)	8
<i>Protected Soul</i> : Power Defense (12 points); Only Works Against Limited Type Of Attack (magical Adjustment Powers; -¼)	10
KS: Arcane And Occult Lore	3
KS: Mystic Artifacts	3
KS: The Magical World	3
+1 to KS: The Superhuman World (making it an 11-)	1
+1 to KS: VIPER (making it an INT Roll)	1
+1 to PS: VIPER Agent (making it an INT Roll)	1
+1 to Fringe Benefit: Membership	1

Total Cost Of Package: 75

Continued from last page

the ban four years later, but Nests have become much more cautious about staging them now than they were back in the '80s.

Recently, the Supreme Serpent authorized Nests to increase their hand-to-hand training and recruitment of good fighters. VIPER plans to organize a fighting tournament on a South Pacific island soon to determine which (non-superpowered) fighter is VIPER's best.

VIPER Scarlet Serpent



SCARLET SERPENT
PACKAGE DEAL

Ability	Cost
TCS Training: +3 INT	3
TCS Training: +5 PRE	5
+1 with All Combat	8
+1 to KS: The Superhuman World (making it an 11-)	1
+1 to KS: VIPER (making it an INT Roll)	1
+1 to PS: VIPER Agent (making it an INT Roll)	1
Tactics (INT +2)	7
Teamwork	3
+1 to Fringe Benefit: Membership	1

Equipment	
Cost	Power
44	VB-A2 "Striker-2" Blaster Rifle
16	VG-1 Frag Grenade (or other grenades)
7	VIPER Grenade Launcher (Rifle-Mounted)
52	VIPER Helmet (Elite, with all options)
24	VFF-1 Force Field Belt

Total Cost Of Package: 173

SCARLET SERPENT (TACTICAL COMMAND
SPECIALIST) PACKAGE DEAL

Nest Leaders, Field Commanders, and Squadron Commanders (page 78) are often trained as "Scarlet Serpents" — VIPER's Tactical Command Specialists. An expert at small unit tactics, a Scarlet Serpent can improve a squad's performance dramatically. They're easily distinguished on the battlefield by their uniforms, which substitute scarlet for green.

THE WATCH (ANTI-PSIONICS SPECIALIST)
PACKAGE DEAL

Nothing's more dangerous to a Nest's security than a determined telepath, and VIPER would not have lasted long if it hadn't developed some sort of defense against mentalists. The Watch is VIPER's best defense against PSI, psychic superheroes, and other enemies who would intrude into the minds of its agents and destroy VIPER from within.

The Watch includes about two dozen members. Twelve major Nests (including the largest one in Millennium City) have a member of the Watch stationed with them; his full-time job is to monitor against telepathic intrusion. The other dozen agents freelance their services out to other Nests, or are sent to a Nest when the central command suspects there's a telepath at work.

THE WATCH PACKAGE DEAL

Ability	Cost
Mental Training: +3 EGO	6
Anti-Psionic Training: Mental Defense (10 points plus EGO/5)	10
More Anti-Psionic Training: Power Defense (12 points); Only To Protect Against The Loss Of INT, EGO, PRE, Mental Defense, And Power Defense (-½)	8
Psionic Awareness: Mental Awareness, Discriminatory, Analyze	15
KS: The Psionic World 11-	2
+1 to KS: The Superhuman World (making it an 11-)	1
+1 to KS: VIPER (making it an INT Roll)	1
+1 to PS: VIPER Agent (making it an INT Roll)	1
+1 to Fringe Benefit: Membership	1

Total Cost Of Package: 45

CONSTRUCTOR DIVISION (INTELLIGENCE) PACKAGE DEALS

VIPER doesn't just fight its enemies — it also spies on them. VIPER's Intelligence specialty agents scout out and plan crimes, gather information about law enforcement organizations and superheroes, and work with other underworld organizations.

VIPER General Intelligence Specialist Package Deal

This Package Deal represents the general training VIPER's Intelligence agents receive, and the equipment they carry. They often substitute

GENERAL INTELLIGENCE SPECIALIST PACKAGE DEAL

Ability Cost

+1 with VIPER Blasters	3
Acting	3
Concealment	3
Disguise	3
KS: The Superhuman World 8-	1
KS: The Local Underworld 11-	2
KS: VIPER 11-	2
Martial Arts: VIPER Brawling (see page 51)	15
PS: VIPER Agent 11-	2
Shadowing	3
Stealth	3
Streetwise	3
WF: Small Arms, Blades	3
Fringe Benefit: Membership (VIPER Basic Agent)	1
18 points' worth of Skills from the following list	18

Animal Handler (Snakes), Bribery, Bugging, Combat Driving, Combat Piloting, Combat Skill Levels, Computer Programming, Conversation, Deduction, Electronics, Forgery, Gambling, High Society, Interrogation, Lipreading, Lockpicking, Paramedics, Persuasion, Security Systems, Systems Operation, Tactics, Teamwork, any Background Skill

Equipment

Cost	Power
15	VB-S1 "Shorty" Blaster Pistol
12	VIPER Fang
9	VIPER BCU (Basic)
7	VIPER Armored Clothing
8	VIPER Helmet (Basic)

Disadvantages Value

Distinctive Features: VIPER uniform (Easily Concealed; Noticed And Recognizable)	-5
Hunted: VIPER 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)	-10
Psychological Limitation: Amoral And Greedy (Common, Strong)	-15
Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)	-20

Total Cost Of Package: 66

Armored Clothing for the BCU when they have to go undercover or pass undetected on the street.

Level II Constrictor Division Package Deals

GIS agents who prove themselves worthy usually get sent back to VIPER Academy for one of five types of advanced training: Espionage Specialist; Infiltration Specialist; Logistics Specialist; Media Specialist; Surveillance Specialist; or Underworld Operations Specialist. Unless Armored Clothing is more appropriate, these agents wear the Elite BCU.

ESPIONAGE SPECIALIST PACKAGE DEAL

VIPER's best all-around intel collector is the Espionage Specialist. The Espionage Specialist gathers information typically in one of two ways. First, he analyzes intercepted communications, captured documents, and the like; second, he makes contact with people VIPER wishes to gain information from and does so via conversation, bribery, or the like. Espionage agents typically carry very little equipment in the field; they prefer to rely on their wits instead. Any gadgetry they do carry tends to be concealable (such as a one-shot mini-flamethrower disguised as a cigarette lighter, or a ballpoint pen laser pistol).

ESPIONAGE SPECIALIST PACKAGE DEAL

Ability Cost

<i>Espionage Training: +3 INT</i>	3
Bribery	3
Bugging	3
Concealment	3
Conversation	3
Cryptography	3
Deduction	3
KS: The Espionage World 11-	2
Lockpicking	3
Persuasion	3
Security Systems	3
Seduction	3
Systems Operation	3
+1 to KS: VIPER (making it an INT Roll)	1
+1 to PS: VIPER Agent (making it an INT Roll)	1
+1 to Fringe Benefit: Membership	1

Total Cost Of Package: 41

INFILTRATION SPECIALIST PACKAGE DEAL

The Infiltration Specialist is similar to the Espionage Specialist, but trained for field operations instead of data analysis and human contact. Using his ability to evade security systems, disguise himself, and the like, he can get into a location to obtain information, steal objects, or perform reconnaissance before a major VIPER operation. Some serve as VIPER's deep cover operatives in various organizations (these may have some Espionage Specialist training as well).

Infiltrators don't normally carry typical VIPER equipment. They use encrypted cell phone-like devices and secured computer connections to communicate with the main Nest. They may support an operation from the inside (for example, by lowering defenses at the last minute to give VIPER agents surprise access) but otherwise normally do not directly involve themselves in combat.

INFILTRATION SPECIALIST
PACKAGE DEAL

Ability	Cost
+1 to Acting	2
Cryptography	3
+1 to Disguise	2
High Society	3
+1 to KS: VIPER (making it an INT Roll)	1
Lockpicking (DEX +2)	7
One PS at 11- (the agent's typical cover identity)	2
+1 to PS: VIPER Agent (making it an INT Roll)	1
Security Systems (INT +2)	7
+1 to Fringe Benefit: Membership	1
Total Cost Of Package: 29	

LOGISTICS SPECIALIST PACKAGE DEAL

The Logistics Specialist stays at the Nest and deals with its administrative minutiae — he's clever, apolitical, and a smart Nest Leader's right hand man. He handles the day-to-day dealings with VIPER's high command, weapons and supplies procurement, agent recruitment, and Nest finances. In short, he's a bureaucrat and supply clerk as well as an agent. It's not always a popular job, but it's

LOGISTICS SPECIALIST
PACKAGE DEAL

Ability	Cost
Bribery	3
Bureaucratics	3
Conversation	3
Deduction	3
Persuasion	3
KS: The Law 13-	4
+2 to KS: Local Underworld (making it an INT +1 Skill)	2
+2 to KS: VIPER (making it an INT +1 Skill)	2
+1 to PS: VIPER Agent (making it an INT Roll)	1
+1 to Fringe Benefit: Membership	1
One of the following: PS: Accountant 11-, PS: Businessman 11-, PS: Lawyer 11-	2
Total Cost Of Package: 27	

absolutely crucial to Nest success. Because a Logistics Specialist knows so much about his Nest's inner workings, he's rarely allowed to leave the Nest at all, and even when he does leave usually has two or more "bodyguards" to accompany him... and eliminate him if capture seems imminent.

MEDIA SPECIALIST PACKAGE DEAL

Of all of VIPER's intelligence operatives, few can cause as many problems for a superhero as the Media Specialist. Whether this agent works as a tabloid reporter, a political commentator for a major television network, or a journalist writing for an established magazine, he can perform hatchet jobs on VIPER's enemies, boost the egos of insecure



MEDIA SPECIALIST PACKAGE DEAL

Ability	Cost
+1 PER with all Sense Groups	3
Conversation	3
Deduction	3
Interrogation	3
KS: The Media 12-	3
+1 to KS: VIPER (making it an INT Roll)	1
+1 to PS: VIPER Agent (making it an INT Roll)	1
Oratory	3
Persuasion	3
PS: Journalist 11-	2
+1 to Fringe Benefit: Membership	1
Fringe Benefit: Press Pass	1

Equipment

Cost Power

12 VB-S1C "Stubby" Blaster Pistol

Total Cost Of Package: 27

Nest Leaders, and use his investigational skills to expose the painful secrets a PC tries to hide.

Media Specialists don't accompany agents during operations. Instead, you can find them in the press corps that follows the fight, making sure any bit of collateral damage and every agent who got away gets portrayed as a major failure on the PCs' part. One of Augur Maxwell's favorite VIPER proverbs is: "Cultivate cynicism like a garden, for heroes cannot live in it," and the Media Specialist is VIPER's gardener of contempt for human virtues.

SURVEILLANCE SPECIALIST PACKAGE DEAL

As part of its arsenal of information-gathering techniques, VIPER trains some agents in surveillance — keeping watch on specific persons or locations, following people, and so forth. While the high-tech gear of the Communications Specialist is the usual choice for an early warning system, sometimes there's no substitute for an eagle eye, and that's where the Surveillance Specialist comes in. Utilizing old-fashioned observation skills and a lot of patience, he uncovers the information VIPER needs to get the job done.

SURVEILLANCE SPECIALIST PACKAGE DEAL

Ability	Cost
+2 PER with all Sense Groups	6
Concealment	3
KS: City Knowledge 11-	2
+1 to KS: VIPER (making it an INT Roll)	1
+1 to PS: VIPER Agent (making it an INT Roll)	1
+1 to Fringe Benefit: Membership	1
Navigation (Ground)	2
Shadowing (INT +2)	7
+2 to Stealth	4

Total Cost Of Package: 27

Surveillance Specialists typically wear normal clothes (sometimes VIPER Armored Clothing) while on the job, and restrict themselves to using mundane gadgets. They might carry a VB-S1C "Stubby" Blaster Pistol if warranted, but even that is rare.

UNDERWORLD OPERATIONS SPECIALIST PACKAGE DEAL

While VIPER's best known to the public as a grandiose organization bent on world conquest, mundane crimes such as narcotics, protection, smuggling, and money laundering are the meat and potatoes of many a Nest. Underworld Operations Specialists coordinate these activities and keep an eye on rival criminal organizations and interfering vigilantes. They're some of the coldest, most ruthless bastards you'll ever meet. Although they prefer not to get involved in combat, they do have standard agent training and can fight if necessary.

UNDERWORLD OPERATIONS SPECIALIST PACKAGE DEAL

Ability	Cost
Conversation	3
Interrogation	3
KS: Narcotics 12-	3
+3 to KS: Local Underworld 14- (making it an INT +2 skill)	3
+1 to KS: VIPER (making it an INT Roll)	1
+1 to PS: VIPER Agent (making it an INT Roll)	1
+1 to Streetwise	2
+1 to Fringe Benefit: Membership	1

Total Cost Of Package: 17

THE VOICE OF THE SNAKE?

The social commentator superheroes despise the most is Nora Gautier, SNN's resident contrarian and talk show panelist, the author of the books *Will We Survive Heroism?* and the recent New York Times bestseller *Collateral Damage?* Gautier became known as "the Voice of the Snake" when she feverishly argued that property damage and loss of life caused by VIPER in the United States was only 20% of the total caused by so-called superheroes. No disaster escapes Gautier's eye, and she has a wide following (especially on her website, where she cuts loose without network censorship).

However, Gautier is not a VIPER plant — she's just an overexcited (though sometimes articulate) whacko. On the other hand, the head of her research staff, Drew Gibson, is deeply in VIPER's pockets and his words are often the ones coming out of Gautier's mouth. Another researcher, Glenn Walker, is an IHA plant. They both know each other's true allegiances, but have too much fun collaborating on copy to expose one another's secrets... for now.

VIPER Aquatic Specialist



THE SCORCHERS

When something goes wrong in VIPER — when superheroes smash a Nest and capture its agents, when a renegade scientist flees with secret data, when evidence points to a traitor or undercover police officer in the ranks — VIPER calls on a special squad known as “the Scorchers” to minimize the damage. As their name indicates, the Scorchers take a “scorched earth” approach to their task, attempting to completely eradicate the source of the problem and institute preventive measures for the future.

Several scholars have described the Scorchers as “VIPER’s Internal Affairs Division,” but that’s not the most accurate way of putting it. Although the Council Of Thirty (to whom the Scorchers answer directly) sometimes assigns them the task of ferreting out spies and traitors, normally they spend their time “cleaning up messes.” For example, if the police capture a Nest, the Council may send the Scorchers to infiltrate the police cordon, plant bombs and computer viruses, and wipe out every bit of information about VIPER that they can. The Scorchers’ goal is to keep a damaging situation from harming VIPER any more than it already has.

Most of the Scorchers are Constrictor and Adder agents (few of their missions involve direct combat). However, they do have some Demolitions Specialists, Firestarters, and assassins among their ranks.

ADDER DIVISION
(TECHNICAL)
PACKAGE DEALS

VIPER’s emphasis on and use of high technology means it needs a lot of agents who can build, analyze, invent, maintain, and repair devices of all sorts. These jobs fall to the men and women of the Adder division — the Technical Specialists.

VIPER General Technical
Specialist Package Deal

This Package Deal represents the general training VIPER’s Technical agents receive, and the equipment they carry.

Experienced scientists and technicians whom VIPER recruits after they’ve established their careers may not have this Package Deal, or any of the others listed here. VIPER likes for its person-

GENERAL TECHNICAL
SPECIALIST PACKAGE DEAL

Ability	Cost
+1 with VIPER Blasters	3
Computer Programming	3
Electronics	3
KS: The Superhuman World 8-	1
KS: VIPER 11-	2
Martial Arts: VIPER Brawling (see page 51)	15
PS: VIPER Agent 11-	2
Stealth	3
Streetwise	3
Systems Operation	3
WF: Small Arms, Blades	3
Fringe Benefit: Membership (VIPER Basic Agent)	1
18 points’ worth of Skills from the following list	18
Animal Handler (Snakes), Bugging, Combat Driving, Combat Piloting, Combat Skill Levels, Conversation, Criminology, Deduction, Demolitions, Forensic Medicine, Forgery, Gambling, Inventor, Lockpicking, Mechanics, Paramedics, Persuasion, Security Systems, Tactics, Teamwork, Weaponsmith, any Background Skill	
Equipment	
Cost	Power
15	VB-S1 “Shorty” Blaster Pistol
12	VIPER Fang
9	VIPER BCU (Basic)
8	VIPER Helmet (Basic)
Disadvantages	Value
Distinctive Features: VIPER uniform (Easily Concealed; Noticed And Recognizable)	-5
Hunted: VIPER 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)	-10
Psychological Limitation: Amoral And Greedy (Common, Strong)	-15
Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)	-20

Total Cost Of Package: 54

nel to be physically and mentally fit, but it sees no purpose in running a 47 year old genetics expert through VIPER Academy when all the organization really needs is his scientific acumen.

Level II Adder Division
Package Deals

VIPER has six types of agent with advanced technical training at its disposal: Communications Specialist; Computer Specialist; Crime Evasion Specialist; Medical Specialist; Science Specialist; and Vehicle Maintenance Specialist. Technical specialists sometimes accompany combat teams into the field, and carry weapons on those occasions, but function more as back-up than as true fighters. These agents wear the Elite BCU if they have to go on a mission, but in the Nest settle for casual clothes, labcoats, and the like.

COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST
PACKAGE DEAL

VIPER’s Communications Specialists are not only technical experts, they coordinate movement and telemetry for VIPER squads. Typically, VIPER stations a CS on the operational perimeter in a civilian vehicle to provide information during the mission. CSs also monitor enemy communications and break enemy codes. VIPER typically expects a Communications Specialist to fill a secondary command role if a Squadron Commander is eliminated, so it trains them to be capable tacticians as well as good technicians.

COMMUNICATIONS
SPECIALIST PACKAGE DEAL

Ability	Cost
Bugging	3
Cryptography	3
Inventor	3
+1 to KS: VIPER (making it an INT Roll)	1
+1 to PS: VIPER Agent (making it an INT Roll)	1
+2 to Systems Operation	4
Tactics	3
+1 to Fringe Benefit: Membership	1

Equipment	
Cost	Power
40	Laptop Serpentine Node (like Vehicle Serpentine Node, but without Sensors, Combat Driving, Combat Piloting, TFs, WFs, or related programs)

Total Cost Of Package: 59

COMPUTER SPECIALIST PACKAGE DEAL

When VIPER needs to crack a computer, they call in a Computer Specialist — also known as a Hacksnake or Cybersnake. Computer Specialists are experts at penetrating computer systems, retrieving data, inserting viruses, and doing all the fun things VIPER enjoys doing to a computer.

The Computer Specialist often serves as a crucial part of a VIPER operation. He either gathers information in advance that makes the op possible, or he participates remotely, using his access to the target's computers to shut down security systems or otherwise make the field team's job easier.

COMPUTER SPECIALIST PACKAGE DEAL

Ability	Cost
CS Training: +3 INT	3
+2 to Computer Programming	4
Cryptography	3
Inventor	3
+1 to KS: VIPER (making it an INT Roll)	1
+1 to PS: VIPER Agent (making it an INT Roll)	1
+1 to Fringe Benefit: Membership	1

Equipment

Cost	Power
40	Laptop Serpentine Node (like Vehicle Serpentine Node, but without Sensors, Combat Driving, Combat Piloting, TFs, WFs, or related programs)

Total Cost Of Package: 56

CRIME EVASION SPECIALIST PACKAGE DEAL

When VIPER commits a crime it *doesn't* want the authorities to link it to, it calls in a Crime Evasion Specialist. The CESs covers up (or ruins) any evidence at a crime scene. Many CES personnel are ex-law enforcement officers with grudges — the sort of person who really enjoys screwing up the efforts of police detectives and amateur investigators by removing evidence or otherwise making a crime scene unsalvageable. CES agents can also plant evidence to incriminate someone else. Crime Evasion Specialists often accompany field teams

CRIME EVASION SPECIALIST PACKAGE DEAL

Ability	Cost
Concealment	3
Criminology	3
Deduction	3
Forensic Medicine	3
Forgery (one category)	2
+1 to KS: VIPER (making it an INT Roll)	1
+1 to PS: VIPER Agent (making it an INT Roll)	1
Shadowing	3
Sleight Of Hand	3
+1 to Fringe Benefit: Membership	1

Total Cost Of Package: 23



VIPER Computer Specialist

during missions — it's easier to prevent a mistake than to cover it up.

MEDICAL SPECIALIST PACKAGE DEAL

VIPER agents sometimes get hurt and need fixing up. When there's a big fight planned, VIPER likes to have a combat medic on site to treat the wounded and get them back into the fight. It recruits its Medical Specialists from the ranks of failed medical students, paramedics and combat doctors too unstable for those professions, or people forced out of the medical profession due to malpractice, refusal to obey ethical guidelines, and the like.

MEDICAL SPECIALIST PACKAGE DEAL

Ability	Cost
Forensic Medicine	3
+1 to KS: VIPER (making it an INT Roll)	1
PS: Doctor 11-	2
+1 to PS: VIPER Agent (making it an INT Roll)	1
SS: Anatomy	3
SS: Medicine	3
SS: Neurology 11-	2
SS: Pharmacology/Toxicology	3
SS: Psychology 11-	2
+1 to Fringe Benefit: Membership	1

Total Cost Of Package: 21

VIPER SCIENCE PACKAGES

Archaeologist

Major Science: Archaeology
Minor Science: Anthropology
KS: one ancient culture of character's choice
Trained Skill: Bureaucratics

Biologist

Major Science: Biology
Minor Science: Zoology
KS: Animals
Trained Skill: Animal Handler (3 points' worth)

Botanist

Major Science: Botany
Minor Science: Pharmacology/
Toxicology or Biology
KS: Plants
Trained Skill: Survival (3 points' worth)

Chemist

Major Science: Chemistry
Minor Science: Biochemistry
KS: Chemicals
Trained Skill: Demolitions or Paramedic

Cyberneticist

Major Science: Cybernetics
Minor Science: Anatomy
KS: Power Systems
Trained Skill: Mechanics

Electronics

Major Science: Electronic Engineering
Minor Science: Computers
KS: Power Systems
Trained Skill: Any

Geneticist

Major Science: Genetics
Minor Science: Biochemistry
KS: Genetically Engineered Creatures
Trained Skill: Paramedics

VIPER's Medical Specialists don't follow the Hippocratic Oath — they have no problem administering combat drugs to VIPER agents, using their skills and drugs to interrogate prisoners, or performing dangerous genetic experiments. They carry weapons in the field.

SCIENCE SPECIALIST PACKAGE DEAL

Ability	Cost
Deduction	3
Inventor	3
Skill (see Science Packages)	3
KS: see Science Packages 11-	2
KS: The Scientific World (INT Roll)	3
+1 to KS: VIPER (making it an INT Roll)	1
PS: Scientist 11-	2
+1 to PS: VIPER Agent (making it an INT Roll)	1
SS: see Science Packages (INT+1 roll)	4
SS: see Science Packages (INT Roll)	3
Any two other SSs at 11-	4
+1 to Fringe Benefit: Membership	1

Total Cost Of Package: 30

SCIENCE SPECIALIST PACKAGE DEAL

VIPER has no fear of the unknown or the dangerous when it comes to science. The Science Specialist is a brilliant but somewhat less than orthodox VIPER operative who uses his knowledge of the sciences to build devices for VIPER, perform experiments on prisoners, and the like. Occasionally Science Specialists accompany field teams on missions where they may encounter scientific problems or need to gather scientific data.

The exact mix of Skills a Science Specialist has depends upon his field of expertise. See the sidebar for several example packages; you can create others if you like.

VEHICLE MAINTENANCE SPECIALIST PACKAGE DEAL

Ability	Cost
+1 to Electronics	2
KS: Military Vehicles	3
+1 to KS: VIPER (making it an INT Roll)	1
Mechanics (INT +2)	7
TFs (7 points' worth)	7
WF: Vehicle Weapons (3 vehicle types)	3
Weaponsmith (5 points' worth)	5
+1 to PS: VIPER Agent (making it an INT Roll)	1
+1 to Fringe Benefit: Membership	1

Total Cost Of Package: 30

VEHICLE MAINTENANCE SPECIALIST PACKAGE DEAL

VIPER's complex vehicles require constant maintenance by someone who's more than your average grease monkey. While maintenance duty may be VIPER's dirtiest and least glamorous job, the Maintenance Specialist is one agent no large Nest can live without. VMSs remain at a Nest during a mission and don't otherwise involve themselves in VIPER's operations, though they can grab a blaster and help defend the Nest if they have to.

SPECIALIZED AGENTS

Not all of VIPER's agents fit neatly into the Cobra/Constrictor/Adder organizational scheme outlined above. A few of the most highly-trained or unusual types stand on their own, or operate solely under the command of the Supreme Serpent or some other important VIPER official.

DRAYSHA PACKAGE DEAL

VIPER has always had an unhealthy fascination with genetic experimentation, leading to the creation of villains like Diamondback, Sidewinder, and Cottonmouth. The most recent success in this field is the Draysha program.

Draysha agents (named after a breed of Egypt-

DRAYSHA PACKAGE DEAL

This Package adds to whatever Basic and Elite Package Deals the agent already has.

Ability	Cost
<i>Ability Boost:</i> Aid 4d6, all Characteristics except COM simultaneously (+2), Delayed Return Rate (points fade at the rate of 5 per Minute; +¼) (130 Active Points); OAF Fragile (specially-prepared king cobra venom; -1¼), Extra Time (Extra Segment; -½), 6 Charges (-¾) 37	
<i>Fangs:</i> HKA ½d6 (10 Active Points); No STR Bonus (-½), Only Works While Characteristics Are Increased By Ability Boost (-¼) 6	
<i>Poisonous Bite:</i> Drain CON 2d6, Delayed Return Rate (points return at the rate of 5 per Hour; +1) (40 Active Points); HKA Must Do BODY (-½), Must Follow Grab (-½), Only Works While Characteristics Are Increased By Ability Boost (-¼) 18	
<i>Slipping Through Tiny Cracks:</i> Desolidification (affected by any attack) (40 Active Points); Does Not Protect Against Damage (-1), Cannot Pass Through Solid Objects (-½), Only Works While Characteristics Are Increased By Ability Boost (-¼) 14	
<i>Scaly Skin:</i> Armor (4 PD/4 ED) (12 Active Points); Only Works While Characteristics Are Increased By Ability Boost (-¼) 10	
<i>Immunity to Venom:</i> Life Support (Immunity: Ophidotoxins) 3	

Disadvantages	Value
Distinctive Features: Completely Hairless (Easily Concealed)	-5

Total Cost Of Package: 83

tian cobra) are the subjects of VIPER's most intense round of genetic experimentation to date. In this process, developed by VIPER scientist Dr. Timothy Blank, subjects selected for genetic compatibility with the treatments have their genes spliced with snake genes to produce people with modest superhuman abilities — in exchange for some unpleasant side effects.

Unlike VIPER's earlier genetic experiments, which attempted to create permanent mutations, the Draysha program succeeds because it creates only temporary superhuman powers. Draysha appear more or less like ordinary humans until they ingest king cobra venom. Drinking the venom sparks a physical transformation: they acquire superhuman characteristics; their skin becomes slightly scaly; their eyes turn from human to reptilian; their canine teeth extend into fangs; and they can inflict a venomous bite. This transformation lasts as long as the Aid to their Primary Characteristics remains in effect; when the effect of the Aid fades completely, the agent's appearance returns to normal and he loses his special abilities. However, unless it's been weeks since his last transformation, a Draysha agent is completely hairless, lacking even eyebrows.

Although the Draysha program has enjoyed far greater success than VIPER's other superhuman-breeding projects — candidates susceptible to the treatment have a 93% survival rate — it has one major drawback. Every year each Draysha agent must make a Constitution Roll; if he fails, he contracts a nasty strain of leukemia. Every month thereafter, he must make a CON Roll. Keep track of the failed rolls; the agent dies after three failures. This tends to drastically reduce the number of volunteers for the project. Draysha realize they've traded lifespan for power and the rush of experiencing life as a superhuman, and are often VIPER's hardest socializers and fighters.

NEST LEADER PACKAGE DEAL

VIPER has no handbook or formal training for Nest Leaders (agents joke that the writer of *Nest Leading For Dummies* was shot), but most Nest Leaders acquire a set of essential skills early in their careers. Most come up through the ranks in the combat specialties — Superhuman Combat Specialist, Vehicle Combat Specialist, or Scarlet Serpents — but a few "earn" their post in other ways (see Chapter Four). Nevertheless, a good Nest Leader almost always has this Package Deal.

Nest Leaders have no set equipment package, but usually carry the best equipment VIPER can offer — including custom-made devices their Nests' technicians create for them.

SERPENT MAGE PACKAGE DEAL

Although VIPER tends to frown on magic, some agents (particularly those outside America, such as in Africa and the Orient) practice serpent-themed magic that honors the legacy of the Snake. North American Nests rarely have Serpent Mages — they've acquired too much of a hatred of the likes of DEMON and Dark Seraph, along with a

NEST LEADER PACKAGE DEAL

Ability	Cost
+3 PRE	3
Bureaucratics	3
Interrogation	3
+2 to KS: The Superhuman World (making it at least an INT Roll)	2
+3 to KS: VIPER (making it at least an INT +2 Roll)	3
+1 to PS: VIPER Agent (making it an INT Roll)	1
Two KSs at 11- from the following list: ARGENT, DEMON, The IHA, L'Institut Thoth; PRIMUS, PSI, UNTIL	4
Oratory	3
+4 to Fringe Benefit: Membership	4

Total Cost Of Package: 26

strong distrust of the arcane — but elsewhere folks are less squeamish, and an agent who practices serpent magic can provide a very unexpected surprise for heroes who are only used to the technological aspects of VIPER.

This Package Deal requires the practitioner to be a member of one of VIPER's serpent cults. Any character with the Serpent Mage Package Deal must take the Snake Cultist Package Deal as a prerequisite.

Continued from last page

Psionics

Major Science: Psionic Engineering
Minor Science: Neurology
KS: The Psionic World
Trained Skill: Paramedics

Psychologist

Major Science: Psychology
Minor Science: Sociology
KS: Phobias
Trained Skill: Conversation, Interrogation, or Persuasion

Robotics

Major Science: Robotics
Minor Science: Metallurgy
KS: Robots
Trained Skill: Mechanics



VIPER Draysha

Erik!

THE HIGH PRIEST
OF THE SNAKE

The unofficial leader of the Serpent Mages is a Ghanian sorcerer named Francois Mercy. Rumor claims he has a spell that allows him to summon not just snakes, but the Daughter of the Serpent herself — Viperia, VIPER's most powerful living weapon.

Mercy is *not* some stereotypical tribal witch-doctor out of a 1950s jungle film; he's a medical doctor and a practicing Roman Catholic. He reconciles his two beliefs by claiming snakes are God's servants (one of the forms naturally taken by angels), and that the Supreme Serpent is a saint who intercedes on the behalf of the Believers. The Supreme Serpent, who's a confirmed agnostic, thinks this is nonsense, but willingly humors the delusional Mercy so he can take advantage of Mercy's power.

Becoming a Serpent Mage requires a night of bloodletting (animal blood) and sacrifice in front of a statue of the great serpent Nama, as well as drunken orgiastic dancing. Thereafter the Serpent Mage must participate in similar ceremonies each month to maintain his powers.

SERPENT MAGE
PACKAGE DEAL

Characters taking this Package Deal must also have the Snake Cultist Package Deal.

Ability	Cost
Power: Magic (INT Roll +5)	13
Spells: 117 points' worth of spells (see text box for examples)	117
Disadvantages	Value
Dependence: must participate in monthly worship ceremonies or all powers acquire an Activation Roll 11-	-0
Total Cost Of Package: 130	

SNAKE CULTIST PACKAGE DEAL

Many members of VIPER don't just train to become skilled combatants — they immerse themselves in the rituals of the cult of the Snake. The Snake Cultist represents the epitome of VIPER's fascination with its namesake; he keeps pet serpents, treats them like family, and raises them as symbols of his personal strength. In combat, Snake

Cultists are often some of VIPER's most fanatical agents, because VIPER isn't just a career to them — it's a religion.

SNAKE CULTIST
PACKAGE DEAL

Ability	Cost
Follower: Rattlesnake (<i>Hero System Bestiary</i> , pages 178-180)	12
Animal Handler (Snakes)	2
KS: Snakes	3
KS: Venoms And Toxins	3
SS: Herpetology	3
Life Support (Immunity: Ophidotoxins)	3
Total Cost Of Package: 26	

TAKARA-SHINJA PACKAGE DEAL

The deadly fighter-assassins known as the Takara-Shinja (or more formally, *Shinja no Hebi*, Japanese for "Believers of the Snake") originated in tenth century China as the offshoot of an order of dragon worshippers. Through strongly persecuted by the lawful authorities, they survived in secret until the 1960s. At that time, they realized VIPER was the most potent incarnation of the Great Snake in the modern world, and offered their services to it

SAMPLE SERPENT
MAGE SPELLS

Calling The Serpentine Horde: Summon 10 king cobras (*HERO System Bestiary*, pages 178-79), Slavishly Loyal (+1) (38 Active Points); Concentration (0 DCV; -½), Extra Time (Full Phase (-½), Requires A Magic Roll (-½). Total cost: 15 points.

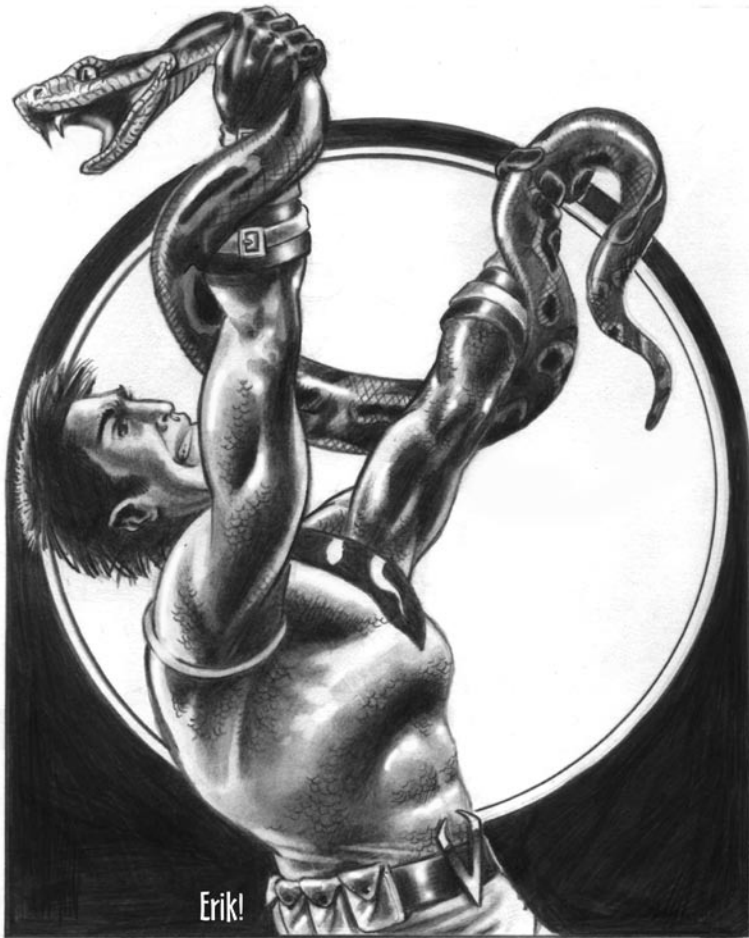
Command Serpents: Mind Control 10d6 (Animal class of minds) (50 Active Points); Concentration (0 DCV; -½), Extra Time (Full Phase (-½), Requires A Magic Roll (-½). Total cost: 20 points.

Serpent's Form: Multiform (assume 130-point king cobra form) (26 Active Points); Concentration (0 DCV; -½), Extra Time (Full Phase (-½), Requires A Magic Roll (-½), Costs Endurance (to transform; -½). Total cost: 9 points.

Speak With Serpents: Telepathy 5d6 (Animal class of minds) (25 Active Points); Concentration (0 DCV; -½), Extra Time (Full Phase (-½), Requires A Magic Roll (-½), Incantations (must speak to snake throughout; -½), No Range (-½), Communication Only (-¼). Total cost: 7 points.

Venomous Touch I: Drain CON 3d6, Delayed Return Rate (points return at the rate of 5 per Hour; +1), NND (defense is Life Support [Immunity: Ophidotoxins]; +1) (90 Active Points); OAF (snake fetish; -1), Extra Time (Full Phase (-½), Requires A Magic Roll (-½). Total cost: 30 points.

Venomous Touch II: RKA 2d6, NND (defense is Life Support [Immunity: Ophidotoxins]; +1), Does BODY (+1) (90 Active Points); OAF (snake fetish; -1), Extra Time (Full Phase (-½), Requires A Magic Roll (-½), No Range (-½). Total cost: 26 points.



unconditionally. VIPER has found these supremely skilled warriors a most potent weapon.

The Takara-Shinja make their headquarters at the *Mayonaka no Shinden* ("Temple of Midnight") near Kyoto, and have other active cells in Tokyo, Hong Kong, San Francisco, and Vancouver (though VIPER often sends them on missions to other cities). Trained from birth to become "the ultimate warriors," culled by an education process crueler and more ruthless than anything practiced in the West, the Takara-Shinja boast that they know neither fear nor hatred, only purpose.

There are only about two dozen Takara-Shinja agents active in the world today. Five form the elite corps *Shehei no Habu*, considered the best of the best. Several retired masters train the next generation (and two train the Supreme Serpent and his bodyguards).

The Takara-Shinja practice a unique martial art called *Hebijutsu* ("Way of the Snake"). It most closely resembles Snake-style Kung Fu. A Hebijutsuka typically holds himself perpendicular to an opponent with a raised arm block and a wide leg stance that's almost a crouch, circling with an extremely slow, smooth, and patient motion; thrusts are sudden and draw heavily on leg power to deliver the blow.

TAKARA-SHINJA PACKAGE DEAL

Ability	Cost
<i>Sudden Serpent Movement</i> : Leaping +10"	
Accurate	15
Life Support (Immunity: Ophiditoxins)	3
Acrobatics	3
Animal Handler	3
Breakfall	3
Climbing (DEX +2)	7
+3 with All Combat	24
Concealment	3
Contortionist	3
Fast Draw (Common Melee Weapons)	3
KS: Hebijutsu 11-	2
KS: The Martial World 11-	2
KS: The Ninja World 11-	2
+1 to KS: VIPER (making it an INT Roll)	1
Martial Arts: Hebijutsu (30 points' worth of maneuvers and Weapon Elements, with +4 Extra DCs)	46
+1 to PS: VIPER Agent (making it an INT Roll)	1
Shadowing	3
Sleight Of Hand	3
+2 to Stealth	4
Tactics	3
WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons, Common Martial Arts Weapons	8
+1 to Fringe Benefit: Membership	1
12 points' worth of Skills from the following list	12
Bribery, Bugging, Combat Driving, Combat Piloting, Combat Skill Levels, Computer Programming, Conversation, Deduction, Electronics, Fast Draw, Forgery, Gambling, Interrogation, Lipreading, Lockpicking, Paramedics, Persuasion, Security Systems, Systems Operation, Teamwork, any Background Skill	

Total Cost Of Package: 155

A Takara-Shinja usually carries a variety of concealed or disguised melee and missile weapons.

HEBIJUTSU

Maneuver	Phs	Cost	OCV	DCV	Notes
Constricting Snake Delighted By Its Prey	½	3	-1	-1	Grab Two Limbs, +10 to STR for holding on
Serpent At the Throat	½	4	-2	+0	Grab One Limb; 2d6 NND(2)
Serpent's Fang Sinking Deep In Flesh	½	4	-2	+0	HKA ½d6 (2 DC)
Serpent Suddenly Lashing Out From Shadow	½	5	-2	+1	STR +4d6 Strike
Serpent Unexpectedly Underfoot	½	3	+2	-1	STR +1d6 Strike; Target Falls
Sinuous Serpent	½	4	—	+5	Dodge, Affects All Attacks, Abort
Snake On Guard Against The Mongoose	½	4	+2	+2	Block, Abort
Snake Wriggle	½	4	+0	+0	+15 STR vs. Grabs
Sudden Serpent Strike	½	4	-1	+1	Disarm; +10 STR to Disarm roll



VIPER Takara-Shinja

AGENT TYPES & MOTIVATIONS



During the course of a superhero's career, he may come in contact with dozens of VIPER agents. Many heroes think of these agents as faceless drones, each of them as alike as their uniforms (an attitude the agents themselves find offensive). Some of the most common personality types among agents are listed below; you can use them to individualize the agents in your campaign.

1. THE ADRENALINE JUNKIE

The Adrenaline Junkie has a death wish; he joined VIPER because he likes the excitement of going after superheroes. He lives for the "rush" of combat when the odds are against him, and uses fear to get a new "high." The Adrenaline Junkie doesn't have a long life expectancy, and usually goes out in a blaze of glory. But if he's competent enough, he may at least earn the heroes' respect for his determination.

Most Adrenaline Junkies serve as Air Cavalry, Heavy Weapons Specialists, Superhuman Combat Specialists, and Vehicle Combat Specialists.

Possible Disadvantages

Psychological Limitation: Adrenaline Junkie, Seeks Out Most Dangerous Way to Do Things, Can't Do Things The "Safe" Way (Very Common, Strong) (20 points)

Psychological Limitation: Refuses To Go Along With Cautious Plans (Common, Moderate) (10 points)

Rivalry: Professional (with other adrenaline junkies) (5 points)

2. THE BRAINWASHED MASSES

One of the things VIPER done with increasing success since the 1980s is find a group of young people and indoctrinate them in the ways of VIPER from their earliest years. This is particularly applicable to the children of Nest Leaders and prominent VIPER commanders, and to that generation of VIPERs raised in West African training camps as the nucleus of the army of the Snake.

The Brainwashed Masses are only beginning to find their way into the VIPER infrastructure, but are expected to enter the organization at all levels.

Possible Disadvantages

Enraged: when VIPER is insulted (Common), go 8-, recover 11- (15 points)

Psychological Limitation: Slavishly Devoted To VIPER (Very Common, Strong) (20 points)

Psychological Limitation: Has No Emotional Con-

nection To The Well-Being Of Non-VIPER Personnel (Common, Moderate) (10 points)

3. BUBBA

Not too bright, and not too ambitious, the Bubba thinks he (or she, there *are* Bubbettes) looks good in his uniform, and that the food at the mess is pretty tasty. The Nest is just one big group of drinking buddies who go out and play with guns. He does what he's told to do, because it doesn't occur to him he actually has a choice over his actions.

Bubbas rarely rise above General Combat Specialist.

Possible Disadvantages

Psychological Limitation: Always Obeys Orders (Very Common, Moderate) (15 points)

Psychological Limitation: Never Turns Against The Pack (Very Common, Moderate) (10 points)

4. THE BULLY

The Bully, is, plain and simple, a bully. He likes to hurt people, and joined VIPER because it offers him the chance to do so. He comes in two varieties: the cowardly bully, who's likely to back down if he encounters force; and the tough-guy bully, who never backs down and loves to fight. Most other VIPER agents dislike the Bully, though he may have a few bootlickers who hang around with him — and if he's good enough at his job his teammates probably won't care if he picks on the new recruits.

Most Bullies are career General Combat Specialists, though the better ones sometimes form the core of a Nest's Heavy Weapons Specialists.

Possible Disadvantages

Psychological Limitation: Does Not Respect The Opinion Of Anyone Regarded As Weak (Very Common, Strong) (20 points)

Psychological Limitation: Takes Any Opportunity To Humiliate Or Pick A Fight With Weaker People (Common, Moderate) (10 points)

5. THE COMPANY MAN

For the Company Man, VIPER's his job. He's worked at VIPER long enough that it's become his life's work, and VIPER takes care of him — medical benefits, pensions, the works. Sure it's a dangerous job, but the Nest Leader's a capable guy... and if you get caught, simply shut your mouth and keep your cool, and the lawyers will get you out.

The Company Man occurs most frequently among VIPER's technical and administrative personnel.

Possible Disadvantages

Psychological Limitation: Slavishly Devoted To VIPER (Very Common, Strong) (20 points)

6. THE COWARDLY LIAR

Treachery is the forte of the Cowardly Liar, who joined VIPER because he likes an opportunity for skullduggery. He manipulates others (“let’s you and him fight”) for his own amusement. If anything serious happens, he tries to get someone else to take the fall for him, otherwise he runs away.

The Cowardly Liar exists at all levels of VIPER.

Possible Disadvantages

Enraged: when directly confronted with evidence of his manipulations (Common), go 8-, recover 11- (10 points)

Psychological Limitation: Compulsive Manipulator (Very Common, Strong) (20 points)

Psychological Limitation: Refuses To Take Responsibility For His Own Actions (Common, Moderate) (10 points)

7. DESTRUCTO-MAN

This agent loves bombs, big guns, and the explosions they make. He likes to destroy things — including people. However, he’s much less enthusiastic about his work when his target actually fires back; then he often runs away.

In VIPER, most Destructo-Men are General Combat Specialists, though the more capable ones become Demolitions Specialists.

Possible Disadvantages

Hunted: Local Arson Investigator 8- (Less Powerful, Non-Combat Influence) (5 points)

Psychological Limitation: Casual Killer (Common, Moderate) (15 points)

Psychological Limitation: Loves To Commit Property Damage (Common, Strong) (10 points)

8. THE GUY WITH BIG PLANS

This agent joined VIPER for the big break — he’s either a future Nest Leader or a supervillain in training, and he’s waiting for something to happen that will carry him into the Big Time. Meanwhile, he makes as many contacts as possible and keeps a careful eye on everything and everyone around him.

This guy’s often found in the upper end of VIPER’s ranks, since nothing’s more important than advancement. He’s also one of the best personality types to use if you’re trying to foster a rivalry with one of the PCs — he’s a good person to use in the role of a punk agent whom the PC busts early in his career, then shows up again later and asks “remember me?” ... right before he pulls the trigger.

Possible Disadvantages

Psychological Limitation: Ambitious And Opportunistic (Very Common, Moderate) (15 points)

Psychological Limitation: Compulsive Schemer (Common, Moderate) (10 points)

Rivalry: Professional (with other Guys With Big Plans) (5 points)

9. THE KID

This type of VIPER agent is notable for his extreme naivete. He joined VIPER because VIPER made extravagant promises, and he believed them. He’s usually not solid VIPER material, but because of the difficulties involved in recruiting large numbers of agents, occasionally a Nest gets a Kid assigned to it. He really doesn’t belong there; he may try to escape, or do something stupid while trying to prove himself; he may hate the world, but really doesn’t want to do anything bad. The Kid is the sort of agent that (some) superheroes like to identify and convert from VIPER.

The Kid is usually found at the bottom of VIPER; dumb Kids are General Combat Specialists, smart Kids are General Technical Specialists. When the Kid grows up, he often turns into the Company Man.

Possible Disadvantages

Enraged: when ridiculed about his mistakes (Uncommon) go 8-, recover 11- (10 points)

Psychological Limitation: Gullible, Believes What He’s Told (Very Common, Strong) (20 points)

Psychological Limitation: Takes Foolish Risks To Earn The Respect Of The Gang (Very Common, Moderate) (15 points)

10. MR. ANGRY AT THE WORLD

This person believes society is out to get him and the world wants to destroy his life. Joining VIPER is his way of protecting himself and getting even. Mister Angry often comes from a life of poverty, or was laid off and has nowhere else to go, or has a radical philosophy and sees VIPER as the best way to achieve his goals against the Enemy (*i.e.*, everyone else).

It’s amazing how often these guys turn into Nest Leaders and intelligence specialists.

Possible Disadvantages

Psychological Limitation: Contempt For Ordinary People, Considers Them Puppets (Common, Moderate) (10 points)

Psychological Limitation: Hatred Of Traditional Institutions Of Authority, Will Never Cooperate With Them (Very Common, Strong) (20 points)

Psychological Limitation: Refuses to Take Responsibility For His Own Actions (Common, Moderate) (10 points)

11. THE PROFESSIONAL

The Professional has a military mindset — he’s the consummate soldier. Prior to joining VIPER, he belonged to the military (or really, really wanted to); he may even have been a mercenary. The Professional joins VIPER because VIPER fosters military efficiency, and its missions give him many opportunities to experience combat and shoot at people. The Professional is often a natural leader, but has a low tolerance for inefficiency.

Most Professionals are Combat Specialists (especially Air Cavalry, Superhuman Combat and Scarlet Serpents) or Espionage Specialists.

Possible Disadvantages

Distinctive Features: Preternaturally Neat, Nothing Is Unpolished Or Out Of Place (Easily Concealable, Noticed and Recognized) (5 points)

Psychological Limitation: Unable To View People As Anything More Than Tactical Weapons And Targets (Very Common, Strong) (20 points)

Psychological Limitation: Dismissive Of Non-Military Or Quasi-Military Personnel (Common, Moderate) (10 points)

Rivalry: Professional (with traditional members of rival service) (5 points)

12. THE TERRIBLE TOADIE

A born follower, the Terrible Toadie enjoys being insulted, abused, and humiliated; that means others are paying attention to him! The Terrible Toadie latches himself onto a VIPER authority (such as a Nest Leader or a Bully) and becomes a sycophant's sycophant. When abandoned (a virtual inevitability), the Toadie becomes lost, like a child in a department store without his mother. At these times his disillusionment may make him ripe for conversion to the forces of Good... if he can develop some gumption.

The Toadie rarely rises above the bottom ranks of VIPER, but that doesn't prevent him from grafting himself to the Nest Leader's side.

Possible Disadvantages

Enraged: when master is physically hurt (Uncommon), go 11-, recover 11- (15 points)

Psychological Limitation: Slavishly Devoted To His Master's Welfare (Very Common, Strong) (20 points)

Psychological Limitation: Lacks Personal Initiative (Common, Moderate) (10 points)

13. THE THREE-TIME LOSER

This ex-con fights harder than most agents to avoid getting caught, because he's done hard time and he's *never* going back. He joined VIPER because he was directed to it by people in the joint, and who else would hire someone with his record? The Three-Time Loser has no place left to go, and acts like it.

The Three-Time Loser usually works as a General Combat Specialist, though the more talented ones (*i.e.*, those who learned a trade in prison) may enter the Technical services.

Possible Disadvantages

Enraged: Berserk when backed into a corner (Common) go 8-, recover 11- (25 points)

Hunted: Local Authorities 8- (As Powerful, NCI) (10 points)

Psychological Limitation: Will Never Surrender (Common, Moderate) (15 points)

Social Limitation: Ex-Con (Frequently, Minor) (10 points)

VIPER Rank Insignia



Agent, Elite (gold)



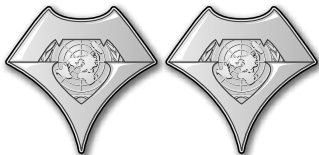
Captain (silver)



Sergeant (gold)



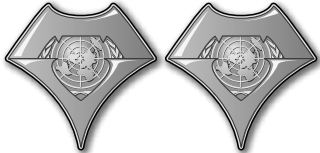
Lieutenant (gold)



Commandant (silver)



General (gold)



Major General (gold)



Serpent-General (gold)



NEST LEADER MOTIVATIONS

Of course, Nest Leaders, while agents in the broad scheme of things, have their own particular motivations and goals. In examining VIPER's Nest Leaders, UNTIL and PRIMUS discovered their behavior typically falls into one of several classic patterns. Many criminology texts discuss these patterns, and superheroes who enjoy psychoanalyzing their foes often discuss them. They include:

1. THE ARROGANT SHOWOFF

Similar to, but much less subtle than, the Cunning Schemer (see below) is the Arrogant Showoff. He revels in the glory that is a Nest Leader's, and the myth of cruelty and indomitability of VIPER. Most are full-blown megalomaniacs — Dr. Destroyer without a powersuit. The Showoff loves to create elaborate plans, in full public view, that demonstrate his cleverness and invincibility, and the greatness and power of VIPER. Intoxicated by newspaper editorials that call for his head, he wants everyone to know how ruthless and powerful he is. Nests led by Showoffs can be very short-lived, but a Showoff with the intelligence to back up his bluster can be the most dangerous type of Nest Leader of all.

Possible Disadvantages

Enraged: when someone openly defies him (Uncommon) go 8-, recover 11- (20 points)

Psychological Limitation: Cannot Resist Elaborate Schemes (Common, Strong) (15 points)

Psychological Limitation: Megalomaniac, Always Must Command, Intolerant Of Subordinates' Personal Initiative (Common, Strong) (15 points)

2. THE COWARDLY COMMANDER

This is the type of Nest Leader most strongly fixed in the public imagination. Not all Nest Leaders abuse their subordinates and use agents as cannon fodder, or run from a fight — but more than one has dreamed impossible designs, then whined like a cur when superheroes have clobbered his “incompetent” agents and are closing in on his battered escape vehicle. His only “strength” is his sense of self-preservation.

The Cowardly Commander lives to watch people demonstrate fear towards him, and doesn't care if it's his own agents or the general public... but he's quick to flee if it seems likely he might come to harm or humiliation. He's the type of leader who nearly destroyed VIPER in the 1980s, and the Supreme Serpent has tried to weed him out, but as long as some cowardly jerk has the money to pay for a VIPER “franchise,” the Cowardly Commander will remain a part of the organization.

Possible Disadvantages

Enraged: Berserk when his troops retreat (Common) go 8-, recover 11- (20 points)

Psychological Limitation: Cannot Directly Face Combat (Common, Strong) (15 points)

Psychological Limitation: Unable To Face Responsibility For Failures, Must Always Have A Scapegoat (Common, Moderate) (10 points)



Moccasin



Constrictor



Adder



Watch

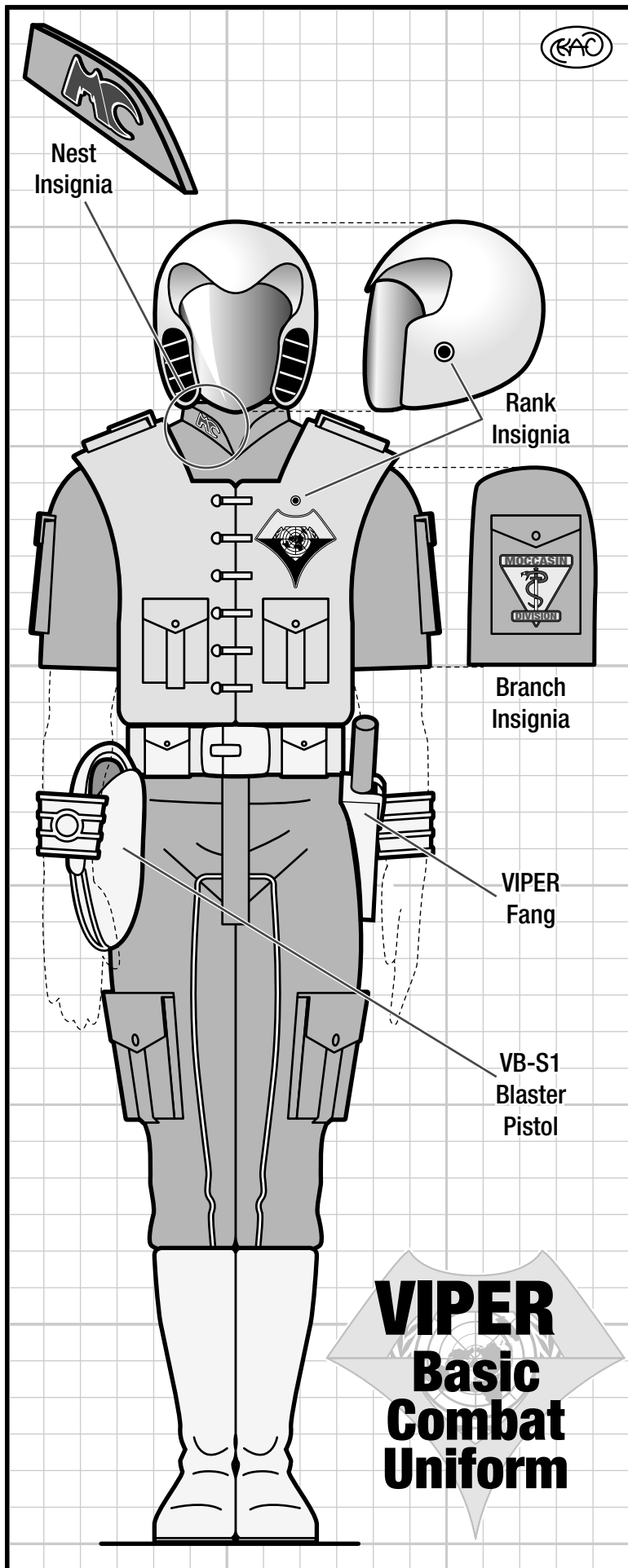


Athame



Clutch





3. THE CULT CLASSIC

The looniest of all VIPER leaders has gotten the nickname “Cult Classic” because he runs his Nest like a cult. Agents aren’t just criminal operatives, they’re also worshippers. The Cult Classic usually creates a personality cult where agents venerate his invincibility, or tries to create Neo-Nazism or Neo-Fascism.

Since the Cult Classic rarely cooperates with others or takes orders gracefully, he’s the most likely type of Nest Leader to turn rogue or challenge the Council Of Thirty; accordingly, he’s the most closely watched type of Nest Leader. Additionally, Nest Leaders who abuse their agents can incur the wrath of VIPER headquarters (there are limits even to the treatment of cannon fodder), leading to their assassination. No VIPER Nest frightens superheroes more than one led by a Cult Classic.

Possible Disadvantages

Psychological Limitation: Intolerant Of Non-Believers (Common, Strong) (15 points)

Psychological Limitation: Despises Modern Social Conventions (Common, Strong) (15 points)

4. THE CUNNING SCHEMER

The Cunning Schemer is the sort of person who would like to play chess against fifty opponents and try to think five moves ahead of each of them. He lives to foil his enemies by manipulating them and setting devious traps. He wants everyone to realize how clever he is; that’s what really matters.

A Schemer’s Nest rarely has a lot of firepower; it relies on covert operations and deceptions. The strength of a Schemer’s Nest is that it’s usually very flexible, and that stealthy operations often earn more profit than blatant ones. The weakness is that many Schemers are too clever for their own good; they don’t learn when to deploy force.

Possible Disadvantages

Enraged: Berserk when he realizes his scheme has fallen apart (Uncommon) go 8-, recover 11- (20 points)

Psychological Limitation: Cannot Resist Elaborate Schemes (Common, Strong) (15 points)

Psychological Limitation: Must Explain His Clever Plan When He Thinks He Has The Advantage (Common, Moderate) (10 points)

5. THE GREEDY GRABBER

Money is the root of all evil, and the Grabber loves his roots. A Nest led by a Greedy Grabber pulls a lot of robberies and other high-profit crimes. He typically enjoys living in high style, and possessing status symbols is extremely important to him. While he often commands a strong Nest (since he needs force to earn money), the Grabber’s greed, and his tendency to blatantly use his agents without sharing the wealth, are his weaknesses.

Possible Disadvantages

Enraged: when he thinks he’s been robbed

(Uncommon) go 8-, recover 11- (10 points)

Enraged: when his possessions are damaged
(Common) go 8-, recover 11- (15 points)

Psychological Limitation: Greedy, Always Wants More (Common, Strong) (15 points)

6. THE MAD SCIENTIST

Some people are blinded by science; others blind people with science. Few Nest Leaders are Mad Scientists, but occasionally a technician or researcher rises to a position of leadership instead of just assisting a leader.

To the Mad Scientist, the world is a laboratory, and crime generates the funds, materials, and guinea pigs needed for experiments. The Mad Scientist involves his Nest in bizarre research, sometimes based on the Scientist's whims with no scientific basis; the Nest's dangerousness depends on how level-headed and scientifically gifted the Mad Scientist is.

Most Mad Scientists leave tactical planning and execution to an agent commander. While he can provide his agents with all sorts of technological surprises for use against the enemy, the Mad Scientist all too often simply isn't an effective leader, and his Nest suffers for it.

Possible Disadvantages

Psychological Limitation: Cannot Resist Trying To Acquire Potential Scientific Breakthroughs (Common, Strong) (15 points)

Psychological Limitation: Treats Everyone Like Guinea Pigs (Common, Moderate) (10 points)

7. THE RESPECTABLE BUSINESSMAN

For some Nest Leaders, control of a VIPER Nest represents just one facet of a much larger organization. The Respectable Businessman can be as ruthless as any other Nest Leader; he just likes to hide behind a facade of respectability. While unlikely to make major displays of force against his enemies (who often have "accidents"), the Businessman wields financial and legal power with great skill.

Possible Disadvantages

Enraged: Berserk when he suffers a major business setback (Uncommon) go 8-, recover 11- (20 points)

Psychological Limitation: Places Profit Above All Other Things (Common, Strong) (15 points)

Psychological Limitation: Prefers To Use Maximum Force To Solve Problem (Common, Moderate) (10 points)

8. THE RUTHLESS BASTARD

One of the more unfortunate characteristics of the human species is its capacity for cruelty. The Ruthless Bastard epitomizes this in VIPER leaders. One might describe this type of Nest Leader as a more competent version of the Cowardly Commander — the welfare of his agents mean nothing to him, but he's not one to run from a fight.

The Ruthless Bastard enjoys living up to his name. He'll kill an enemy without hesitation, and the messier and the more public the death, the better. The Ruthless Bastard doesn't live for spectacle; he lives for the fear, and for chances to hurt his enemies.

Possible Disadvantages

Enraged: Berserk when betrayed (Uncommon) go 8-, recover 11- (20 points)

Psychological Limitation: Casual Killer (Common, Strong) (15 points)

Rivalry: Professional (with other underworld figures) (5 points)

9. THE VENGEFUL VIPER

The Vengeful VIPER joined VIPER for one reason — revenge. Perhaps the legal system put the screws to him, or he fell victim to an accident. He wants revenge against someone, and uses VIPER as an instrument to get it.

Possible Disadvantages

Enraged: Berserk when his attempt to get revenge fails (Uncommon) go 8-, recover 11- (20 points)

Physical Limitation: Infirmary Caused By Person He Wants Vengeance On (All The Time, Slightly Impairing) (15 points)

Psychological Limitation: Vengeful (Common, Strong) (15 points)

Social Limitation: Diminished Status Caused By Person He Wants Vengeance On (Frequently, Minor) (10 points)



VIPER: chapter four

NESTS OF THE VIPER

NEST CHARACTERISTICS



VIPER refers to its primary local bases — those housing groups of agents, who use them as a headquarters for performing a variety of criminal missions — as “Nests.” Nests serve as local bases of operations, training facilities, communications centers, planning and strategy facilities, and homes for VIPER agents in nearly every major city of the world. (Other facilities, such as testing grounds, factories for weapons and other illegal objects, or secret laboratories, are not called “Nests.”) They house some of the world’s most powerful illegal technology and most devious criminal minds.

You should design a Nest or Nests for your campaign which suit the nature of your game and provide sufficient opposition for the PCs. This chapter provides a few guidelines and suggestions, as well as descriptions of several sample Nests and a discussion of Nest relations and life.

VIPER usually designates Nests as “major” or “minor.” A *major Nest* has two dozen or more agents (in addition to commanders and secondary personnel) permanently assigned to it. Some range into the hundreds of agents, though two to four dozen is the average. Most Nests are *minor*, with a typical complement of 10–20 agents, plus a Nest Leader and support staff. A Nest can always obtain more people on a temporary basis by asking VIPER for assistance, or hiring mercenaries or local thugs to put on a uniform for a job or two. (Many VIPER recruits make it to VIPER Academy on the strength of a recommendation from a Nest Leader after they perform well on one of these “temp jobs.”)

Each Nest is unique, shaped by such forces as the nature of the city it’s in, the location available to it, the Nest Leader in charge, and the size and needs of the force of agents headquartered there. Therefore, describing a “typical” VIPER Nest is difficult at best; more than a few differ so much from any other base that they could almost belong to some other organization. But most VIPER bases share a few features.

LOCATION

With a few exceptions (mainly in Third World countries), VIPER locates its Nests in urban areas — usually large cities, which provide both the maximum cover for VIPER’s agents and the most opportunities for profitable crimes. Nests in smaller cities or rural areas are either proportionately smaller, or located near some resource of particular importance to VIPER.

VIPER builds most of its Nests underground,

since such locations offer a high degree of concealment, security, and defensibility. Sometimes they attach the base to part of an existing underground structure, such as a subway tunnel; for example, the Steel Citadel in San Francisco (page 93) was built in this fashion. Other Nests are built as part of the underground construction of other buildings. For this type of Nest, the construction crews work for VIPER, or VIPER bribes them to keep the secret (and usually follows the bribe up by killing most of the people involved). The main New York City VIPER Nest, located in Manhattan, was built this way by the now defunct (in every sense of the word) Brennerman Construction firm. Similarly, some Nests are faux building projects begun by disguised VIPER crews and later “abandoned”; the McCloskey Tunnel base in Millennium City provides a textbook example. Some Nests use abandoned underground structures, such as subway and sewer tunnels no longer in use; this saves on time and resources, but may pose safety or discovery risks. VIPER set up another of the New York Nests using this method.

By longstanding VIPER tradition, no underground Nest has less than two entrances/exits. Most have many more than that, though at least a few access points usually remain hidden, known only to the Nest Leader or other high-ranking agents. Entrances/exits normally have high levels of security (see below).

Sometimes VIPER breaks its normal pattern and chooses an aboveground location for a base. Abandoned buildings, structures owned by VIPER through a series of dummy corporations, and facilities controlled by VIPER through blackmail or other methods all provide possible venues for Nests. In these cases, the Nest usually covers its existence with a fake business, such as a trucking company, an investment firm, or a civilian research laboratory. Most of the employees of the false front have no idea that VIPER signs their paychecks, nor do they know what *really* goes on behind the heavy, locked doors that only their bosses have access to. For example, one of the VIPER’s Nests in Boston is located on the fifty-third through sixty-third floors of a high-rise office building, disguised as the high-priced law firm of Pritchett, Knox, Rydell, and Huffman. Several of the firm’s partners are VIPER officers.

SECURITY

VIPER Nests uniformly have high security — not unusual, given the nature of the organization

Snake Beer

One of the “perks” of VIPER membership is plenty of free beer during recreation periods. VIPER has its own brand, Snake Beer — the Beer With Bite! It comes in distinctive yellow-gold cans with a green serpent and lettering (or bottles with a similar label). Collectors value the containers, since VIPER goes to great lengths to make sure it destroys them so they don't reveal the organization's presence in an area. Despite the risks, VIPER's leadership regards Snake as a morale-booster and keeps supplying it to Nests (some agents suspect it contains drugs or brainwashing chemicals to improve their performance, but no one's ever offered any proof).

The quality of Snake varies, since VIPER doesn't actually brew it. Instead, it has Nests hijack shipments of legitimate brands of beer, then puts the beer into VIPER's own cans and bottles.

and its activities. Security begins at the entrances and exits, which usually have fingerprint or retina scanners, code-key or code-card systems, pressure plates, and/or closed-circuit television cameras to foil intruders. (See pages 105-06 of *Champions* for some sample security devices.) Most entrances have at least one or two agents on guard at all times, with standing orders to call for help rather than try to fight invaders by themselves. Nests with paranoid leaders consider sewer connections, power and phone conduits, and the like as “entrances” and secure them accordingly, knowing superheroes often have unusual ways to gain access.

Inside the Nest, security usually varies from area to area, depending on the competence of the base's Security Commander. Sensitive areas, such as the computer and data storage room, laboratories, the Leader's chambers, and the like have security measures similar to entrances, and often armed guards as well. Other areas may have few or no security precautions, though most Nests at least maintain a series of closed-circuit cameras to watch all major parts of the base.

Particularly powerful or crucial VIPER Nests may have even tighter security precautions. Using VIPER's high technology, they can set up anti-teleportation or anti-intangibility fields, anti-psionic zones, brainwave scanners, or just about anything else their fiendish minds can conceive of. Nests which frequently fight specific superteams or heroes often devise special security precautions for those supers.

Especially vicious, ruthless, or cruel Nest Leaders sometimes include lethal traps as part of their security. While such traps may backfire or cause casualties among the Nest's membership on occasion, Leaders who use them find those risks acceptable. From simple, tried and true traps, like acid-filled pits or crushing walls, to automatic blasters and similar weapons, to more esoteric methods like triggered teleporting bombs or psionic feedback generators, these devices spell trouble for anyone who dares to beard VIPER in its lair.

Last but certainly not least, any superhumans assigned to a base may provide security for it. In many cases their mere presence helps to defend the base from enemies, but some VIPER supers have powers they can use to make their home bases harder to find or enter. For example, Delusion, of the Miami base, uses his unique holographic technology to supplement the base's normal security measures with various illusions and confusing images.

FACILITIES

Though every base is unique, most of them have certain facilities or resources in common.

UTILITIES

First, a Nest has to have a way to provide power, telephone lines, ventilation, sewer connections, and the like. In most cases VIPER simply taps into the existing utility services clandestinely and siphons off whatever it needs. But some Nests,

particularly those with large laboratory or manufacturing facilities, need so much power and other resources that they would attract attention if they “fed off” standard utilities. These Nests usually supply their own power or other needs with generators and similar technology. VIPER's research and development labs have created some amazingly small and efficient devices to service its Nests.

LABORATORIES

All but the smallest VIPER Nests have at least a laboratory or two. While VIPER has bases devoted exclusively to scientific research and invention, each Nest needs its own technological resources — a place to develop a new weapon for use against the pesky local superheroes, or to analyze the device Squadron Alpha just stole from Cambridge Biotech. In some Nests, the agents themselves use the labs; larger Nests usually have a dedicated staff of technicians and scientists to assist the field agents.

COMPUTERS AND DATA STORAGE

All VIPER Nests (or other bases for that matter) have a room devoted to computing (including the base's connection to VIPER's ultra-secure Serpentine Network) and data storage. Inevitably one of the most heavily protected rooms in a Nest, it usually has self-destruct mechanisms designed to keep any information about VIPER from falling into the wrong hands. Most agents are not allowed to take data storage media out of this room; this prevents them from losing it (or selling it), and ensures that the self-destruct system eliminates *all* of a base's data.

See page 117 for sample VIPER computers.

TRAINING

Most Nests have facilities for training agents. In smaller bases, this consists of little more than a gym and a soundproof firing range. Larger or more technologically advanced bases may feature computer simulation and/or virtual reality training rooms, “war rooms” for planning crimes, so-called “danger rooms” for creating a wide variety of real-danger training scenarios, and the like.

MANUFACTURING

Some of the larger Nests have small manufacturing facilities onsite, where trained agents make or repair weapons and other equipment. However, VIPER does most of its manufacturing and repair work at dedicated facilities far away from the prying eyes of law enforcement (often in Third World countries).

RECREATION

VIPER expects a lot from its agents — hard work, loyalty, and a willingness to engage in an extremely dangerous occupation. In return it compensates them handsomely, not only with money and training, but with recreation opportunities. Rather than let agents leave the Nest frequently, which runs the risk of attracting attention to the base, VIPER prefers to provide the means for recreation onsite. Even the smallest Nest has a “rec

room” featuring food service equipment and a wide-screen high-definition television. Larger or more advanced Nests provide a lot more than that — small-screen theaters, game rooms, jacuzzis, restaurant-like cafeterias, even harems.

NEST CLASSIFICATIONS

While VIPER itself doesn't bother to categorize its Nests, criminological literature generally recognizes four types of them.

DISASSOCIATED NESTS

A *disassociated Nest* is one in which the main body of agents does not reside in the Nest full-time. A few agents, including the Nest Leader, live in the Nest at all times, but most of them have their own apartments and homes. Through secured forms of communication — encrypted e-mail and wireless phones, sealed letters delivered by agents disguised as messengers, and the like — the Nest Leader calls the agents together for training, to plan and conduct missions, and so forth. Disassociated Nests most commonly exist in smaller cities which cannot support a full-fledged Nest, or as smaller Nests in orbit of much larger and more important Nests in the world's metropoli.

Security issues pose a major problem for disassociated Nests. Since agents have to come and go from the Nest on a relatively regular basis, they need a way to get in and out without the authorities or nosy people observing them. Some disassociated Nests rely on secrecy and/or isolation to accomplish this. They hide their entrances in tiny back alleys, sewer tunnels, underground parking garages,

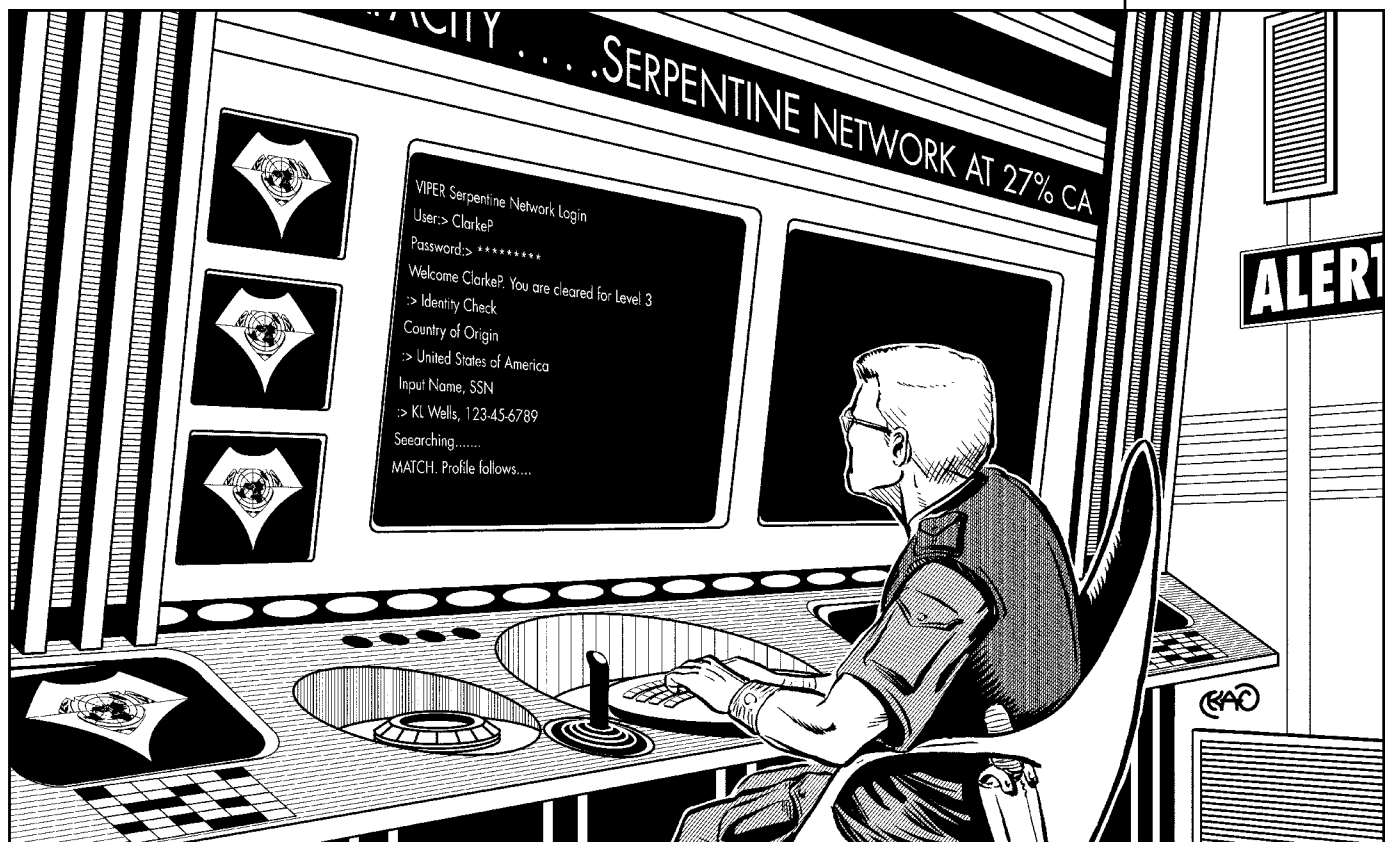
or deep forests, making sure agents have several different routes to get to the “front door” without leaving a trail. Others prefer to “hide in plain sight.” All their agents belong to a seemingly innocuous group controlled or sponsored by VIPER, such as a fraternal organization, a church, or a club of some sort. The group acts as a front, giving the agents a supposedly legitimate reason to gather together regularly. If the group owns a building, such as a clubhouse or meeting hall, the actual Nest itself is part of or connected to that facility (often, it's buried beneath it).

On the other hand, the lack of a permanent body of agents living and working in one place alleviates some security concerns. Disassociated Nests usually have little difficulty hiding their drain on the local power grid or the disposal of their waste, for example. Similarly, since they normally lack extensive laboratory or manufacturing facilities, they minimize the risk of exposure due to accidents.

NEST NETWORK

Also known as a “Nestwork,” this organizational scheme divides a single Nest among several “sub-Nest” physical facilities. Rather than put all of his eggs in one basket, the Nest Leader splits his resources up among a number of small Nests. The typical Nest network has three to eight “mini-Nests,” but UNTIL has verified the existence of Nestworks with as many as 23 sub-Nests.

Establishing and running a Nest network presents some logistical difficulties. The overall Nest Leader has to have enough trustworthy underlings to delegate sub-Nest leadership duties to. But no Nest Leader is foolish enough to fully trust *any* of



his agents, so he also needs overt and covert methods to observe the sub-leaders' performance and prevent treachery as best he can. Since communication between sub-Nests must occur frequently, the Nest Leader has to ensure that his computer and communications networks remain as secure as possible. Most Nest networks have an unusually high percentage of agents skilled with computers and electronics for this reason.

The Council Of Thirty tends to frown on Nest networks. It find them more difficult to communicate with, harder to control, and prone to breakdowns in authority. But they recognize that some locations simply don't allow for a sufficiently secure centralized Nest, making a Nest network the best type of presence the organization can maintain there.

The best known example of a Nest network was the VIPER Nest in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania during the 1980s. Led by a low-powered superhuman known as Xerxes, it divided its facilities and resources among six different mini-Nests in the greater Three Rivers area. Xerxes, a stickler for discipline and efficiency, did his best to precisely balance the number of agents, weapons, and other resources among his six Nests (after giving the one he used as his headquarters priority, of course). Unfortunately for VIPER, a brief slip in communications discipline tipped off a local superhero group, the Justice Defenders, to the Nest's existence. Over the course of the next six months, the Justice Defenders waged a bitter war against Xerxes and his men, eventually smashing all six sub-Nests and driving VIPER away from Pittsburgh for four years.

CENTRALIZED NEST

When people talk about "a VIPER Nest," they're almost always thinking of what experts call a "centralized Nest." Large, powerful, and based in a single location, a centralized Nest of any size poses a major threat to the security and safety of a city. In more than one city, the centralized VIPER Nest represents the most powerful force in the underworld.

Centralized Nests typically have one or more squadrons of agents who live in the Nest on a permanent basis, their own laboratory facilities (and sometimes manufacturing facilities as well), meeting and planning rooms, recreation and dining facilities, and anything else needed to keep a large-scale criminal operation functioning. Having everything in one place diminishes certain security concerns, such as the need for highly secured communications or ways for agents to covertly enter and exit the base regularly.

But maintaining a centralized Nest poses its own security problems. First, keeping a base so large and complex, and inhabited by so many people, secret can tax the resources and ingenuity of even the cleverest Nest Leader. For example, the need to provide utilities for the Nest, whether by tapping existing utility providers or having the Nest generate its own, can reveal the Nest's presence to law enforcement officials and superheroes. Second, the Nest has to find a way to store its fleet of vehicles, and to give large groups of agents the means to leave and enter the Nest secretly. If agents can't get into and out of the Nest quickly and quietly, keeping them all in one location doesn't do VIPER much good. For this reason, most centralized Nests are located underground, or have under-



ground accessways, since it's not hard for agents to get into basements and sewers without attracting too much attention.

The main Nest in Chicago, known as “the Aerie” because it's located near the top of a skyscraper, provides a perfect example of a centralized Nest. See page 86.

SATELLITE NESTS

Just because a city has a centralized Nest doesn't mean VIPER wants to keep all its local resources there. Sometimes VIPER needs more agents in a city or nation than it can comfortably house at one location. In these cases, it establishes smaller Nests to accompany the centralized Nest. Criminologists have coined the term “satellite Nests” for these bases, since they “orbit” the centralized Nest.

To a certain extent, a centralized-satellite Nest system resembles a Nest network, since the Leaders of the satellite Nests ultimately answer to the Nest Leader of the centralized Nest, who controls all VIPER activity in that area. But since VIPER considers satellite Nests separate facilities, their Leaders have far more autonomy and responsibility than agents who lead sub-Nests. Except when a crime

requires coordination of effort, satellite Nest Leaders generally don't have to report to the centralized Nest Leader or seek his permission to conduct their own operations. However, in the event of significant conflicts between the centralized and satellite Nests, or repeated instances where lack of communication causes problems, VIPER's leadership insists on closer ties between the two.

Sometimes the Leader of a satellite Nest launches a “coup” against his centralized Nest Leader, hoping to take over his position. VIPER doesn't tolerate such “civil wars” for very long, particularly if they attract too much attention from superheroes and police organizations. If necessary, the Council Of Thirty decides which Nest Leader it favors, then sends Dragon Branch and/or some squadrons of VIPER's best agents to resolve the situation quickly and quietly.

The Nine Dragon Palace, located beneath the evolving “Chinatown” area of the borough of Queens in New York City, is an example of a satellite Nest. Though nominally under the command of the main New York City VIPER Nest in Manhattan, it largely acts on its own, confining its operations to Queens. See page 89.

ORGANIZATION & STRUCTURE



Nests tend to display as much diversity of personnel and Leaders as they do of physical plant, but they do have some features in common.

NEST HIERARCHY AND PERSONNEL

Like VIPER itself, Nests maintain strict hierarchies of command and control.

The Nest Leader

Exercising total authority over the base and its residents is the “Nest Leader.” At most Nests, he holds the rank of Commandant; at larger or more significant Nests, he's a General. Within the Nest, his word is law. Except in cases of gross incompetence or malfeasance, his VIPER superiors usually support his decisions without question. If he feels the only appropriate discipline for a rebellious agent is death, so be it. If he wants to attack a particular target in a particular way, that's how the Nest does it. Only for especially important missions or situations does VIPER send higher-ranking agents to take control away from a Nest Leader.

Of course, saying the Nest Leader has total control really doesn't make it so. To function as

an effective commander, a Nest Leader needs the respect, or at least fear, of his underlings. If a Nest's agents decide their Leader is unbalanced, dangerous, out of control, an idiot, or just too cruel, they may decide to murder and replace him — and VIPER's leaders usually won't quibble with their decision, since a Leader who can't keep control of his Nest obviously doesn't deserve to keep it.

CREATING NEST LEADERS

One of the keys to designing an enjoyable Nest for your campaign is the personnel you create for it. VIPER agents are VIPER agents; one is pretty much just like another as far as the PCs are concerned. But the officers and agents unique to the Nest, particularly the Nest Leader, can provide color and excitement to your game. An ordinary, boring Nest Leader adds nothing — but one with a unique, distinctive personality can become a major foe whom your players look forward to grappling with time and again.

When creating your Nest Leader, first you should decide whether he uses a *nom du crime* or avoids such affectations. VIPER being a large and colorful criminal organization, it attracts larger than life people of criminal bent, and many of them like to ape the superhero culture and adopt codenames. Redstone (page 37), who runs the main Vancouver Nest, provides a good example. Of course, superpowered leaders are more likely to

CAPTURED!

Every Nest Leader knows that sooner or later, the authorities (or superheroes working for or with them) are going to capture some of his men. Whether it's one agent or a dozen, an agent in police custody poses a significant security risk, so VIPER has developed several ways to deal with the problem.

First, all agents have strict instructions to say nothing to the police and to offer no cooperation whatsoever. An agent who obeys this order continues to receive his pay while in prison (VIPER banks it for him, or gives it to his family), and VIPER will use whatever resources it can to ensure he ends up in a facility that has other VIPER agents, or in which VIPER can provide him with money and luxury items. An agent who disobeys is disowned by the organization altogether. If it can, VIPER will have him killed (if not at present, when he gets out), and exceptionally cruel Nest Leaders often establish a policy of killing an agent's family and friends if he squeals.

Second, VIPER provides captured agents with legal representation. It can afford to pay lavish retainers, and that means it can hire some high-powered legal help; in addition, more than a few agents are attorneys in their "secret identities." An agent who doesn't follow orders has to hire his own lawyer or rely on the public defender.

Third, if the security risk of leaving an agent (particularly a high-ranking one) in police custody is too great, VIPER

choose codenames, but even some normal human Nest Leaders do so. For example, Shadow, the leader of one of the satellite Nests in New Orleans, has no superpowers whatsoever, but she's widely known by her chosen name (a far better one, in her opinion, than her given name of Margaret Turner).

Second, determine whether your Nest Leader has superpowers. Most Nest Leaders do not, but a significant minority of them do. Even minor superhuman abilities makes it easier for them to run their Nests and interact with VIPER's superpowered agents and leaders. It also gives them a better chance of fighting off superheroes who confront them. Of course, even Nest Leaders who don't have a single innate superpower often use advanced or experimental technology to give themselves an edge over the typical agent.

Third, spend some time thinking about the Nest Leader's personality and leadership style. Is he a tyrant, a martinet, sloppy, easy-going, ruthless, efficient, cautious, daring? Does he have a penchant for large, elaborate crimes, or can he content himself with smaller and plainer, but often equally as profitable, missions? Given his methods, do his underlings like and respect him, grudgingly tolerate him, or loath his slimy serpentine guts? All of these factors affect how he leads the Nest against your heroes, how agents react to the PCs, and what crimes the Nest commits. See page 69 for more information on Nest Leader personality types.

Commanders

Immediately below the Nest Leader in a base's chain of command, and usually holding the rank of Captain, are three "commanders": the Field Commander, Intelligence Commander, and Security Commander. In theory the commanders are equals, but depending on the nature of the Nest, or the preferences of its Leader, one of the commanders may have more influence or power than the others.

The *Field Commander* is the Nest's combat and missions leader (but second in command, if applicable, to the Nest Leader). He decides how to conduct a particular operation, which agents commit which crimes (or which parts of them), and how best to confront and defeat the enemy. In many Nests, he's the best-trained and/or best-equipped agent in the Nest after the Leader.

When planning his operations, the Field Commander usually relies heavily on the *Intelligence Commander*, whose people gather information about targets, potential opposition, local law enforcement, and other matters of interest to the Nest. If a Nest has spies in the local business or law enforcement community, assigns agents to surveil businessmen to obtain blackmail data, or tries to hack into UNTIL's computer records, those operations all fall under the Intelligence Commander's jurisdiction.

The *Security Commander* deals with all issues of Nest security, including what security devices to install where, establishing security procedures for all agents to follow, and ensuring that agents can come and go from the base without significant risk

of detection by unfriendlies. This is a dangerous position to hold, since the Nest Leader usually lays the blame for any breaches of security at the Security Commander's feet, even if the S.C. did nothing wrong — and blame usually leads to punishment.

DIVISIONS WITHIN THE NEST

In Nests with a heavy contingent of personnel who work mainly for one of VIPER's four branches, the chain of command may also include a Political Commander, Financial Commander, or Technical Commander (the Field Commander would be the "Criminal Commander"). If they exist, these persons typically rank just below the three commanders described above, though again that can vary depending on the Nest and its leader.

Squadrons And Agents

Nests organize their rank-and-file agents into *squadrons* of varying numbers and types of personnel (see below); some Nests have larger or smaller squadrons based on the number of agents available to form them. A *Squadron Commander*, usually holding the rank of Lieutenant (or, more rarely, Sergeant), commands each squadron. He's responsible for the conduct of his men, and a commander or Nest Leader may punish him if one of them fails a task or violates the rules. He must also ensure that each agent's equipment functions properly, that his men have the proper training, and that their morale remains high, and so forth. Many agents regard this as one of the hardest jobs in VIPER — it comes with most of the difficulties of being a high-ranking officer, but none of the perks.

SQUADRON SIZE AND COMPOSITION

For years, VIPER used the "classic" Five-Team arrangement, but recently it's moved to different squad sizes for flexibility and diversity. Additionally, it's found that an even number of personnel in a squad makes it easy for agents to work in pairs and watch each other's backs.

VIPER uses the "Four-Team," or four-man intrusion squad, for subtle jobs. A Four-Team typically consists of:

- Two Combat Specialists (typically GCSs)
- One Espionage or Infiltration Specialist
- One Technical Specialist (typically a Communications, Computer, or Science Specialist); the Technical Specialist usually oversees the operation

A full "Eight-Team," or eight-man assault squad, deployed when VIPER knows it's going into an assault situation, normally includes:

- One Lieutenant as Squadron Commander (typically a Scarlet Serpent or one of the advanced Combat Specialists)
- One or two Heavy Weapons Specialists
- Three or four GCS agents
- One Vehicle Combat Specialist/transport operative

- One Communications Specialist or like agent (used primarily in support)

Minor operations typically employ one or two four-man squads, perhaps with a combat-oriented squad stationed near the site as back-up. Major operations employ five to six Four-Teams, which is close to the full complement of many medium-sized Nests.

Retrieval assaults (when VIPER's trying to capture an important objective) require a full assault team and appropriate technical specialists (computer data will require a Computer Specialist, scientific objects require a Science Specialist, and so forth). An Infiltration Specialist may also take part in the operation; he'll have infiltrated the target weeks earlier and established himself in a position to lower defenses. Likewise, VIPER may have people disguised as uniformed police who'll arrive on the scene if superheroes are threatening to break it apart, pretend to help, and then shoot the heroes in the back.

Assassination missions employ more subtle methods. Usually a single Infiltration Specialist or a Red Guard does the trick. When VIPER *really* wants to send a message, Snake Cultists, Draysha,

or even the Takara-Shinja perform assassination missions (sometimes with the assistance of trained venomous snakes).

Of course, mission parameters aside, the thing you should most consider when planning a VIPER operation is how best to challenge your player characters, which helps make VIPER seem more "realistic." If VIPER knows the local superhero team may show up to oppose it, it will send enough personnel to give itself a fighting chance to accomplish the mission and escape with the objective. In any event, Nest leadership usually remains back at the Nest, far away from the danger of a battle with superheroes or the police.

INTERPERSONAL AND GENDER ISSUES

VIPER is a tough outfit, where only the strong and fit survive. But it's also an *organization*, a group of people working together to achieve things none of them could accomplish singlehandedly. As such, VIPER has to carefully mix its philosophy of superiority with one of teamwork. It wants its agents to compete against each other so the best ones prosper and rise to positions of greater responsibility (a sort of "criminal Darwinism"). But it also wants

Continued from last page

may stage a rescue or assassination attempt. It advertises successful rescues widely among its personnel, but doesn't ever mention the possibility of assassination.

JOURNAL OF A VIPER AGENT

Following a raid that destroyed most of a minor Nest in Chicago, UNTIL recovered the fragments of a journal kept by a VIPER agent posted there. Finding it insightful and intriguing, the UNTIL higher-ups have had portions of it widely distributed throughout the agency and to prominent criminal psychologists. Excerpts follow.

January 15: Pretty routine day, except that the Commandant announced a new operation at the morning briefing. He's got a plan to rob the Hentaro Corporation; he says some "inside man" tells him the company's investment bank subsidiary is storing \$20 million in bearer bonds in their vault. Sounds too good to be true to me, but I just do what I'm told.

Us and Beta Squadron got the nod for the job, so we spent the rest of the day after training coming up with a plan on the Commandant's orders. According to his info, the bank only keeps the vault open for a few hours each afternoon, and it's too strong for us to cut through easily, so we figured it would have to be a strong-arm job or a sneak. I think we worked out a pretty good routine, though; we should be in and out in under five minutes.

Jackie's still giving me the cold shoulder. Bitch.

January 16: Got a special assignment today — scouting out the Hentaro bank job with Larry. I'm glad they put him on the job; he's one of those Financial guys, and I don't know anything about investments. First we had to go over to a print store and get some business cards for a cover, then arrange a meeting with some suit at the bank.

Larry did most of the talking, I just sat there holding a briefcase and looking around. I took in the whole place, using my Scouting Glasses to gather plenty of intel. It didn't look to me like it would be too tough a job. They only have a couple of security guards on duty; I guess they prefer to rely on alarms and stuff. We'll have to find a way to cut the alarms without tipping anyone off before we go in.

After some more scouting, got back just in time for

dinner and rec time. The theater was showing some stupid movie about a blind guy and Mira Sorvino with no nudity. Who'se #!(%&\$ idea was *that*? Won twelve dollars in poker afterwards, though.

January 19: We've been practicing the Hentaro job for two days. Using the film I took, we set up a mock bank lobby and got Gamma Squadron to play the part of the bank goons. We've gotten it down to as little as three minutes fifteen — assuming nothing goes wrong, of course.

The biggest problem with the plan is having to screw around with the alarms in advance. The Squadron Commanders have decided to send Barry and Carol in as "maintenance workers" from the security company a few hours before we pull the job. Seems shaky to me, but even if it doesn't work, we can probably do the job safely if we can stick to the three minutes.

The Commandant says he got the word earlier today that they're going to move the bearer bonds in the next two or three days, so he's decided we're gonna pull the job tomorrow. I wish we had more time; I never like it when we have to move so quickly.

January 20: What a screw-up. I don't know whether Barry and Carol screwed their part of the job, or the bank just didn't buy their cover story, but the alarms definitely were *not* cut. We pulled up outside the bank and made it in just fine, but halfway through getting the bonds a bunch of UNTIL jerks and a couple of the Peacekeepers showed up. The whole thing turned into a bloody mess; we tried to take hostages and get away, but Dreamweaver messed with our minds and rescued the hostages before we could make it to the air-cars. We were pinned down by UNTIL fire until Deryk got lucky and blew up their van with one of his blaster shots. Me and a bunch of other guys from the squadron made a break for it and got away in one of the air-cars, but most of Beta Squadron was caught. The Commandant's pretty pissed; it looks like we may have to evacuate the whole damn base.

them to work together to defeat their enemies and complete missions. Nest personnel, particularly Squadron Commanders and Field Commanders, work hard to ensure that rivalries, and even hatreds, don't get out of hand and ruin a squadron's or Nest's morale or fighting efficiency. If necessary, Nest Leaders transfer troublemakers to other bases, or kill them.

Most Nests contain a mix of male and female agents; VIPER, after all, is an equal-opportunity organization. All it cares about is whether an agent can do the job. As such it freely mixes male and female agents in Nests, and does not care about fraternization between them as long as it doesn't impair organizational efficiency. On the other hand, VIPER's philosophy of superiority dictates that an agent who can't handle unwanted sexual advances from another agent is weak and deserves whatever he gets. Smart Squadron Commanders don't let this sort of thing get out of hand, and find ways to deal with it that don't hurt morale.

THE DAILY GRIND

Though every Nest has a different daily routine, most of them follow more or less the same rough schedule, one derived from VIPER's years of experience operating secret bases and managing a vast criminal enterprise. Of course, Nest Leaders may vary this routine to account for special circumstances, personal preferences or whims, and other factors; disassociated Nests often maintain significantly different schedules since their agents don't live on-site.

Since most Nests conduct a lot of their operations between the hours of 12:00 midnight and 4:00 AM, agents typically arise between 10:00 AM and 12:00 noon during active periods; when on "down-time," between major missions, the Nest Leader usually allows them to sleep as late as they want. After waking up, they spend about half an hour on a calisthenics regimen tailored to each agent or squadron. Part of the exercise routine focuses on keeping the agents in fighting trim, and part complements their training for the current mission (if any). For example, if a squadron plans to conduct a robbery in which the agents climb down from a rooftop, their morning routine may include rope-climbing exercises. After working out, the agents grab a quick shower and head down to the food service area or cafeteria for breakfast.

Following breakfast, the agents assemble, either in one large group or by squadron, for a daily briefing conducted by the Nest Leader or other high-ranking agent. The briefing covers the day's schedule, current Nest activities, projected activities for the next two to six weeks, security updates, and the like. Years of experience have taught VIPER that keeping agents reasonably informed about Nest operations improves morale and performance, though it means the Nest Leader may have to change plans quickly if the authorities capture an agent.

The agents spend the rest of their "morning," until lunch at about 4:00 PM to 6:00 PM, training. Usually they mix standard training exercises

— time on the firing range, practicing lockpicking or other skills, anti-superhero tactics, and the like — with mission-specific training. If the Nest has enough space, the Squadron Commander may set up a mock floorplan for the target, allowing agents to practice "run-throughs" (with other agents standing in for the victims and security personnel). Most Nests prefer to conduct training in the Nest, to minimize exposure, but if necessary the officers can arrange for offsite training. For example, if a squadron has to parachute onto a target, the Nest Leader may hire the services of a jump school and arrange for a civilian vehicle to take the agents out to the airport.

After the mid-day meal, agents spend several hours attending to chores or engaging in additional training or study. Most Nest Leaders leave this time relatively unstructured, allowing agents to do whatever they want provided they don't neglect their duties or skills. But if a major operation is in the works, the Leader or commanders may dictate certain tasks.

Most Nests schedule the evening meal for sometime between 9:00 and 11:00 PM. On an ordinary day, it's a heavy meal, followed by two or three hours of personal time for the agents. Most of them spend this time relaxing in the recreation areas, pursuing their hobbies, or the like. Computer games, particularly those that allow agents to compete against each other, are popular pasttimes in many Nests. Lights-out is usually at 12:00 midnight to 4:00 AM, depending on the schedule.

If the Nest has a mission planned for the evening, the agents eat a lighter meal, have an hour or so of personal time, then prepare for the job. After suiting up and gathering their weapons and gear, they assemble at the departure point. Assuming everything goes as planned, they leave the Nest, conduct the mission successfully, leave the scene of the crime unhindered, and return to base after taking appropriate precautions to ensure that no one follows them. Of course, sometimes jobs *don't* go as planned, forcing the agents and the Nest Leader to adapt, improvise, and react in the most intelligent manner they can....

SUPERVILLAINS ON STAFF

Some Nests have their own supervillains permanently assigned to them as part of their complement of agents. Examples include Delusion (a gadgeteer specializing in holograms who works with the main Miami Nest) and Epoch (a chronomanipulator stationed at New Karnak in Cairo). A Nest can get one of these super-agents in several ways.

First, a normal agent working for the Nest can somehow gain or develop superpowers while a member of VIPER. In that case, the Council usually allows the agent to remain with his Nest; it feels this improves morale and encourages agents not to hide their superpowers. Of course, if an agent prefers not to remain in his local Nest, VIPER removes him from it and assigns him as a floating agent within Dragon Branch.

Second, VIPER's leadership can assign the supervillain to the Nest long-term. This indicates

the importance VIPER places on the Nest and its activities, or some need the Nest has that only that particular supervillain can fill.

In either case, VIPER considers the agent a member of Dragon Branch. He's subject to all orders, regulations, and perks any member of Dragon Branch receives (often to the resentment of mundane agents). Typically a super-agent has a *de facto* rank/authority within a Nest equal to a commander, or at least a lieutenant, but this varies from Nest to Nest.

Nest Internal Politics

While some Nests operate as models of high-military efficiency, most fall somewhat short of this ideal. No matter how much discipline VIPER training and Nest leadership try to instill, the truth is VIPER agents are criminals — which means they're greedy, prone to violence, temperamental, touchy, hateful, ambitious, and have poor impulse control. As a result, many Nests seethe with plots, schemes, and feuds. Commanders may want to overthrow the Nest Leader and take his place, or a low-ranking agent may scheme to obtain a promotion by making other agents look bad. The members of one squadron may hate the members of another squadron and pick fights with them whenever possible. Sexual relationships may arise and collapse at the drop of a hat, leading to all sorts of jealousy and resentment.

When you create a Nest for your campaign, think about the personalities involved and the potential for internal alliances and conflicts. It's easiest to assume all agents do as they're told and have no personal agendas, but that's not necessarily "realistic" and may deprive you of some potential adventure ideas. By making a Nest's personnel more like real, living, breathing criminal agents instead of cardboard cutouts, you make the Nest, and thus VIPER, a more interesting foe for the PCs.

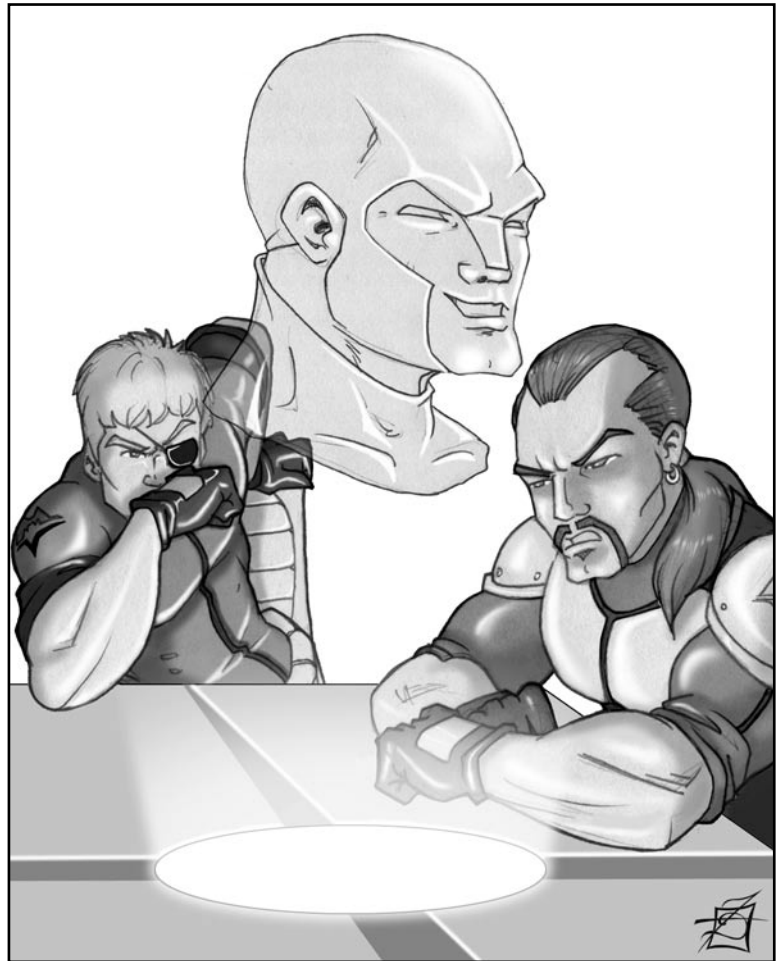
THE NEST AND GREATER VIPER

Of course, as independent as they sometimes act, Nests are not autonomous criminal entities — they belong to a larger organization, and you have to take that into account when creating and running them.

THE NEST MODEL

Criminologists often ponder the question of why VIPER chose the "Nest model" for its organization rather than a more traditional structure. They've correctly deduced that VIPER has several reasons.

First, the Nest model helps to encapsulate various parts of the organization from each other, much like the "cell structure" used by some terrorist and espionage organizations. A Nest may have connections to the VIPER leadership, and may know something about other local Nests it works with from time to time. But it doesn't necessarily have



a huge amount of information about VIPER as a whole: it can't tell UNTIL or PRIMUS where to find the Council Of Thirty, who the Supreme Serpent is, or how many Nests there are in some other city (or even who's in charge of them). Obviously some information leaks between various Nests, and some Nests (or Leaders, or agents) develop reputations that transcend this compartmentalization, but for the most part it holds true — particularly among the lowest-ranking agents, who may know little to nothing about the rest of VIPER.

Second, the Nest model limits the organization's exposure to capture or disruption. If the Sentinels or the local cops discover and destroy a Nest, or capture all of a Nest's agents, they don't necessarily have any effect on the rest of the organization. Other local Nests, and Nests in other cities, can continue their criminal operations uninterrupted; they're typically not dependent on other Nests for most of their resources or leadership.

Third, the Nest model makes it easy to expand. Rather than building a small number of huge bases, VIPER has a large number of relatively small bases, which it finds easier to build and hide. After a Nest has established a foothold in an area, VIPER can build another one in the same general area without stepping on the other Nest's toes. Much like a franchised restaurant, it spreads insidiously across the landscape, one city or state at a time. Similarly, if the authorities compromise a Nest, it's a fairly simple matter to establish another one, since VIPER hasn't put all its eggs in one basket.

ACCESSING VIPER'S RESOURCES

When a Nest needs something from greater VIPER — more (or better) equipment, the services of Dragon Branch, replacements for lost agents, and the like — it has several ways to get what it wants.

First, there's the Nest's regular "allotment." Under VIPER's rules, each Nest is entitled to a certain amount of free technology, new agents, and the like each year; a Nest's allotment depends on its size and importance. The Financial Division has an elaborate scheme of valuation through which a Nest that wants something special (such as some extra heavy weapons) can "swap" part of its regular allotment ("Instead of 24 new VB-A1s, I'd like 12

Continued on next page

ESTABLISHING NEW NESTS

VIPER Nests don't spring up overnight for no good reason. They arise in one of two ways.

VIPER-Created

First, VIPER creates mosts Nests as the result of deliberate planning and decisionmaking by the VIPER leadership. The Council Of Thirty studies the economy, underworld, and criminal prospects in an area. If it decides the region is ripe for a VIPER presence (or an expansion of the existing VIPER presence), the Council puts VIPER's engineers and technicians to work to find a proper location for the Nest and a way to build or establish it without attracting the attention of the authorities. After the Council approves the engineers' plan, construction begins. It usually takes no more than six months to build a new Nest, though the time required depends on the size of the Nest, the resources VIPER devotes to the job, and how much effort the builders have to devote to disguising their activities. If possible, they pose as a legitimate construction crew, using forged permits and documentation to make it look like they're doing legitimate work on a legal project.

Franchised

Second, sometimes enterprising individuals "apply" to VIPER to create a Nest. VIPER personnel generally refer to this as "franchising," or "buying a Nest franchise," even though it's not literally a franchise arrangement. What happens is that an ambi-

tious criminal — usually, but not always, one who already belongs to VIPER or works for it in some capacity — contacts a high-ranking VIPER officer and asks about establishing a new Nest. The officer relays the request to the Council Of Thirty through the appropriate channels, and the Council considers the matter. If it considers the "applicant" unfit, or his idea for a new Nest unfeasible, it usually arranges to have him killed; he knows too much or has become too ambitious for VIPER's good.

If, on the other hand, the Council Of Thirty thinks the idea of a new Nest has merit and that the applicant is the right person to create and lead that Nest, it establishes terms for the "deal." The future Nest Leader first has to pay enormous sums of money (typically in the millions of dollars) to the Council as an "approval fee," and must provide extensive personal information about himself. Then he must present the Council with a plan for the construction and operation of the Nest. Once the Council approves the plan (which may take several rounds of back-and-forth discussion and rewriting), the applicant starts work. If everything goes as planned, in a few months VIPER assigns him squads of agents and his Nest begins operations and becomes part of VIPER's structure. If setbacks occur, the Council may step in and take over (usually after having the applicant killed), or it may abandon the project and covertly tip off the authorities (again, usually after killing the applicant so he can't reveal any VIPER secrets).

"Franchise applicants" prefer to buy their way into VIPER instead of establishing their own criminal gangs for three reasons. The first, to use modern marketing-speak, is "branding." VIPER is a powerful force in the global underworld, and belonging to the group automatically confers a certain level of prestige and respect. Second, joining VIPER grants access to the group's resources, which vastly exceed anything a local gang could establish or create on its own. Third, if you can't beat 'em, join 'em — local criminal leaders know they can't compete with VIPER, and rather than have the organization dispose of them when they become too much of a threat, they become a part of VIPER and take advantage of all the organization has to offer.

Nest Leaders, commanders, and other VIPER officers often look down on Nest Leaders who "buy their way into" VIPER. They consider them less competent and less worthy of respect than Leaders who join the organization as recruits and work their way up the ladder. But the truth is that "franchised" Nest Leaders have records of success equal to those of "real" Leaders — apparently, the ability to establish one's self in the underworld, earn the money to buy a Nest franchise, and convince the Council to approve the application proves one's worth as much as ascending the VIPER ladder does.

SELECTING NEST LEADERS

Other than Nest Leaders who franchise their way in, VIPER has several methods to select Nest Leaders.

The first and most common is merit. When a Nest Leader can no longer lead (he retires, is



captured/killed, demonstrates his incompetence, or the like), the VIPER leadership evaluates potential replacements. It looks first and foremost to other personnel within that Nest, and if someone seems fit for the job promotes him to it. If no one inside the Nest seems appropriate, VIPER looks elsewhere in that same city, or if necessary beyond it, until it finds the right person for the job. If two or more people are equally qualified, VIPER may have them compete for the job in various ways... or simply let both of them know and then give the job to whichever of them manages to kill the other one.

Second, VIPER can let criminal Darwinism do the job. Killing a superior officer to take his place doesn't occur frequently in VIPER, but it's not unknown. More than one unpopular or oppressive Nest Leader has ended his career with a VIPER Fang between his shoulder blades, and sometimes even skilled Leaders fall victim to an agent more ruthless or ambitious than themselves. But just killing the Nest Leader doesn't mean an agent gets to take his place. The Leader's death may touch off a power struggle within the Nest, as other agents try to take advantage of the time of "weakness" to dispose of the assassin and seize power for themselves. Even if the "usurper" has wisely arranged for other agents to support his play for power, the Council Of Thirty still has to approve of the change of leadership. Usually the Council gives the new Leader its stamp of approval; he's proven his worth by getting rid of a less deserving officer. If the Council has any doubts — for example, if the agent's disciplinary record suggests he lacks the discretion to maintain the Nest's secrecy — the Council has him killed and replaces him with a new Nest Leader of its own choice.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND PRIVILEGES

Within VIPER, a Nest has many responsibilities, but also plenty of privileges.

Nest Duties

VIPER's leadership stresses Nests' duties to the organization, and swiftly punishes any attempt to avoid them.

First, a Nest has to obey orders. If the Council Of Thirty or some other authority "requests" a Nest's help with a particular project, the Nest must comply without hesitation. Efforts to minimize involvement or shirk this responsibility result in immediate sanctions, up to and including the summary execution of offending Nest Leaders and commanders. VIPER doesn't care whether a Nest agrees with or supports a plan; it only cares that the Nest does what it's told.

Similarly, VIPER generally expects Nests and Nest Leaders to support the organization's overall goal of world domination. It realizes many Leaders have much more restricted perspective on things — they just want to make themselves fabulously rich, or to become the ruler of a city's underworld. But it expects them to set their personal goals aside in the greater interest of the entire organization when necessary. After all, when VIPER rules the world, its members will live like kings!

Furthering the organization's goals usually

impacts a Nest most closely when the Council wants to conduct a criminal operation of its own in a Nest's territory. In that case it sends a team of its own (often including members of Dragon Branch) to get the job done, and it expects the full cooperation and support of all local Nests it chooses to involve. If that means sacrificing agents, vehicles, or even an entire Nest, so be it — VIPER compensates the Nest Leader later as it sees fit.

Second, all Nests must pay a "cut," a portion of their earnings from all enterprises legitimate and illegitimate, to the Council Of Thirty. Nest Leaders sometimes call this "the VIPER tax," but it's no different from the way any other large criminal organization conducts business — those lower on the ladder have to pay members higher on the ladder. Depending on a Nest's profitability and other factors, its "cut" usually equals twenty to thirty percent of everything it takes in.

Nest Privileges

The first privilege a Nest gets for belonging to VIPER, besides the general prestige and power that comes with belonging to it, is the right to request organizational assistance and resources. If a Nest needs extra agents, or even members of Dragon Branch, it contacts the Council and requests support personnel. If it needs to expand its arsenal, it asks the Technical Division for more weapons, new weapons, or the chance to field-test the latest experimental weapons.

Of course, few of these services are free (see the Allotment sidebar). VIPER does sometimes send a Nest a supervillain or new weapon without being asked, sort of as a membership perk, and it may offer a Nest some extra resources to ensure that an important mission goes as planned. But usually a Nest that wants assistance from the "home office" has to cover the expenses or pay for the privilege. If a Nest wants a shipment of a dozen new VB-A1 "Striker" blaster rifles from the factory in Colombia, it has to send payment before the factory sends the weapons. If a Nest needs the services of Oculon, Halfjack, and Ripper, it has to "hire" their services from the Council Of Thirty. In both cases, the costs are much cheaper than they would be for the Nest to buy weapons or hire mercenary villains from another source, but they're still hefty.

Second, each Nest has an exclusive "territory" assigned to it within which it has authority over all VIPER operations by any Nest (the Council can, of course, conduct its own operations wherever it wishes without restriction). If a Nest wants to perform a crime within another Nest's territory, it has to get permission (which usually involves paying the Nest Leader a "cut" of the proceeds). The Council severely punishes a Nest that operates in another Nest's territory without permission.

For cities or regions with only one Nest, determining the extent of the territory becomes a simple matter. It's more difficult when a city has multiple Nests, but usually the Council resolves the situation by establishing strict geographical boundaries based on roads or prominent landmarks. If the Council wants to add a Nest into an area that

Continued from last page

of the rifles and two V-12 Destructors...").

Second, the Nest can buy what it wants from VIPER. After a Nest uses up its annual allotment, it can purchase technology (and sometimes agents) from the Council Of Thirty. If a Nest does this repeatedly, VIPER's leadership examines the situation closely to determine whether the Nest needs to have its allotment raised, or is just getting greedy.

The annual allotment does not include any help from Dragon Branch. If a Nest requests the presence of one or more of VIPER's supervillains, the Council considers the request. If it seems meritorious to the organization as a whole, the Nest gets whatever it needs gratis. If the request just benefits that Nest, the Nest has to "hire" the villains it wants at high rates — often tens of thousands of dollars per villain per week.

Rather than attract the attention of the Council by making too many requests for more equipment or help, some Nest Leaders prefer to go to "outside contractors" — ARGENT or the like. The Council frowns on this, since it's a security risk, but hasn't tried to stamp it out... yet.

THE GOLDEN VIPERS

The Golden Vipers, the Supreme Serpent's hand-picked corps of bodyguards, includes some of the most highly-trained and competent agents in VIPER. The Supreme Serpent takes them, has his scientists use genetic and cybernetic treatments to make them even more powerful, and then equips them with the best weapons they have to offer. Every Golden Viper is indoctrinated with one overwhelming command: serve the Supreme Serpent absolutely, even if it means sacrificing your life. There's nothing a Golden Viper won't do or endure to help the leader of VIPER with his schemes.

A Golden Viper has a 20 in all Primary Characteristics (except COM), and individuals may have higher scores in one or two of them. They also have SPD 4, and may raise other Figured Characteristics as well. Most have the General Combat Specialist and Scarlet Snake Package Deals; additionally, choose one or two of the following Package Deals for them: Environmental Combat Specialist; Heavy Weapons Specialist; Melee Combat Specialist; Night Operations Specialist; Red Guard; Sniper Specialist; Superhuman Combat Specialist; Vehicle Combat Specialist.

Equip the Golden Vipers as standard VIPER GCS agents, with Elite BCUs and helmets, but improve the efficiency and power of their equipment (*i.e.*, its Active Points, DCs, or the like) by 10-25%.

already has one or more, it has to take territory away from existing Nests to give to the new Nest; in this case it compensates the Nest Leaders who lose territory with payments of cash, equipment, or personnel.

Inter-Nest Relations

If a Nest thinks a rival Nest has wronged it, it can file a grievance with the Council using the Serpentine Network. VIPER then dispatches a heavily-guarded investigation team to examine the complaint. The team talks to members of each Nest and conducts a street-level inquiry. It also talks with VIPER contacts in local organizations who have no ties to either Nest. After the investigators file a report, the Council makes a ruling and punishes the Nest found to be in the wrong (usually with a hefty fine).

EXAMPLE NESTS



Here are several example Nests and Nest Leaders from around the world. You can incorporate them into your game as-is, change them to suit your campaign, or use them as guidelines for designing your own Nests.

SUPREME NESTS

VIPER has four major bases outside the normal Nest structure. Referred to as "Supreme Nests," they contain vital organizational resources; any one of them could serve as VIPER's world headquarters if the existing World Headquarters was compromised or destroyed. All Supreme Nests have extensive security precautions, including elaborate self-destruct mechanisms to ensure that the authorities can't learn too much about VIPER by invading one.

For security reasons, VIPER has no Supreme Nests in the United States; the odds of a superhero uncovering one there are simply too great. Since it has so many regular Nests in America, this lack causes no problems despite VIPER's high level of activity there.

Mbang Mountains: VIPER World Headquarters

Located in the jungle-covered Mbang Mountains in the nation of Cameroon, the VIPER World Headquarters is VIPER's largest and best-protected facility. Built inside and beneath the mountain range itself, the World Headquarters is well-hidden from the prying eyes of the world not only by thousands of tons of solid rock, but by simple isolation.

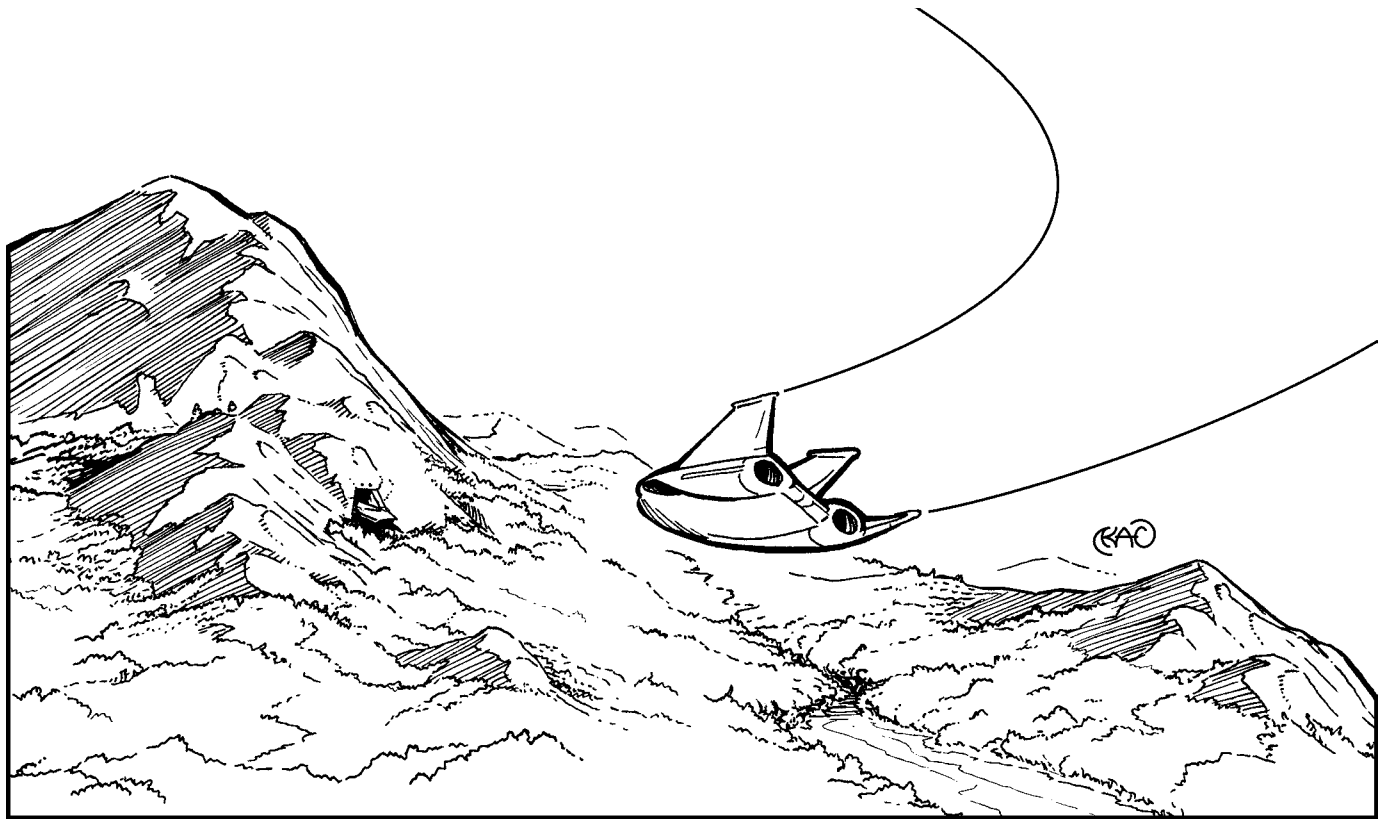
When Nests frequently collide and it's clear that they can't get along and that no one side is convincingly in the right, sometimes the Council issues a "vendetta" order. This means the Nests must find a way to settle their differences or lose their privileges. VIPER may restore privileges to one side when the other side's wiped out, but sometimes other VIPER Nests, sensing the blood in the water, try to grab the available territory. The threat of mutual destruction often forces intransigent Nests to reach an agreeable compromise.

Because it's usually in a Nest's best interest to cooperate with other Nests to combat mutual threats, Nest politics usually remain relatively neat and orderly. But when they get messy, they get *really* messy.

The World Headquarters is the domain of the Supreme Serpent himself. From here he issues orders to the Council and the Nests, launches various plans and schemes, contemplates the world situation and how best VIPER can take advantage of it, and studies his foes. On those rare occasions when the Council Of Thirty comes together for a face-to-face meeting, this is where it gathers. The base also includes Serpentine, the master computer that runs VIPER's Serpentine Network.

The World Headquarters consists of three large levels. The topmost level holds the Supreme Serpent's personal quarters, his private work spaces, and related facilities. It resembles an old Victorian mansion more than a VIPER base. The walls have elaborate wood paneling and hold Old Master paintings; the furniture is lavish and comfortable; and an air of comfort, elegance, and sophistication pervades every room. Of particular note are the Council's meeting room (featuring a single table large enough for all thirty members to sit at), the Supreme Serpent's enormous dining hall, and the Serpent's "sitting room" from which he can look down upon his future domain via a large viewscreen arranged to look like a picture window.

The second level looks and feels more like a typical VIPER base. The walls are metal or plaster, the facilities more spartan (but by no means uncomfortable). The Supreme Serpent's hand-picked corps of bodyguards, the Golden Vipers, lives and trains here; every member of the Dragon Branch also has quarters here, and uses them frequently. This level also features enormous hangars for the base's fleet of aerial vehicles. Because the mountainous, jungle-covered terrain around the base makes the use of lots of ground vehicles



impractical, the World Headquarters has very few of them. Instead it relies on VIPER aircraft, such as Quetzalcoatl Aerial Gunships, to defend the World Headquarters and shuttle visitors to and fro.

The third and lowest level is a technical area, filled with laboratories, workshops, testing rooms, prison cells, and other such utilitarian features. It includes the Serpentine Sphere, an enormous spherical chamber housing Serpentine and its various supporting equipment and subsystems.

Naturally, VIPER protects its World Headquarters *extremely* well. Hidden sensors detect and track intruders from about 20 miles out so no attacker can take VIPER by surprise. In addition to the large fleet of aircraft mentioned above, the base also has both automated and agent-fired main guns that normally remain hidden inside the mountain; typically these do at least RKA 6d6 Armor Piercing damage, if not more, with their powerful energy beams. Inside the base, security remains tight at all times, with electronic locks on all major doors that require a passcard, code word, or retina scan to get through. During times of attack security becomes even more intense, with automated weapons popping out from behind concealed panels to lay down withering barrages of fire against any intruder. Additionally, the layout of the base makes invasion difficult and gives the defenders plenty of places to take cover and establish fire zones.

Of course, if a large invading force actually does make it to the World Headquarters, it's likely VIPER will abandon the base anyway because it's been compromised. The defenses have as much to do with giving the Supreme Serpent and his most valued underlings the time and opportunity to escape as they do with literally fending off attack-

ers. The base has numerous secret escape routes, all heavily secured and many known only to the Supreme Serpent himself.

The Alps: The Citadel

The World Headquarters isn't VIPER's only major under-mountain base. Hiding right in the heart of Europe like a cancer, the Citadel is the personal Nest of the Duchess herself.

Built beneath the Lepontine Alps in Switzerland, the Citadel resembles the World Headquarters in many respects, but has five smaller levels instead of three enormous ones. The Duchess uses the top two as her personal quarters and workspace; they're filled with every luxury imaginable. The lower levels contain laboratories, barracks for agents, hangars and garages, and other facilities.

Unlike the World Headquarters, the Citadel has relatively few defensive weapons; it relies on elaborate, tightly-enforced secrecy and security procedures instead. The Duchess knows that fighting off attacking superheroes won't solve any problems once they find out about the Citadel; she just wants to ensure she can get away and that no traces of her (or Duchess Industries's) presence or involvement with VIPER remain. The Citadel has numerous escape routes, including several underground high-speed mini-maglev trains that can carry the Duchess dozens of miles away in just a few minutes. The Citadel's self-destruct systems are as elaborate as those in the World Headquarters; the Duchess hopes that if she ever has to activate one of them, she can catch a whole group of superheroes or several squads of UNTIL agents inside.

The Citadel has two main entrances. The first, from which it takes its name, is concealed inside an old Swiss castle owned by Duchess Industries. The world thinks the castle is just a retreat and vacation spot for valued Duchess employees, but a few Duchess employees know of the hidden door that leads down into the true Citadel. The other is from Henrietta Von Drotte's personal Swiss chalet.

When the Duchess herself is not in residence at the Citadel, command of the facility falls to General Robert McClarren, a short and seemingly innocuous fellow who came to VIPER after a few years in a radical faction of the Provisional Irish Republican Army. Although highly disciplined and calm in crisis situations, he's capable of acts of sadistic violence if necessary (and sometimes just for fun). Even people like Logan Hendricks and Sidewinder walk softly around "Devil McClarren."

The Arctic: Ice Station VIPER

Considered one of the worst assignments in the organization, Ice Station VIPER is buried inside the permanent ice sheet that covers the Arctic Sea. It also extends slightly into the frigid waters below the ice, allowing VIPER submarines to dock, take on supplies, and so forth.

The main purpose of Ice Station VIPER is to monitor world communications and the comings and goings of American and Russian military forces. Most agents and technicians spend their days listening to hour after hour of boring radio traffic, making note of anything that seems relevant or interesting. These nuggets of information allow VIPER to track the movements of its foes (and eventual targets) so it can prepare for attacks and counterattacks against any VIPER facility.

"The Icehouse" (as agents call it) has one large level, with small "sub-levels" and "supralevels" here and there as necessary to contain various structures. It's roughly circular, with the Serpentine Network node at the center and other facilities spreading out from there. The further away from "the core," the less important a part of the base tends to be.

Since Ice Station VIPER contains so much valuable communications equipment and data, including a Serpentine Network node nearly as powerful as Serpentine itself, it features heavy defenses. In the event of an attack, massive energy cannons (RKA 8d6, Penetrating, with a MegaScale mode of 1" = 1 km) suddenly project out of the ice and begin firing. Batteries of lesser blasters, including laser and sonic weapons, open fire on any attacker who gets past the main guns. In the event the defenses fail to stop invaders, the base's self-destruct system can reduce it to shattered fragments that sink quickly to the ocean floor.

A tough, laconic VIPER general who goes by the title of "the Snowhound" commands Ice Station VIPER. While most of the agents assigned to the Arctic base complain bitterly about the cold and ice, the Snowhound seems to revel in it; he never wears protective clothing and yet seems completely unaffected by the bitter temperatures. Rumors

whispered in the corridors of the Icehouse claim the Snowhound stalks the ice packs, hunting polar bears and killing them with his bare hands.

India: The Sand Castle

Beneath the sandy wastes of the Great Indian (or Thar) Desert that straddles the border of India and Pakistan VIPER has built a large, sprawling base once referred to as "Desert Station VIPER," but now almost uniformly known by the nickname its first complement of agents christened it with: the Sand Castle.

Consisting of four "sub-bases" connected to each other by various tunnels and maglev train systems, the Sand Castle mainly focuses on research, technological development, and studies into superhuman mutations and powers. While it has some facilities for training agents, compared to other Supreme Nests it has few agents but many more scientists and technicians. When VIPER recruits unscrupulous scientists from the former Soviet bloc countries and the Middle East, the Sand Castle almost inevitably becomes their first home in VIPER. They may not stay there very long, but this is where VIPER evaluates their skills and fitness for the organization. Some prove unsuitable and only leave the Castle feet-first.

The commander of the Sand Castle, General Kalat Barkhan, knows the region well from his childhood growing up in the Pakistani state of Punjab and his years in the Pakistani army. Facing arrest and imprisonment for his brutal torture and murder of several Indian soldiers, he fled to VIPER, which stationed him at several bases around the world until finally bringing him home. He has a bitter hatred of India and won't allow any Indian agents in his command, but he doesn't dare use VIPER resources to attack India because he has strict orders from the Supreme Serpent himself not to do so.

THE AERIE

VIPER's main Nest in Chicago earned its nickname, "the Aerie," because it's an exception to the general rule that centralized Nests have underground sites. Located in the heart of Chicago's downtown, high up in a skyscraper, the Aerie casts its avaricious gaze over the Windy City.

THE MACGREGOR BUILDING

A 95-story office building featuring prominently in Chicago's skyline, the MacGregor Building was constructed in the late 1970s. Since 1987, VIPER has controlled the corporation which owns it, MacGregor Building LLC, and thus effectively owned the building. Since VIPER owns 73% of the company's stock through various dummy corporations, proxies, and high-ranking agents, it can prevent the sale of the building and keep anyone from discovering what it's really up to. VIPER's computer files also contain significant blackmail information about several of the owners of the remaining 27%

The Aerie

First Floor

(Floor 87 of
MacGregor
Buidling)



Secret Elevator to
Underground Facility

Computer
Station

Desk & Typical Chairs



File Cabinets

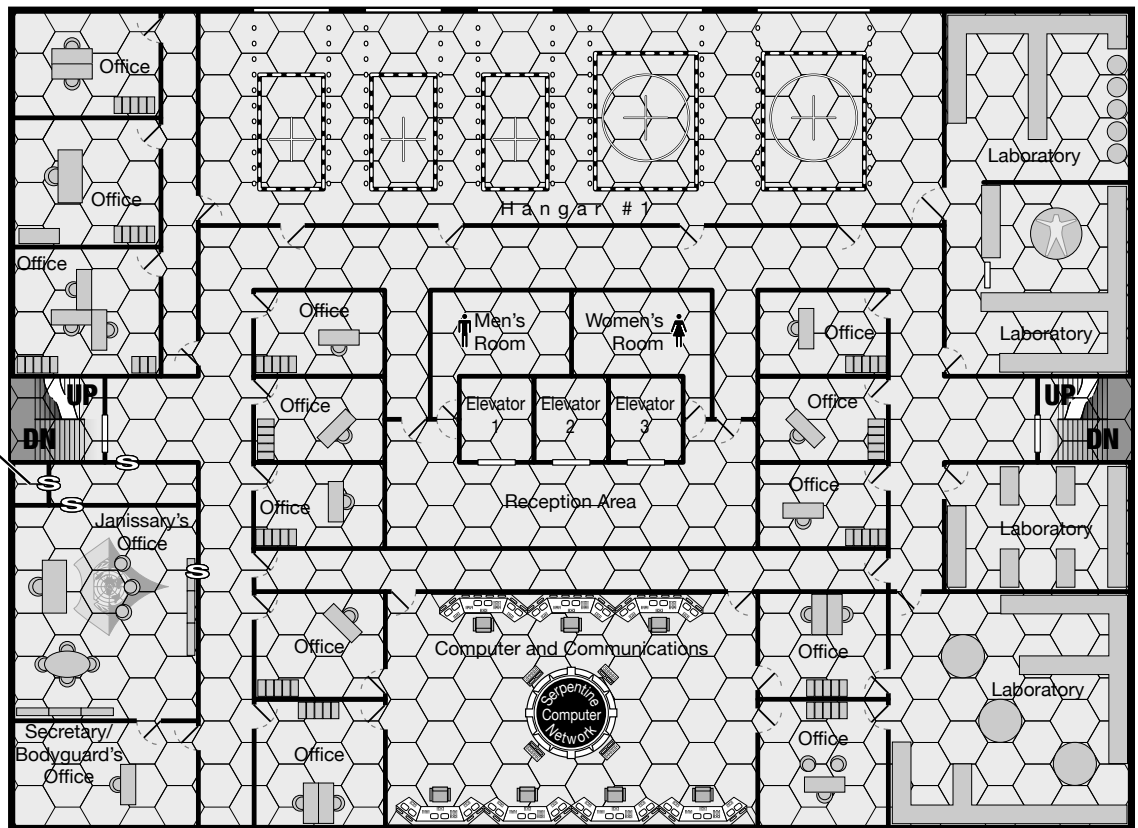


Secret Door



Sliding Door

Hexes are at standard
Hero scale 1" = 2m



The Aerie

Second Floor

(Floor 88 of
MacGregor
Buidling)



Secret Elevator to
Underground Facility



Bunk & Chest



Table & Chairs



Desks & Chairs

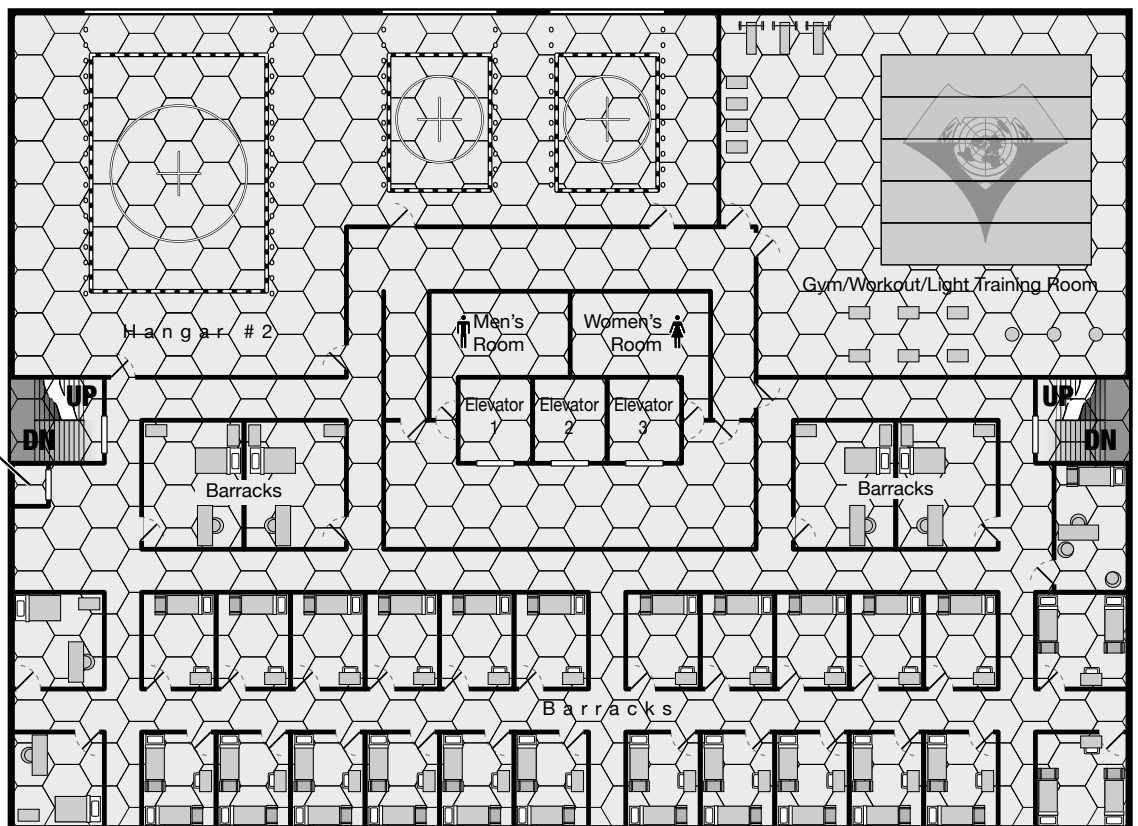


Chairs & Sofas



Sliding Door

Hexes are at standard
Hero scale 1" = 2m



VIPER uses the latter to develop new weapons for the Nest, repair damaged equipment, conduct experiments to create superhumans, perform tests on captured superheroes, and the like.

The Janissary

The first floor also includes the offices of the Janissary (not to be confused with the U.S. Department of Defense super-soldier of the same name), the leader of this Nest and all of VIPER's Chicago operations. A former mercenary, he remains every bit as fit and deadly as he was during his days in the field. Though possessing no superpowers *per se*, he's just about as strong and agile as a human can be without them. When on duty, he wears a special VIPER BCU which includes heavier armor, and carries several powerful weapons and devices (far better than those used by normal agents). Though he usually prefers to confront his opponents head-on and defeat them with his superior tactics and resources, he also knows when it's time to make his escape and return to fight another day.

During working hours, the Janissary wears a business suit and poses as Kenneth Flint, the president and CEO of GenoDyne. He can make convincing small talk about genetic research, but can't discuss the subject in depth for very long.

SECOND FLOOR

The second floor (floor 88 of the building) makes no pretension of being an office; anyone who sees it can recognize it as something unusual and dangerous. One quarter of it contains a second hangar, which operates just like the one below it. A gymnasium and light training room occupies another quarter of this floor. The rest of this part of the base contains barracks rooms for the base's agents. The larger and better furnished rooms are for the Janissary, the Nest's officers, and any superhumans currently assigned to the Aerie. The lower an agent's rank, the smaller his room; sometimes the Nest has to double-bunk the newest agents.

THIRD FLOOR

When in the Nest, most agents spend a substantial part of their day on the third floor. In addition to more barracks rooms, it contains the dining hall, kitchen, and an auditorium-like meeting and planning room. Equipped with both flat-screen and holographic projection systems, the "theater," as it's known, allows the Aerie to plan its operations with absolute precision.

Last but certainly not least in the minds of the rank and file, the third floor includes the recreation room. It has video games, a wide-screen TV with VCR and DVD, various table games, and plenty of comfortable chairs and sofas. Though empty most of the day, it fills up quickly during "free time" in the evenings.

UNDERGROUND LEVEL

Beneath the fifth level of the MacGregor Building's underground parking garage is a small but important part of the Aerie — its heavy training rooms and ground vehicle garage. Connected to the main part of the base by the secret elevator,

it provides a place where the base's agents can do things they don't dare attempt in a skyscraper. The heavy training room is where they practice firing their weapons, train with explosives, conduct mock robberies and "dry runs" of planned jobs, and so forth.

The other part of the underground level is where the Aerie keeps its cars, motorcycles, and other ground vehicles. The garage has a secret entrance into the fifth level of the parking garage and a secret ramp leading up to an entrance/exit in a nearby alleyway (-5 to Concealment rolls to find either). VIPER maintains a careful watch over the fifth level and the alley with concealed cameras so no one sees its fleet coming and going.

THE NINE DRAGON PALACE

Located deep below the streets of Queens, New York City, beneath a part of the borough inhabited mainly by Chinese immigrants, the Nine Dragon Palace represents just one of VIPER's assets in the greater New York City area. Though nominally subject to the commands of the main Manhattan Nest, the Palace is usually left to its own devices, and turns a tidy profit most years through robbery, illegal gambling operations, drug smuggling, and other crimes.



LOCATION AND FACILITIES

VIPER built the Nine Dragon Palace in 1976, when the borough stopped using an older part of its sewer network which it had replaced with newer tunnels. Known at that time simply as the Queens Nest, it was built alongside the abandoned main sewer tunnel, which VIPER agents can access through a number of hidden or secret entrancesways (-6 to Concealment rolls to find any of these). Once in the tunnel, agents carefully make their way to the entrance to the base, a concealed reinforced steel double door. They stand in front of the door so security devices can scan them (including their retinas). If the systems approve them, the two guards on duty in the guard room on the other side open the doors electronically and let them in. The guards have strict orders to alert the rest of the base in the event of an invasion, and to do their best to slow down invaders to give the rest of the base time to mobilize to repel the attackers.

The base has several other entrances as well (all with the same Concealment modifier). One, hidden in a nearby alley, is protected by a hidden fingerprint scanner. Anyone who gets through this door without having his print scanned has to climb down a twisting maze of stairs, which contain a number of cleverly hidden lethal traps. (A print scan deactivates the traps.) Another entrance leads to an abandoned warehouse where the Nest stores its ground and air vehicles. Additionally, the Nest Leader has two other secret entrances and exits, with security similar to the alley entrance, known only to him.

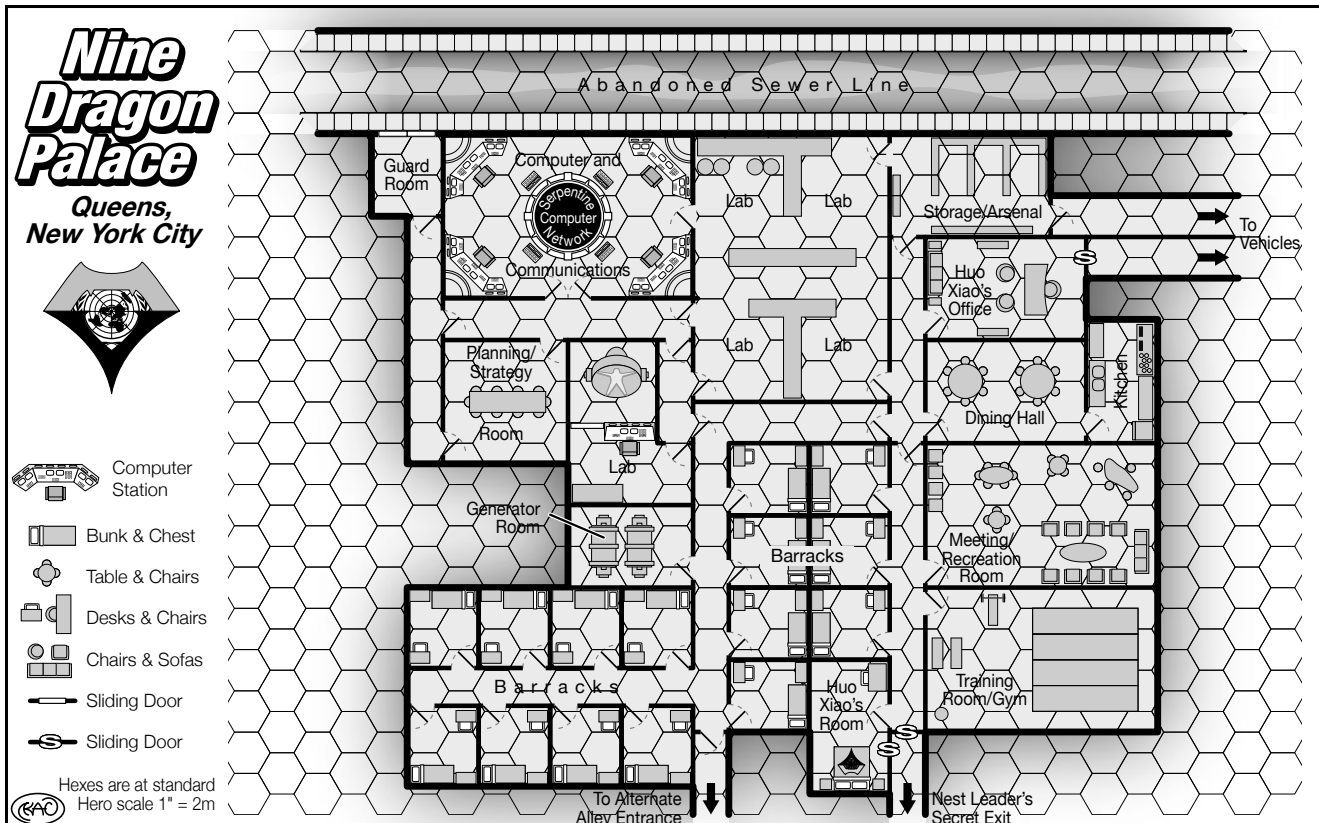
Inside, the base is decorated with a sort of blend of faux Chinese traditional and modernistic/technological, which seems a little odd at first but later

exerts a subtle appeal. The base takes its name from the decor, which was ordained by the Nest Leader, Huo Xiao, when he took over in 1994.

Though small and somewhat cramped, the Nine Dragon Palace includes all of the facilities needed to keep a VIPER Nest operating successfully. It has a large computer and communications room, where agents use the power of the Serpentine Network to hack into government and financial databases, commit computer fraud, and engage in other cyber-crimes. Next to the computer room is the Nest's largest lab. Subdivided into several sections by partitions, it, along with the base's smaller lab, provides Huo Xiao with most of the scientific resources he needs. If necessary, he can call on one of the other New York area Nests for research assistance, though he prefers not to.

Located near the smaller lab are two important rooms. The first, a planning/strategy room, is where the Nest's officers plan missions and concoct ways to defeat superhuman and law enforcement opposition. Though consisting of little more than a conference table and a flat-screen projection system, it has proved adequate to the Nest's needs. The second, the generator room, includes the base's electricity generator, ventilation equipment, and other such devices.

The Nest's 12-15 agents (it varies depending on period and need) spend most of their time in the eastern half of the base, which includes a storage room and arsenal, a dining hall, a gymnasium and training room, and a meeting room which doubles as the Nest's recreation room in the evenings. Huo Xiao also has his office in this part of the Nest; he spends most of the day here or in the planning room, meeting with his officers.



HUO XIAO

Born in Fujien province, China, Huo Xiao ("Fire Owl") emigrated to the United States with his family in the early 1980s. Scorning traditional Chinese discipline and values for the fast life and glittering lights of American culture, he soon fell in with a Chinese street gang in New York City's Chinatown. After a few years with the gang, he drifted away and, eventually, into VIPER.

During his VIPER training, he was accidentally exposed to some radiation which activated his latent superpowers. He developed minor fire-related powers, such as the ability to generate small blasts of flame from his eyes, sheath his body in fire, and control existing flames (he can shape and move them, creating deadly "fire sculptures"). Though nowhere near as powerful as most other fire-based superhumans, Huo Xiao gained a definite edge from his powers (and the resulting association with Dragon Branch) and rose through VIPER's ranks fairly quickly. In 1994, he received command of the Queens Nest, which he remodeled to suit his own taste and christened the "Nine Dragon Palace."

As Nest Leader, Huo Xiao is something of a martinet and fussy budgeter. He wants everything to run "just so," and any agent who deviates from his plans or interferes with the efficiency of his precious base suffers for it.

OTHER NESTS AND NEST LEADERS

Some of VIPER's other prominent Nests include:

BOSTON: THE FIRM

The main VIPER Nest in Boston, like the Aerie in Chicago, occupies space in a skyscraper: the fifty-third through sixty-third floors of a building. It disguises itself as the high-priced law firm of Pritchett, Knox, Rydell, and Huffman, and as a result is known throughout VIPER as "the Firm." Several of the firm's partners are VIPER officers; the legitimate lawyers are kept in the dark and not allowed access to the floors where agents live and train.

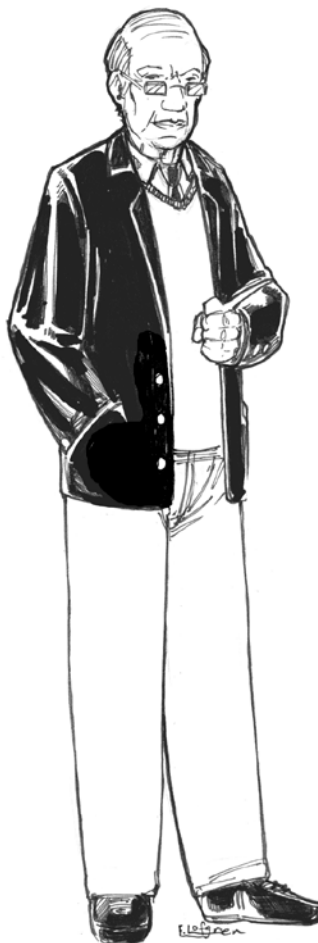
The Leader of this Nest is the Professor, a former engineering professor at MIT who abandoned academe for VIPER when he became thoroughly disgusted by a combination of budgetary cuts and the chance the authorities would arrest him for some robotics experiments that weren't licensed or approved and which resulted in several deaths. He enjoys the freedom to "tinker" and the virtually unlimited budget that VIPER allows him; he no longer has to apologize about the harm he causes in his "quest for scientific gain." Thanks to his influence and skills, the agents at the Firm use better weapons than other Nests (add +1 DC), and often have access to experimental devices the Professor "just whipped up" in his lab.

LOS ANGELES

Hidden beneath a nondescript building on a nondescript section of Venice Boulevard is VIPER's primary Los Angeles Nest, which has no particular nickname. Through various false fronts VIPER also owns most of the businesses on the block, including a rare book store, two antique stores, a game publishing company, a graphic design firm, a limousine service, a restaurant, and a convenience store. At least one key employee in each of these businesses is a VIPER agent who both keeps watch for anyone snooping about and provides special services to other agents (such as ultra-cheap limo rentals). Several other buildings on the block don't show any signs of regular business activity; they connect to and are part of the base.

The main L.A. Nest, the second-largest one in the United States, is an all-purpose facility; it doesn't specialize in any particular type of crime or resource, though its agents do seem to have a flair for flashy, elaborately-planned robberies. They rely on ground transport more than aircraft, and disguise their vehicles to look like ordinary cars so they can better blend in with the area's copious traffic. But unlike other cars, these can use hover technology to go over traffic jams!

General Antoine Russell, a tall, deep-voiced black man, leads the Nest. Once a promising high school basketball player, he lost out on a scholarship to Marquette when officials discovered he'd been shaving points so VIPER agents could clean



up by betting on his games. Embracing the criminal lifestyle wholeheartedly, he attended VIPER Academy, thrived under the pressure, and over the next several years worked his way up the ranks. He has a real gift for small-unit tactics and loves to take on superheroes and humiliate them with his superior fighting skills. UNTIL believes he's directly responsible for the murder of the superheroine Belladonna in 2002.

MIAMI: THE SWAMP

Among the several Nests located in southern Florida, the largest and most important is the one located in central Miami and known colloquially as "the Swamp." No one seems sure where the nickname came from; some think it's because of the proximity to the Everglades (where agents sometimes conduct combat training exercises), while others claim it's from the television show *M*A*S*H*.

The main occupation of the agents in the Swamp, and Snakebite their Nest Leader, is smuggling. VIPER is a major player in the drug smuggling endemic to the region, using its high technology to avoid the authorities — or if necessary fight them off. The Nest also involves itself in robbery and several other criminal enterprises.

Snakebite stands out among his agents even though he doesn't wear a distinctive uniform. He's had himself surgically altered to possess serpentine features. His teeth are filed to points, with the two upper eyeteeth replaced by more fang-like versions. His tongue has been split, giving it a fork. He wears contact lenses that make his eyes look like a snake's. He's had his face tattooed with a fine snake's scales pattern.

According to many in VIPER, the Swamp's biggest asset isn't Snakebite, who's an average Nest Leader at best, but the supervillain Delusion. A relative of Snakebite's, and thus loyal to him, Delusion remains assigned exclusively to the Swamp (though it occasionally "loans him out" to other Nests in need of his services). A gadgeteer who specializes in holograms and deception technology, Delusion uses his devices to make it seem as if he's wearing a costume woven not of cloth but of multicolored, ever-shifting smokes. (In truth he wears a gadget-laden VIPER BCU.) He insists the supervillainess Mirage stole her technology from him, and has vowed bloody revenge.

NEW YORK CITY: HELL'S CELLAR

Located beneath several warehouses in the Manhattan neighborhood sometimes known as Hell's Kitchen (hence the Nest's name), the main New York VIPER's Nest is a large, efficient operation. With dozens of agents associated with all branches of the organization, it's got its fingers in criminal pies ranging from stock and insurance fraud, to robbery and hijacking, to computer crime, to smuggling, to corruption. Hell's Cellar often ranks as VIPER's top-earning Nest for the year.

The Cellar has a Nest Leader as tough and tenacious as itself. A middle-aged man of Italian descent who hails from Brooklyn (and has the accent to prove it), Arthur Cesario was recruited into VIPER about twenty years ago after he got out of prison, where he served time for grand theft auto and assault. The combination of his violent nature and quick wits made him perfect for VIPER, and he prospered in the organization. In 1995 he became the Nest Leader for the Cellar.

General Cesario operates a tight ship, because he knows how easily one of his agents could slip up and reveal the location of the Nest. Everything runs like clockwork based on the elaborate schedules he prepares weekly and daily, and the Nest maintains a high level of security and combat readiness at all times. Few agents enjoy serving under him, but everyone who has acknowledges learning a lot from him.





SAN FRANCISCO: THE STEEL CITADEL

Located underground, alongside a BART tunnel, beneath the intersection of 11th Street, Market Street, Van Ness Street, and Oak Street in downtown San Francisco, the Steel Citadel is larger than the typical VIPER Nest (and more important as well, due to the many opportunities for crime in the area, including nearby Silicon Valley). Additionally, it can quickly call on the forces of other VIPER Nests in the Bay area if need be.

The Leader of the Steel Citadel, the Silicon Serpent, is a master swordsman who wears a costume that blends high-tech samurai armor with typical VIPER motifs. He also possesses minor cyberkinetic powers, from which he takes his name. Although an efficient leader, he's also somewhat dictatorial, and not particularly popular with his agents; his Intelligence Commander, Paula Jacobi, has been plotting to take his place for some time now. She's just waiting for him to show a moment of weakness so she can strike.

VIBORA BAY: THE WAREHOUSE

VIPER maintains several Nests in Vibora Bay and the surrounding area, but the one that stands out the most is located in and beneath a ramshackle old waterfront warehouse. Using a large fleet of amphibious vehicles, "the Warehouse" (as it's usually known) has a well-earned reputation for committing profitable robberies; it's also involved in smuggling, insurance fraud, and many other schemes.

The Nest Leader of the Warehouse is Monique Fontaine, a beautiful black woman, tall and thin, with long black hair reaching below her shoulders and a devilish glint in her eye. A well-known figure in the Vibora Bay business community (she's the CEO of a VIPER-owned local trucking company, VTransit), she wears stylish (though slightly revealing) businesswoman's garb instead of a VIPER uniform. While normally full of charm and pleasant conversation, she's absolutely ruthless and has a vicious streak as wide as her smile. She kills anyone who challenges her authority... and then kills his family and friends to boot.



VIPER: chapter five

THE VIPER ARMORY

VIPER WEAPONS



Since its earliest days, much of VIPER's power and reputation has derived from its mastery of high technology. From weapons, to vehicles, to sensory gadgets, to devices powerful enough to threaten the very world, VIPER has shown it can invent, innovate, and employ high technology as well as any government or superhero team.

In the typical *Champions* campaign, the most important devices VIPER agents have are their weapons. Since agents face superheroes in combat, you need to know what types of weapons those agents have access to, how powerful those weapons are, and any other pertinent data. This section includes dozens of weapon write-ups with easy-to-read summaries, full game write-ups, and variant models.

PISTOLS

Most VIPER agents carry at least one blaster pistol or similar one-handed energy weapon in addition to their rifle.

VB-S1 "SHORTY" BLASTER PISTOL

Effect: Energy Blast 7d6

Shots: 12

Combat Modifier(s): None

Range: 175"

Description: VIPER's standard sidearm is the VB-S1, nicknamed the "Shorty" because it looks like a cut-off, stumpy version of the VB-A1 Blaster Rifle. Able to project a powerful beam of destructive energy over ranges of up to approximately 350 meters, it provides superb "backup" for the agent who has lost his rifle or used up all of its energy. The Shorty's standard power cell has enough charges for 12 shots, though some agents adapt larger power cells for their pistols.

Game Information: Energy Blast 7d6 (35 Active Points); OAF (-1), 12 Charges (-¼). Total cost: 15 points.

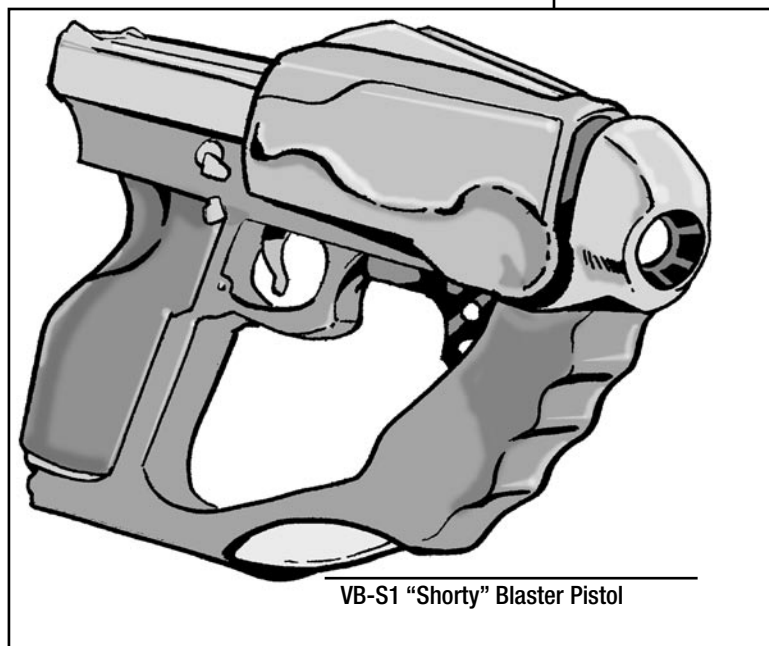
OPTIONS:

1) **Larger Power Cell:** Energy Blast 7d6, 20 Charges (+¼) (44 Active Points); OAF (-1). Total cost: 22 points.

2) **VB-S1XP Variant:** This form of the VB-S1 is popular in many Nests. It uses enhanced power feed systems to improve the force of the beam. Increase to Energy Blast 8d6. 40 Active Points; total cost 18 points.

3) **VB-S1A Variant:** A weapon as widely used as the "Shorty" naturally develops a few variant configurations and customized versions when placed in the hands of creative (and often desperate) people like VIPER agents. One of the most popular changes earned a place in the VIPER arsenal as the VB-S1A. Also called the "Shorty," but distinguishable by the large gold cylinder attached to the front half of the barrel, the VB-S1A uses a beam focuser to give the pistol's energy beam greater range and ability to penetrate a target's defenses. Add Armor Piercing (+½). 52 Active Points; total cost 23 points.

4) **VB-S1B Variant:** Agents sometimes customize the "Shorty" by altering the power feed that taps the power cell, allowing it to draw greater amounts of energy for a stronger blast. VIPER frowns on this adaptation, since it can short out the pistol and make it useless, but far too many agents like the extra "punch" to stop making it. Change to 12 Boostable Charges (-0). Total cost: 17 points.



VB-S1 "Shorty" Blaster Pistol

5) VB-S1C “Stubby” Blaster Pistol: Also called a “Pocket Blaster” or “Sleeve Blaster” because its tiny size and streamlined features make it the perfect weapon for concealed carrying, the “Stubby” is a favorite among VIPER agents trained for espionage and undercover missions. As powerful as the VB-S1, but with a much smaller power cell, the VB-S1C is an unwelcome surprise for the unwary superhero or policeman. Change to 4 Charges (-1). Total cost: 12 points.

6) VB-S1D “Shower” Blaster Pistol: So called because it lets the agent “shower” the opposition with blaster beams, this variant incorporates a much larger power cell and automatic fire capabilities. Change to Energy Blast 7d6, Autofire (5 shots; +½), 60 Charges (+½) (70 Active Points); OAF (-1). Total cost: 35 points.

7) Lethal VB-S1: Some of the more vicious VIPER agents tune their VB-S1s to a higher energy frequency that inflicts more severe injuries. Replace the Energy Blasts in any model of VB-S1 with the equivalent DCs of Killing Damage.

VL-S1 “REDEYE” LASER PISTOL

Effect: RKA 2d6

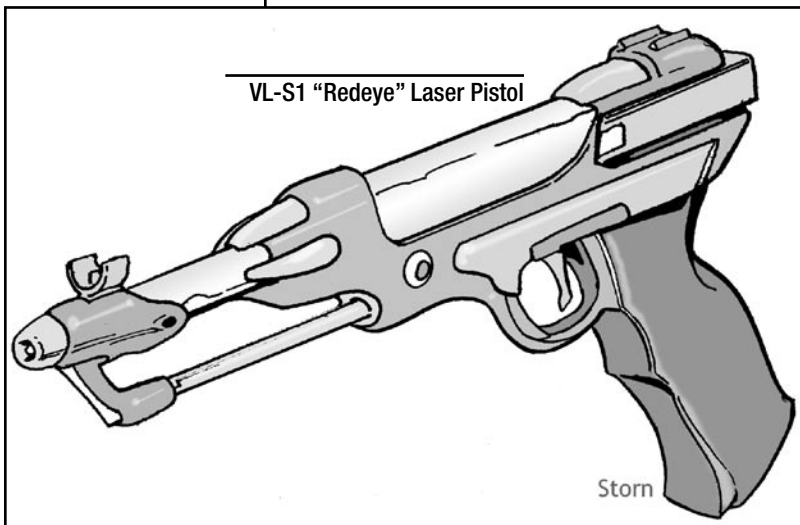
Shots: 10

Combat Modifier(s): +1 OCV, +1 RMod

Range: 150”

Description: In addition to standard blasters, VIPER also employs weapons that fire more specific forms of projected energy, such as lasers. The VL-S1 Laser Pistol, first developed by VIPER’s labs back in the early 1970s and repeatedly refined since then, represents the pinnacle of the organization’s efforts to miniaturize a standard laser weapon while leaving it with sufficient power to kill or injure a foe. Prior to fully depressing the trigger, the shooter can depress it slightly to project an aiming laser (hence the weapon’s combat modifiers).

VIPER generally does not issue this weapon to agents as a regular sidearm, preferring to save it for instances where it knows superheroes will probably attack a squad, the assault team has to cut through a vault door, or similar circumstances.



VL-S1 “Redeye” Laser Pistol

Game Information: RKA 2d6 (30 Active Points); OAF (-1), 10 Charges (-¼) (total cost: 13 points) plus +1 OCV (5 Active Points); OAF (-1) (total cost: 2 points) plus +1 versus Range Modifier (3 Active Points); OAF (-1) (total cost: 1 point). Total cost: 16 points.

OPTIONS:

1) Larger Power Cell: Change to 20 Charges (+¼). $37 + 5 + 3 = 45$ Active Points; total cost $18 + 2 + 1 = 21$ points.

2) VL-S1XP Variant: This form of the VL-S1 is slightly larger, but more powerful. Increase to RKA 3d6. $45 + 5 + 3 = 53$ Active Points; total cost $20 + 2 + 1 = 23$ points.

4) VL-S1A “Lightshow” Laser Pistol: This larger VL-S1, more a machine blaster than a blaster pistol, can fire multiple beams with a single pull of the trigger. Change to 32 Charges (+¼) and add Autofire (5 shots; +½). $52 + 5 + 3 = 60$ Active Points; total cost $26 + 2 + 1 = 29$ points.

5) VL-S1C Variant: This version of the VL-S1 can maintain its beam on a single target, but the firer cannot shoot at anyone else while doing so. Add as a naked Advantage Continuous (+1) (30 Active Points); OAF (-1), Lockout (cannot fire at any other targets, take any other Attack Actions, or take any other actions besides Half Moves while maintaining the Continuous effect; -1) (total cost: 10 points). $30 + 30 + 5 + 3 = 68$ Active Points; total cost $13 + 10 + 2 + 1 = 26$ points.

6) VL-S1N “Quiet Light” Variant: The standard VL-S1 models emit a distinctive “energy whine” when fired. This model does not; it’s as quiet as a mouse. Add Invisible Power Effects (Hearing Group; +¼). $37 + 5 + 3 = 45$ Active Points; total cost $16 + 2 + 1 = 19$ points.

VN-S1 NEEDLER PISTOL

Effect: RKA 2d6, Armor Piercing

Shots: 8

Combat Modifier(s): +1 OCV, +1 RMod

Range: 225”

Description: A variant of the VL-S1, the Needler uses a beam focuser similar to that found on the VB-S1A to make the laser beam even more likely than normal to cut through armor or other forms of defense. Some Nests or agents modify this weapon to give it a larger power cell and automatic fire capability.

Game Information: RKA 2d6, Armor Piercing (+½) (45 Active Points); OAF (-1), 8 Charges (-½) (total cost: 18 points) plus +1 OCV (5 Active Points); OAF (-1) (total cost: 2 points) plus +1 versus Range Modifier (3 Active Points); OAF (-1) (total cost: 1 point). Total cost: 21 points.

OPTIONS:

- 1) **Larger Power Cell:** Change to 20 Charges (+¼). 52 + 5 + 3 = 60 Active Points; total cost 26 + 2 + 1 = 29 points.
- 2) **VN-S1XP Variant:** This form of the VN-S1 is slightly larger, but more powerful. Increase to RKA 3d6. 67 + 5 + 3 = 75 Active Points; total cost 27 + 2 + 1 = 30 points.
- 3) **VN-S1A "Autofire" Needler Pistol:** This form of the Needler shoots multiple beams at once. Change to 32 Charges (+¼) and add Autofire (5 shots; +½). 67 + 5 + 3 = 75 Active Points; total cost 33 + 2 + 1 = 36 points.

VS-S1 "LITTLE RATTLER" SONIC PISTOL**Effect:** Energy Blast 10d6**Shots:** 8**Combat Modifier(s):** None**Range:** 250"

Description: VIPER developed the VS-S1, its standard sonic pistol, in the early 1990s. The weapon packs a stronger offensive punch than the VB-S1, but its power pack provides fewer shots. Still, many agents accept the loss of shots for the chance to really rattle an enemy's teeth... and bones... and armor...

Game Information: *Energy Blast 10d6 (50 Active Points); OAF (-1), 8 Charges (-½). Total cost: 20 points.*

OPTIONS:

- 1) **Larger Power Cell:** Change to 20 Charges (+¼). 62 Active Points; total cost 31 points.
- 2) **VS-S1 with Multi-Battery Attachment:** Some versions of the VS-S1 come equipped with a special clip that lets the firer easily carry a second power cell. Change to 2 clips of 8 Charges each (-¼). Total cost: 22 points.
- 3) **VS-S1 "Harpy" Sonic Pistol:** This form of the Little Rattler fires a beam with an expanded sonic "spectrum" so that it deafens as well as harms the target. Add Hearing Group Flash 6d6 (18 Active Points); OAF (-1), Linked (-½), 8 Charges (-½) (total cost: 6 points). 50 + 18 = 68 Active Points; total cost 20 + 6 = 26 points.

VZ-S1 "STING" FIREARM**Effect:** RKA 2½d6, Armor Piercing**Shots:** 14**Combat Modifier(s):** None**Range:** 300"

Description: Sometimes low-tech solutions work best. When blasters aren't appropriate, VIPER issues this weapon, a standard ballistic firearm, to its agents. Featuring polygonal rifling, special barrel coatings, and VIPER's advanced armor-piercing ammunition with high-grade accelerant, both the standard and machine pistol versions of this weapon represent some of the most sophisticated small arms in the world today.

Game Information: *RKA 2½d6, Armor Piercing (+½) (60 Active Points); OAF (-1), Beam (-¼), 14 Charges (-0). Total cost: 27 points.*

OPTIONS:

- 1) **Larger Clip:** Change to 32 Charges (+¼). 70 Active Points; total cost 31 points.
- 2) **VZ-S1MP "Sting" Machine Pistol:** This larger, heavier form of the VZ-S1 has automatic fire capability and a large clip. Add Autofire (5 shots; +½) and change to 32 Charges (+¼). 90 Active Points; total cost 40 points.

RIFLES

VIPER agents rely on their energy rifles (and related weapons) more than their pistols. Most carry their VB-A1 (or equivalent) with them wherever they go when they're in uniform.

VB-A1 "STRIKER" BLASTER RIFLE**Effect:** Energy Blast 7-8d6**Shots:** 32**Combat Modifier(s):** None**Range:** 200"

Description: This weapon, the standard field arm issued to VIPER agents, incorporates VIPER's basic blaster technology in assault rifle form. Its large beam generator assembly projects a more powerful energy blast than the VB-S1 Blaster Pistol, and can fire in automatic mode if necessary. Squadrons of agents often coordinate their automatic fire to create a "kill zone" on the battlefield and take out enemy officers or superheroes. Others attach a VXH Scope (see page 108) to the weapon's standard aiming technology and rely on accurate fire instead of massed fire.

VIPER agents sometimes "supercharge" the VB-A1 to increase the power of its beam. This runs the risk of burning out the weapon's energy pack and leaving the agent without his primary firearm, but some agents are willing to take the chance to get that extra burst of firepower. Another common variant, developed by Nests that frequently face foes with intangibility powers, fires a multi-flux beam capable of affecting desolidified matter.

The "Striker" has a distinctive appearance that sets it apart from blaster rifles used by other organizations. The primary beam generator assembly occupies the back half of the main body of the rifle, which gradually tapers down to a lethal-looking muzzle. The designers mounted a plate on the bottom side of the front barrel to give the shooter a steadier grip when necessary. An unusual-looking handle/trigger guard, roughly triangular-shaped and attached to the bottom of the main assembly, allows for easy carrying of the weapon; agents can also use this part of the VB-A1 as a crude club if necessary. The weapon's 32-shot power cell has a banana clip-like shape and projects forward from the underside of the weapon, immediately forward of the handle/trigger guard.

VIPER TECH PROCUREMENT

VIPER obtains its high technology in several ways.

First, it steals it. Superheroes, governments, and scientists throughout the world work on advanced technologies, and many of them don't guard their data and prototypes as well as they ought to. Through hacking, burglary, and blackmail, VIPER obtains technological secrets quickly and easily.

Second, it invents it. VIPER has a large corps of scientists, engineers, and technicians in its employ. Well paid and usually given free rein in their work, these scientists develop all sorts of gadgetry for VIPER agents and Nests. In secret factories hidden throughout the Third World (and even in more advanced countries), VIPER builds the devices it needs to further its agenda of world conquest.

Third, it buys it. Many other organizations, ranging from ARGENT, to the scientists of Larisagrad, to individual inventors like Wayland Talos can create super-technology, and VIPER sometimes finds it easiest to buy from them direct (and often at a volume discount!). ARGENT, in particular, has developed a close relationship with many Nests as their armorer.

Generally, VIPER prefers to keep its arsenal standardized. This ensures agents from one Nest can use another Nest's equipment without any difficulty, and it minimizes research and manufacturing costs. But it's always on the



VB-A1 "Striker" Blaster Rifle



VB-A1A "Eagle" Blaster Rifle

Storn

Game Information:**Cost VB-A1 "Striker" Blaster Rifle**

- 32 VB-A1 "Striker" Blaster Rifle: Multipower, 52-point reserve, 32 Charges for entire Multipower (+¼); all OAF (-1) [32]
- 2u 1) *Basic Setting*: Energy Blast 8d6; OAF (-1)
- 2u 2) *Autofire Setting*: Energy Blast 7d6, Autofire (5 shots, +½); OAF (-1), Limited Range (200"); -¼)
- 6 *Rifle-butt Club*: HA +3d6; OAF (-1), Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½)

Total cost: 42 points.**Cost VB-A1 "Striker," Supercharged Variant**

- 37 VB-A1 "Striker" Blaster Rifle, *Supercharged Variant*: Multipower, 67-point reserve, 32 Charges for entire Multipower (+¼); all OAF (-1), Activation Roll 14- Burnout (-¼) [32]
- 2u 1) *Basic Setting*: Energy Blast 11d6; OAF (-1), Activation Roll 14- Burnout (-¼)
- 3u 2) *Autofire Setting*: Energy Blast 9d6, Autofire (5 shots, +½); OAF (-1), Activation Roll 14- Burnout (-¼), Limited Range (275"); -¼)
- 6 *Rifle-butt Club*: HA +3d6; OAF (-1), Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½)

Total cost: 48 points.**Cost VB-A1-I "Ghost Striker" Blaster Rifle**

- 37 VB-A1-I "Ghost Striker" Blaster Rifle: Multipower, 60-point reserve, 32 Charges for entire Multipower (+¼); all OAF (-1) [32]
- 3u 1) *Basic Setting*: Energy Blast 8d6, Affects Desolidified (+½); OAF (-1)
- 3u 2) *Autofire Setting*: Energy Blast 6d6, Autofire (5 shots, +½), Affects Desolidified (+½);

OAF (-1)

- 6 *Rifle-butt Club*: HA +3d6; OAF (-1), Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½)

Total cost: 49 points.**OPTIONS:**

1) **Extra Power Cell**: Some Nests issue the standard VB-A1 to agents with a second power pack. Change to 2 clips of 32 Charges each for entire Multipower (+½). Total cost: 49 points.

2) **Lethal VB-A1**: Some of the more vicious VIPER agents tune their VB-A1s to a higher energy frequency that inflicts more severe injuries. Replace the Energy Blasts in any model of VB-A1 with the equivalent DCs of Killing Damage.

VB-A1A "EAGLE" BLASTER SNIPER RIFLE**Effect: Energy Blast 8d6****Shots: 12****Combat Modifier(s): None****Range: 1,500", No Range Modifier**

Description: This rifle, a long-barreled, lighter-weight version of the basic VB-A1, offers VIPER squadrons the additional tactical option of sniping. Able to fire accurately over much longer ranges than any other VIPER rifle, it allows an agent to pick off superheroes and cops from nearly two miles away. It's delicately balanced and relatively fragile, so it can't be used as a club in an emergency.

Game Information: *Energy Blast 8d6, Increased Maximum Range (1,500"; +¼), No Range Modifier (+½) (70 Active Points); OAF (-1),*

Beam (-¼), 12 Charges (-¼). Total cost: 28 points.

OPTIONS:

- 1) **Strong VB-A1A:** Increase to Energy Blast 12d6. 105 Active Points; total cost 42 points.
- 2) **Weak VB-A1A:** Decrease to Energy Blast 7d6. 61 Active Points; total cost 24 points.
- 3) **Lethal VB-A1A:** Some of the more vicious VIPER snipers tune their VB-A1As to a higher energy frequency that inflicts more severe injuries. Replace Energy Blast 8d6 with RKA 2½d6.
- 4) **Larger Power Cell:** This version of the VB-A1A has a larger power cell, and can thus fire more shots before the agent has to change “clips.” Change to 24 Charges (+¼). 80 Active Points; total cost 35 points.
- 5) **Extra Power Cell:** Sometimes VIPER issues the VB-A1A with an extra power cell for additional firing. Change to 2 clips of 12 Charges (-0). Total cost: 31 points.

VB-A2 “STRIKER-2” BLASTER RIFLE

Effect: Energy Blast 5-8d6

Shots: 32

Combat Modifier(s): None

Range: 200”

Description: This rifle, a VB-A1 with some design modifications and special beam tuning attachments, provides a third firing option — a stunning blast. This attack works best against “bricks” and other characters with ordinary defenses; it cannot penetrate force fields tuned to shield the wearer against energy damage. The design modifications and beam tuning technology make it impossible for agents to “supercharge” this weapon reliably. Agents sometimes argue at length about whether this weapon is superior to the VB-A1, with agents who frequently face super-strong heroes often championing the Striker-2.

Game Information:

Cost VB-A2 “Striker-2” Blaster Rifle

32 VB-A2 “Striker-2” Blaster Rifle: Multipower, 52-point reserve, 32 Charges for entire Multipower (+¼); all OAF (-1) [32]

2u 1) *Basic Setting:* Energy Blast 8d6 (40 Active Points); OAF (-1)

2u 2) *Autofire Setting:* Energy Blast 7d6, Autofire (5 shots, +½); OAF (-1), Limited Range (200”; -¼)

2u 3) *Stun Setting:* Energy Blast 5d6, NND (defense is an ED Force Field; +1); OAF (-1), Limited Range (200”; -¼)

6 *Rifle-butt Club:* HA +3d6; OAF (-1), Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½)

Total cost: 44 points.

OPTIONS:

- 1) **Larger Power Cell:** Some Nests use a version of the VB-A2 with a power cell that provides energy for almost twice as many shots. Change to 64 Charges for entire Multipower (+½). Total cost: 51 points.

VB-A3 “FIREBIRD” BLASTER RIFLE

Effect: Energy Blast 6-7d6

Shots: 32

Combat Modifier(s): None

Range: 260”

Description: This rifle, another variant on the basic VB-A1, incorporates a beam tuning option that focuses the rifle’s blast for extra penetration against energy-based defenses (*i.e.*, force fields). This makes it slightly less powerful overall than the “Striker,” but a much better tactical option against many superheroes. Some agents have requested a version of the Firebird which incorporates the stun setting of the Striker-2, but so far VIPER’s technicians have not found a way to combine the two systems.

Game Information:

Cost VB-A3 “Firebird” Blaster Rifle

37 VB-A3 “Firebird” Blaster Rifle: Multipower, 60-point reserve, 32 Charges for entire Multipower (+¼); all OAF (-1) [32]

2u 1) *Basic Setting:* Energy Blast 7d6; OAF (-1) plus Armor Piercing (+½) Advantage for Energy Blast 7d6; OAF (-1), Only Versus Force Fields (-1)

2u 2) *Autofire Setting:* Energy Blast 6d6, Autofire (5 shots, +½); OAF (-1), Limited Range (260”; -¼) **plus** Armor Piercing (+½) Advantage for Energy Blast 6d6 Autofire; OAF (-1), Only Versus Force Fields (-1)

6 *Rifle-butt Club:* HA +3d6; OAF (-1), Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½)

Total cost: 47 points.

OPTIONS:

- 1) **Larger Power Cell:** Some Nests use a version of the VB-A3 with a power cell that provides energy for almost twice as many shots. Change to 64 Charges each for entire Multipower (+½). Total cost: 55 points.

VB-A4 “JACKHAMMER” BLASTER RIFLE

Effect: Energy Blast 12d6, Autofire

Shots: 30

Combat Modifier(s): None

Range: 250”

Description: This weapon is not standard issue for the average VIPER agent; rather, Heavy Weapon Specialists carry it, and Field Commanders often issue it to squadrons. Each squadron typically has one or two “Jackhammers” at its disposal, with the Squadron Commander deciding which agents carry them. Only large, strong agents can use this weapon, for it’s bigger, heavier, and more powerful than the VB-A1. Some superheroes have reported encountering VIPER “heavy rifle” squadrons where *all* the agents carried VB-A4s (or A5s, see below), but law enforcement officials have not yet verified this.

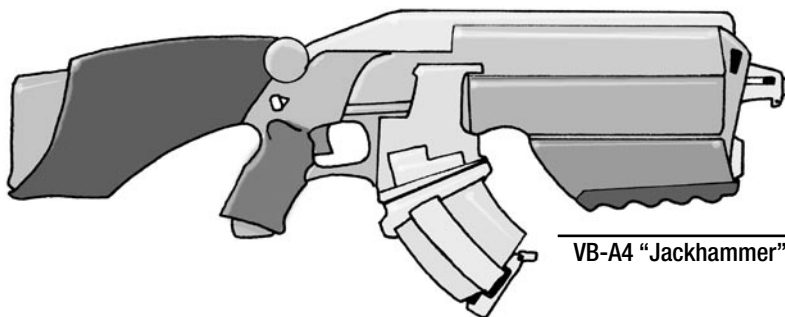
Game Information:

Cost VB-A4 “Jackhammer” Blaster Rifle

47 VB-A4 “Jackhammer” Blaster Rifle: Energy Blast 12d6, Autofire (5 shots; +½), 30 Charges

Continued from page 97

lookout for new and innovative ideas, particularly ones that enhance its existing technology with minimal expense or effort. To encourage creative thinking in this area, the Supreme Serpent broadcasts technical notes and inventions of interest among the Nests via the Serpentine Network. Agents responsible for developing new gear that benefits the entire organization receive rich rewards and promotions.



VB-A4 "Jackhammer" Blaster Rifle

VE-A1 "Trapper" Trapweb Launcher



Storn

- (+¼); OAF (-1), Limited Range (250"; -¼)
 6 *Rifle-butt Club*: HA +3d6; OAF (-1), Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½)

Total cost: 53 points.

OPTIONS:

1) **Larger Power Cell**: Some forms of the Jackhammer have much larger energy supplies so agents can fire on full-auto mode more often. Change to 100 Charges (+¾). Total rifle cost 60 points; total cost 66 points.

2) **VB-A4A "Spikehammer" Blaster Rifle**: This form of the VB-A4 focuses the beam more tightly for increased armor penetration capability, though this reduces the weapon's automatic fire capacity. Change rifle to Energy Blast 12d6, Armor Piercing (+½), Autofire (3 shots; +¼), 30 Charges (+¼) (120 Active Points); OAF (-1), Limited Range (250"; -¼). Total rifle cost 53 points; total cost 59 points.

3) **VB-A4B "Thunderhammer" Blaster Rifle**: The "Thunderhammer" variant of the VB-A4 uses an energy beam spreader attachment to make the beam affect a larger area. Agents equipped with Thunderhammers often cause considerable property damage. Change rifle to Energy Blast 10d6, Area Of Effect (One Hex; +½), Autofire (5 shots; +1), 30 Charges (+¼) (137 Active Points); OAF (-1), Limited Range (250"; -¼). Total rifle cost 61 points; total cost 67 points.

4) **Lethal Variant**: This form of the Jackhammer fires a high-energy beam. Convert the rifle's DCs of Normal Damage to the equivalent DCs in Killing Damage. Total cost: 53 points.

VB-A5 "SLEDGEHAMMER" BLASTER RIFLE

Effect: Energy Blast 14d6, Autofire

Shots: 40

Combat Modifier(s): None

Range: 350"

Description: Think the "Jackhammer" is a big weapon? Well, take a look at the Sledgehammer, the most powerful personal weapon used by VIPER agents. VIPER issues and uses it similarly to the Jackhammer.

Game Information:

Cost VB-A5 "Sledgehammer" Blaster Rifle

62 *VB-A5 "Sledgehammer" Blaster Rifle*: Energy Blast 14d6, Autofire (5 shots; +½), 40 Charges (+½); OAF (-1), Limited Range (350"; -¼)

6 *Rifle-butt Club*: HA +3d6; OAF (-1), Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½)

Total cost: 68 points.

OPTIONS:

1) **Larger Power Cell**: Some versions of the Sledgehammer have much larger power cells. Change rifle to 120 Charges (+¾). Total rifle cost 70 points; total cost 76 points.

2) **VB-A5A "Brickbuster" Blaster Rifle**: This variant of the Sledgehammer uses beam augmentation systems to increase the damage it does, but at the price of the weapon not always firing properly. Change rifle to Energy Blast 16d6, Autofire (5 shots; +½), 40 Charges (+½) (160 Active Points); OAF (-1), Activation Roll 14- (-½), Limited Range (350"; -¼). Total rifle cost 58 points; total cost 64 points.

3) VB-A5B “Avenger” Blaster Rifle: This rifle fires more intense energy than the standard Sledgehammer, making it more likely to kill a target. Change rifle to RKA 5d6, Autofire (5 shots; +½), 40 Charges (+½) (150 Active Points); OAF (-1), Limited Range (350”; -¼). Total rifle cost 67 points; total cost 73 points.

VE-A1 “TRAPPER” TRAPWEB LAUNCHER

Effect: Entangle 8d6, 5 DEF

Shots: 16

Combat Modifier(s): None

Range: 325”

Description: This weapon sprays an agglomeration of thick, tough, sticky fibers at the target, trapping him in a high-inescapable web. If the victim does not find a way to get free on his own, the trapweb dries and hardens in about an hour, becoming brittle and much easier to break. Alternately, agents can spray trapweb over a broad area, creating “walls” for protection against enemy attacks.

The “Trapper” is a fairly squat-looking VIPER rifle, with a short, wide-mouthed barrel and a storage tank for the trapweb fluid attached below the barrel and forward of the trigger guard. One problem with the weapon is that if anything pierces the pressurized storage tank, it may explode. An explosion covers the entire area around it with trapwebs, and so thoroughly immobilizes the user of the weapon that some agents have suffocated when the fibers clogged their noses and throats. Due to the risk of rupture, agents cannot use this weapon as a club.

In game terms, the GM should roll 1d6 whenever the rifle takes 1 or more BODY damage from an attack. On a 1, the weapon explodes, covering a 2” radius with its Entangle. The agent holding the weapon is caught in a double-BODY Entangle.

Game Information: *Entangle 8d6, 5 DEF (65 Active Points); OAF (-1), Limited Power (weapon subject to dangerous rupture; -¼), 16 Charges (-0). Total cost: 29 points.*

OPTIONS:

1) Multiple Trapweb Tanks: This weapon comes with several small tanks of trapweb, giving it more “ammo” than the standard VE-A1. However, if damaged it ruptures on a 1-2 on 1d6. Change to 32 Charges (+¼). 81 Active Points; total cost 36 points.

2) VE-A2 “Blinder” Blindweb Launcher: This weapon resembles the Trapper except for a few superficial differences and sometimes a different color. However, its effects differ slightly from the Trapper, since it fires a modified form of trapweb that VIPER calls “blindweb.” Blindwebs envelope the target more thoroughly, cutting off most of the victim’s senses. Agents often use the Blinder to take captives, since they can then haul them back to the Nest without having to bind, blindfold, and gag them. Change to Entangle 6d6, 6 DEF, Stops A Given Sense (Sight, Hearing, and Smell/Taste Groups) (90 Active Points); OAF (-1), Limited Power (weapon subject to dangerous rupture; -¼), 16 Charges (-0). Total

cost: 40 points.

VF-1 “BRIGHT NOISE” FLARE RIFLE

Effect: Sight and Hearing Group Flash 12d6

Shots: 8

Combat Modifier(s): None

Range: 325”

Description: Since most superheroes and law enforcement officers have to see and hear to function effectively, what better way to eliminate the threat they pose than to blind those senses? VIPER created the “Bright Noise” Flare Rifle to do just that. It projects a layered beam of intensely bright light and equally loud sonic energy which renders most targets blind and deaf for a long period of time — or at least long enough for other VIPER agents to finish them off.

Game Information: *Sight and Hearing Group Flash 12d6 (65 Active Points); OAF (-1), 8 Charges (-½). Total cost: 26 points.*

OPTIONS:

1) Larger Power Cell: This form of the VF-1 has a much larger “clip,” so the shooter can fire more times before reloading. Change to 20 Charges (+¼). 81 Active Points; total cost 40 points.

2) VF-2 Bright Noise Flare Carbine: Smaller and easier to carry, this form of the Bright Noise weapon also fires a slightly less intense beam. Change to Sight and Hearing Group Flash 9d6 (50 Active Points); OAF (-1), 10 Charges (-¼). Total cost: 22 points.

VL-A1 “REDLINE” LASER RIFLE

Effect: RKA 2d6+1-3d6

Shots: 24

Combat Modifier(s): None

Range: 225”

Description: When VIPER thinks a squadron may encounter superheroes, particularly those powerful enough to resist the damage from its standard blasters, Squadron Commanders issue this weapon to their men. The Redline uses a ruby laser of lethal intensity to burn through walls, cars, and superhumans. Like the VB-A1, agents can “supercharge” this weapon, but doing so burns out the ruby focusing crystal and power pack much quicker. Shooters can also use the weapon’s laser projection abilities at a low level as an accuracy enhancer.

The VL-A1 resembles a longer, slimmer, more streamlined version of the VB-A1 Striker. Its smaller power pack projects straight down instead of curving forward, the muzzle and forward assembly of the rifle have a different appearance, and the handle/trigger guard has a more trapezoidal shape.

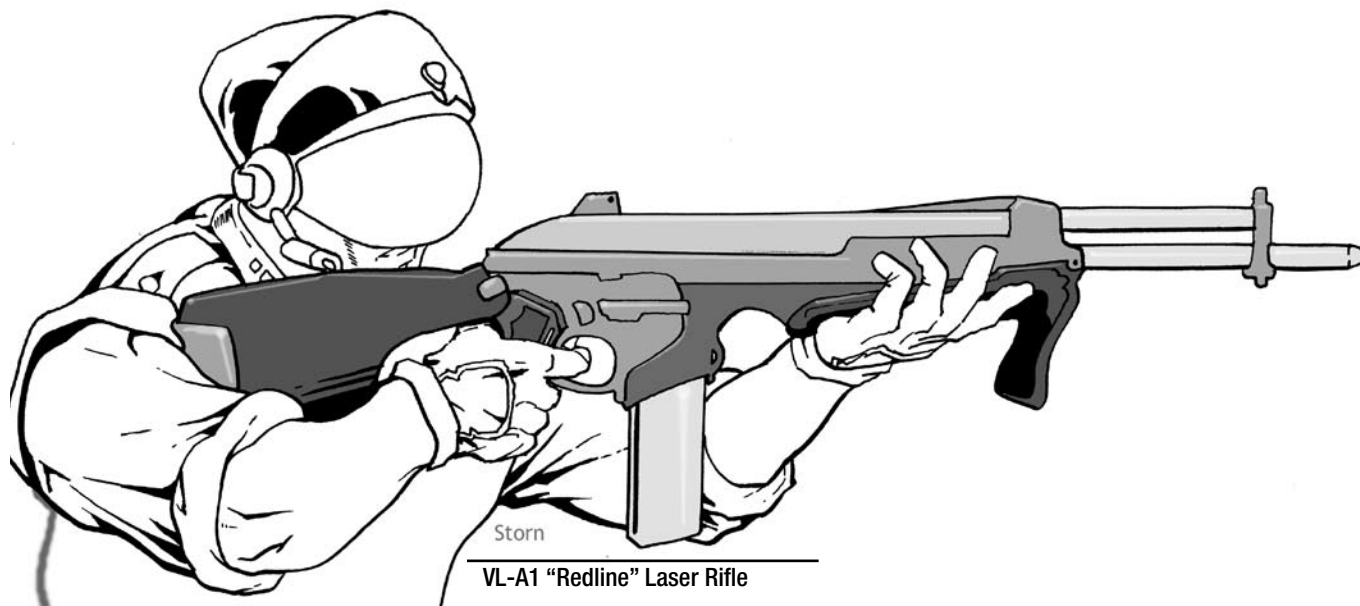
Game Information:

Cost VL-A1 “Redline” Laser Rifle

32 VL-A1 “Redline” Laser Rifle: Multipower, 52-point reserve, 24 Charges for entire Multipower (+¼); all OAF (-1)

2u 1) *Single-Shot Setting:* RKA 3d6; OAF (-1)

2u 2) *Autofire Setting:* RKA 2d6+1, Autofire (5



VL-A1 "Redline" Laser Rifle

shots;
+½); OAF (-1), Limited Range
(225"; -¼)

- 6 *Rifle-butt Club*: HA +3d6; OAF (-1),
Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½)
- 5 *Aiming Laser*: +1 OCV (5 Active Points);
OAF (-1) (total cost: 2 points) plus +2 versus
Range Modifier (6 Active Points); OAF (-1)
(total cost: 3 points)

Total cost: 47 points.

Cost VL-A1 "Redline," Supercharged Variant

- 42 *VL-A1 "Redline" Laser Rifle, Supercharged
Variant*: Multipower, 75-point reserve, 18
Charges for entire Multipower (+¼); all OAF
(-1), Limited Range (225"; -¼)
- 3u 1) *Single-Shot Setting*: RKA 4d6; OAF (-1),
Limited Range (225"; -¼)
- 3u 2) *Autofire Setting*: RKA 3d6+1, Autofire (5
shots; +½); OAF (-1), Limited Range (225";
-¼)
- 6 *Rifle-butt Club*: HA +3d6; OAF (-1), Hand-
To-Hand Attack (-½)
- 5 *Aiming Laser*: +1 OCV (5 Active Points);
OAF (-1) (total cost: 2 points) plus +2 versus
Range Modifier (6 Active Points); OAF (-1)
(total cost: 3 points)

Total cost: 59 points.

OPTIONS:

- 1) **Larger Power Cell**: This form of the standard
VL-A1 has a larger energy source. Change to 40
Charges (+½) for entire Multipower. Total cost: 54
points.

VRD-A1 "ZAPNET" DISCHARGER RIFLE

Effect: Drain Electrical Powers 6d6

Shots: 8

Combat Modifier(s): None

Range: 300"

Description: This rifle fires an electrically-charged
"net" of energy that strikes the target and seems to
wrap around him. The charge in the blast causes
all electricity-based devices and superpowers to
stop working — they lose power and/or suffer
damage to their components. The effect only lasts
for a minute or two, but that's often enough for
other VIPER agents to dispose of the weakened foe.
VIPER has found that this weapon is particularly
effective against superheroes who wear powered
armor or use lots of gadgets.

Game Information: *Drain Electrical Powers
6d6, all Electrical Powers simultaneously (+2),
Limited Range (300"; +¼), Delayed Return
Rate (5 points per Minute; +¼) (210 Active
Points); OAF (-1), 8 Charges (-½). Total cost:
84 points.*

OPTIONS:

- 1) **Larger Power Cell**: This form of the VRD-A1
has a larger supply of energy. Agents often take
advantage of this by firing multiple shots at a single
target, one Phase after another, until he cannot use
his electrical powers at all. Change to 20 Charges
(+¼). 225 Active Points; total cost 90 points.
- 2) **VRD-A1XP Zapnet Rifle**: This form of the VRD-
A1 fires a more powerful "net," but sometimes mal-
functions. Increase to Drain Electrical Powers 8d6
and add Activation Roll 12- Jammed (-1¼). 280
Active Points; total cost 75 points.
- 3) **VRD-A1 Zapnet Carbine**: Smaller and easier to
carry, this weapon has slightly less power than the
full-sized version. Decrease to Drain Electrical
Powers 5d6. 175 Active Points; total cost 70 points.

VRD-A2 "COTTONMOUTH" NEURAL INTERFERENCE RIFLE

Effect: Drain DEX and INT 4d6

Shots: 8

Combat Modifier(s): None

Range: 300"

Description: This weapon, one of the most advanced in the VIPER arsenal, projects a beam of energy that interferes with the functioning of the victim's nervous system. He becomes clumsy and addled, unable to move or think effectively; some victims find it difficult even to remain standing. VIPER agents upon whom Research & Development tested this weapon gave the gun its nickname after noting that its effects felt like "being drunk and having a hangover, combined."

Game Information: Drain DEX and INT 4d6, two Characteristics simultaneously (+½), Limited Range (300"; +¼), Delayed Return Rate (5 points per Minute; +¼) (80 Active Points); OAF (-1), 8 Charges (-½). Total cost: 32 points.

OPTIONS:

1) Larger Power Cell: Agents facing large groups of opponents favor this VRD-A2 variant, which allows them more shots. Change to 15 Charges (-0). Total cost: 40 points.

2) VRD-A2 Cottonmouth Carbine: With its shorter barrel and more compact power cell, this form of the VRD-A2 is easier to conceal and carry, but it has a less powerful effect. Decrease to Drain DEX and INT 2d6 and change Limited Range to 100". 40 Active Points; total cost 16 points.

VRD-A3 "BRICKBREAKER" WEAKNESS RIFLE

Effect: Drain STR 8d6

Shots: 8

Combat Modifier(s): None

Range: 300"

Description: VIPER developed this weapon by altering the beam frequency and wavelength of the VRD-A2. Instead of interfering with basic motor and thought processing functions, it scrambles the neural pathways controlling the victim's use of his muscles, rendering him weak as a kitten. VIPER agents bring this weapon along whenever they expect to confront "bricks" or other super-strong metahumans, hence its name.

Game Information: Drain STR 8d6, Limited Range (300"; +¼), Delayed Return Rate (5 points per Minute; +¼) (120 Active Points); OAF (-1), 8 Charges (-½). Total cost: 48 points.

OPTIONS:

1) Larger Power Cell: This form of the VRD-A3 comes with an expanded energy source. Change to 20 Charges (+¼). 140 Active Points; total cost 70 points.

CREW-SERVED LIMITATION

Some weapons require more than one person to operate properly. Such weapons take the Limitation *Crew-Served*. The value of the Limitation depends on the size of the crew needed to fire the weapon without penalty, as indicated by the accompanying table.

Value	Required Crew	Penalty for Single Character To Operate
-¼	2	-3
-½	3-4	-6
-¾	5-8	-9
-1	9-16	Not possible
...and so on		

If more than a single character, but fewer than the required number of characters, attempts to fire a weapon, reduce the penalty by the number of characters beyond one (though the minimum penalty remains -1 regardless of how many characters participate). For example, if four characters try to fire a weapon needing a crew of 8, the normal -9 penalty becomes -6 (-9, reduced by 3 for each person beyond the first).

To determine the OCV of a Crew-Served weapon, use the chief operator's OCV, or at the GM's option take the average OCV of the crew. If a Crew-Served weapon requires a Weapon Familiarity, at least half of the crew must have that WF, or the crew suffers the standard Unfamiliar Weapon penalty (-3 OCV).

If a Crew-Served weapon costs END, all members of the crew must pay that END cost.

Weapons with this Limitation should also take the *Focus* Limitation with the additional *Bulky* or *Immobile* Limitations. They usually take the *Extra Time* Limitation as well. Generally they do not take the *STR Minimum* or *Required Hands* Limitations, since they're mounted on bipods, tripods, or vehicles.

VRD-A4 "FROSTY" ICE RIFLE

Effect: Various Attack Powers

Shots: 8

Combat Modifier(s): None

Range: 250"/150"/250"/195"

Description: One of VIPER's more unusual weapons, the "Frosty" emits a beam of supercooled energy and liquid. By altering the direction and flow of the liquid, the shooter can create a variety of effects. First, he can simply blast the target; the impact of the energy and its low temperature harms the victim. Second, he can freeze the victim through, slowing down his reactions and decreasing his ability to act. Third, he can trap the victim in a block of ice; fourth, he can coat the ground with ice, making it difficult for anyone to walk or run.

VIPER has very few copies of this weapon in its arsenal; experts estimate perhaps only a half-dozen of them exist. However, rumors claim VIPER's labs recently made some breakthroughs in cryotechnology and will soon have the ability to manufacture the VRD-A4 much more easily and

cheaply (and perhaps even build a heavy weapon version of it).

Game Information:

Cost VRD-A4 "Frosty" Ice Rifle

20 VRD-A4 "Frosty" Ice Rifle: Multipower, 50-point reserve; all OAF (-1); 8 Charges for entire Multipower (-½) [8]

2u 1) *Icy Blast*: Energy Blast 10d6; OAF (-1)

2u 2) *Frozen Stiff*: Drain SPD 3d6, Ranged (+½); OAF (-1)

2u 3) *Block Of Ice*: Entangle 4d6, 6 DEF; OAF (-1), Vulnerable (Fire/Heat; -1)

2u 4) *Icy Ground*: Change Environment (create ice sheet) 32" radius, -4 to DEX Rolls to move on the sheet; OAF (-1), Only Affects Characters Who Are Moving On The Ground (-¼)

Total cost: 28 points.

OPTIONS:

1) **More Ammo**: This form of the VRD-A4 comes with a greater supply of liquid and a stronger energy pack. Change to 16 Charges for entire Multipower (-0). Total cost: 33 points.

2) **VRD-A4XP Variant**: This experimental form of the VRD-A4 is much more powerful, but also prone to failure. Change reserve to 60 points and add Activation Roll 14- (-½) to it and every slot; slot one is Energy Blast 12d6; slot two Drain SPD 4d6; slot three Entangle 6d6, 6 DEF; slot four remains unchanged. Total cost: 28 points.

3) **VRD-A4 "Icer" Ice Rifle**: This version of the VRD-A4 can also fire an "Icicle Blast," a sharp "needle" of ice capable of killing targets with ease. Add a fifth slot — RKA 3d6. Total cost: 30 points.

VS-A1 "BANSHEE" SONIC RIFLE

Effect: Energy Blast 10d6, Penetrating/Energy Blast 7d6, NND

Shots: 30

Combat Modifier(s): None

Range: 375"/350"

Description: VIPER has not confined its sonic weapons technology solely to the VS-S1 pistol. This weapon, one of two sonic rifles in the standard VIPER arsenal, uses sonic energy for one of two effects: an ordinary damaging blast; or to "scramble the target's brain," as VIPER weapons instructors put it, knocking the target out without causing lasting harm (VIPER agents often employ this feature to take superheroes hostage).

The "Banshee" resembles the VL-A1, but with a distinctive widened forward barrel assembly and muzzle for generating sound at damaging frequencies. Unlike most VIPER firearms, which have a golden sheen, the VS-A1 is usually silver-colored.

Game Information:

Cost VS-A1 "Banshee" Sonic Rifle

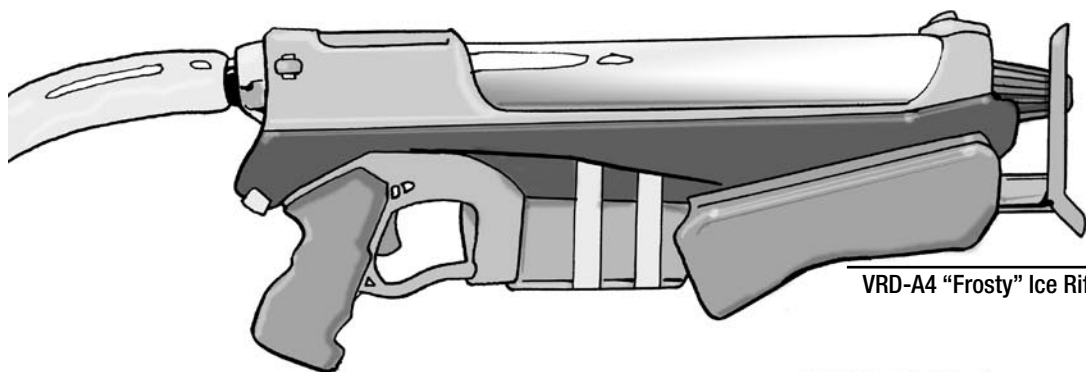
47 VS-A1 "Banshee" Sonic Rifle: Multipower, 75-point reserve, 30 Charges (+¼) for entire Multipower; all OAF (-1)

4u 1) *Lethal Setting*: Energy Blast 10d6, Penetrating (+½); OAF (-1)

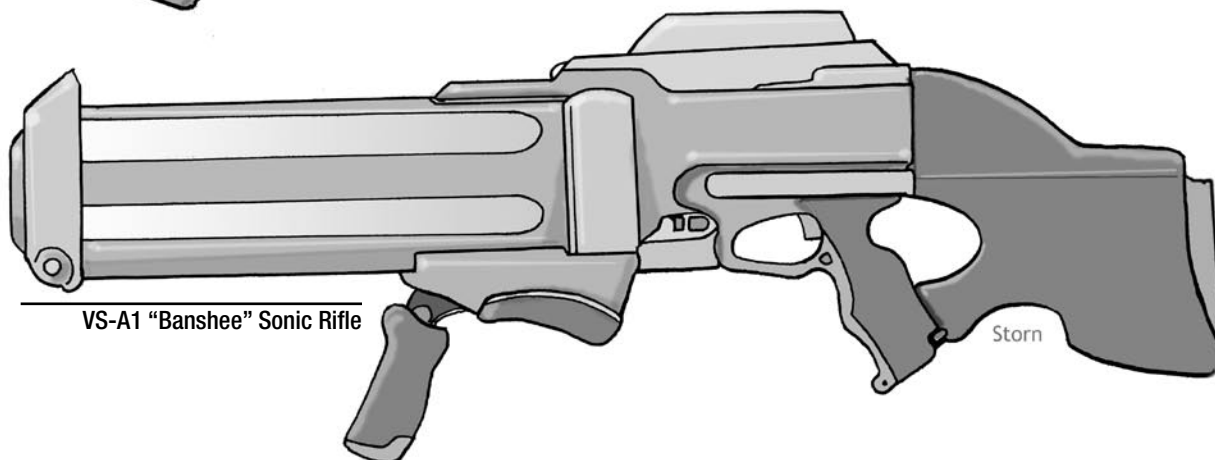
3u 2) *"Scrambler" Setting*: Energy Blast 7d6, NND (defense is solid ear coverings, Hearing Group Flash Defense, target covers his ears, or target is deaf; +1); OAF (-1)

6 *Rifle-butt Club*: HA +3d6; OAF (-1), Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½)

Total cost: 60 points.



VRD-A4 "Frosty" Ice Rifle



VS-A1 "Banshee" Sonic Rifle

Storn

OPTIONS:

1) Larger Power Cell: This form of the Banshee comes equipped with a larger energy source. Change to 60 Charges (+½) for entire Multipower. Total cost: 69 points.

2) VS-A1-FL “Fat Lady” Sonic Rifle: This form of the VS-A1 uses infra- and ultra-sound to make its “scrambler” setting even more dangerous. Change slot two to Energy Blast 6d6, AVLD (defense is Hearing Group Flash Defense; +1½). Total cost: 61 points.

3) VS-A2 “Big Rattler” Sonic Rifle: This weapon, the “big brother” to the VS-S1 sonic pistol, and to the VS-A1 rifle as well, is perfect for use against superheroes. It’s given more than one squadron the power to defeat superpowered foes. It resembles the VS-A1 rifle, but is larger with a slightly different shaped rear assembly. Agents who use it must wear helmets that incorporate Acoustic Shielding or risk damaging their hearing. Change to:

Cost VS-A2 “Big Rattler” Sonic Rifle

77 VS-A2 “Big Rattler” Sonic Rifle: Multipower, 124-point reserve, 30 shots for entire Multipower (+¼); all OAF (-1)

5u 1) *Lethal Setting:* Energy Blast 12d6, Penetrating (+½); OAF (-1) plus Hearing Group Flash 8d6; OAF (-1), Linked (-½)

6u 2) *“Scrambler” Setting:* Energy Blast 8d6, AVLD (defense is Hearing Group Flash Defense; +1½), OAF (-1) plus Hearing Group Flash 8d6, OAF (-1), Linked (-½)

6 *Rifle-butt Club:* HA +3d6; OAF (-1), Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½)

Total cost: 94 points.

VSC-1 “SPITTING COBRA” ACID SPRAYER

Effect: RKA 1½d6, Continuous, Penetrating, Uncontrolled

Shots: 8

Combat Modifier(s): None

Range: 30”

Description: Based on the experiences of Diamondback and certain experiments conducted by the New York City Nests, VIPER has determined that acid is a potent weapon against many superhumans (not to mention inanimate objects). Heroes who can shrug off the blast of a VB-A1 or the shriek of the “Big Rattler” often suffer severe injuries when attacked with acid. To exploit this tactical weakness, VIPER developed the VSC-1 Acid Sprayer, nicknamed the “Spitting Cobra.” It sprays a stream of concentrated acid onto the target, causing horrific burns and often death. (For more information on the game effects of acid, see page 8 of *The UNTIL Superpowers Database*.)

Particularly vicious or sadistic agents enjoy using this weapon, since it not only has an extreme effect, it often inspires fear in their opponents. However, it has one significant drawback: if the weapon’s pressurized acid storage compartments suffers damage, they may rupture and explode, seriously injuring or killing the user. (In game terms, the GM should roll 1d6 whenever the rifle takes

1 or more BODY damage from an attack. On a 1, the weapon explodes, doing its damage over a 2” radius; the agent holding the weapon takes double damage.)

The VSC-1 consists of a long, wide-mouthed barrel, an electric trigger assembly, and two cylindrical acid storage tanks mounted on the rear top of the weapon. In the eyes of many, it resembles a metallic, high-tech version of a child’s squirtgun.

Game Information: RKA 1½d6, Continuous (+1), Penetrating (+½), Uncontrolled (+½) (75 Active Points); OAF (-1), 8 Charges (-½), Limited Power (weapon subject to dangerous rupture; -¼), Limited Range (30”; -¼). Total cost: 25 points.

VIPER HEAVY WEAPONS

VIPER defines a “heavy weapon” as any weapon requiring two or more agents (typically Heavy Weapons Specialists) to operate efficiently, or which due to its size or bulk inhibits the user’s ability to move. Technicians mount most of these weapons on tripods, vehicles, emplacements, or the like. The average VIPER squadron on the average VIPER mission rarely carries or uses any of these weapons; VIPER saves them for situations where it expects to face superhuman opponents or needs the extra firepower to get the job done.

V-12 “DESTRUCTOR” BLASTER CANNON

Effect: Energy Blast 20d6

Shots: 30 Boostable

Combat Modifier(s): None

Range: 750”

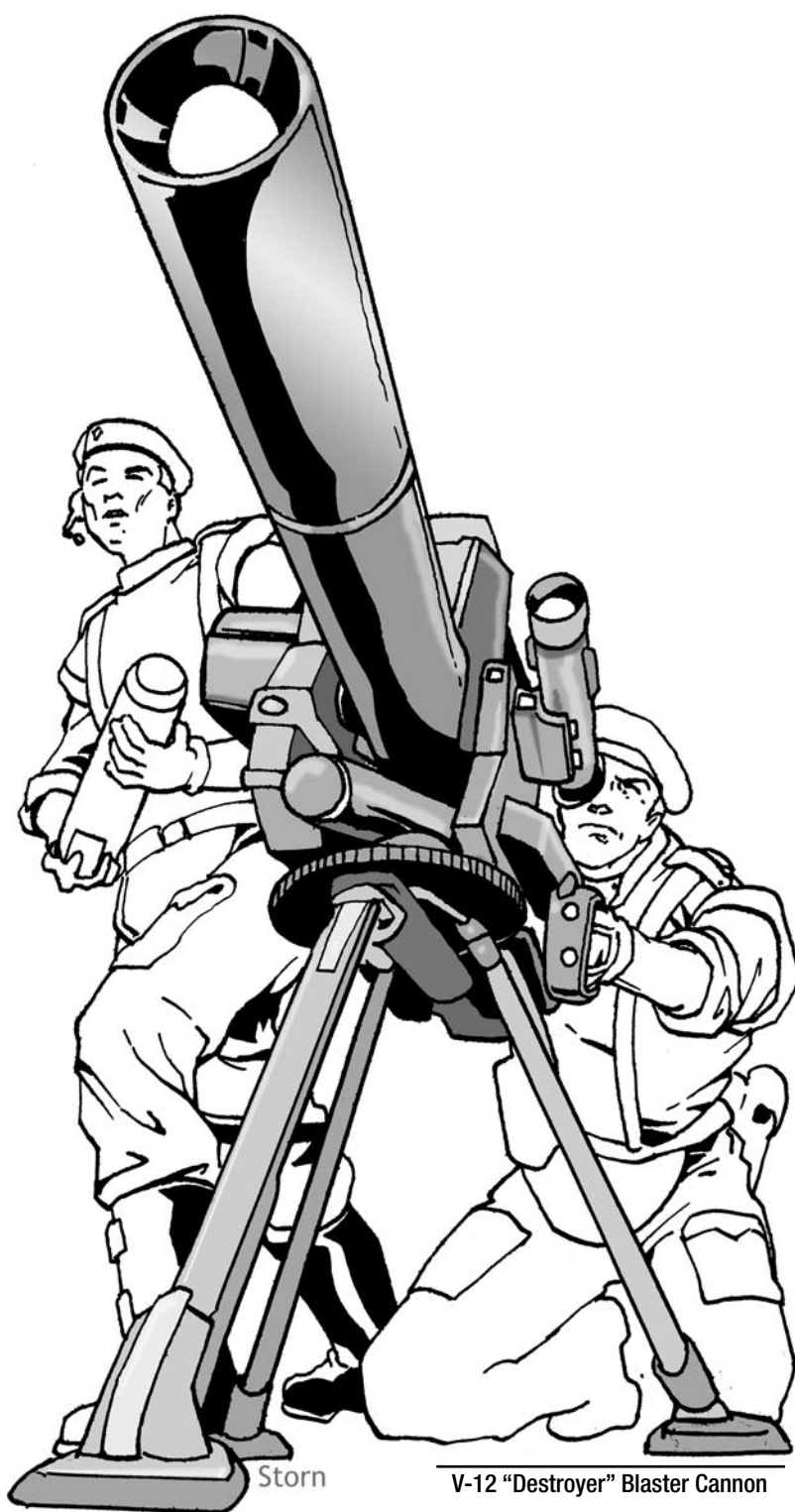
Description: The heaviest weapon in VIPER’s standard arsenal, the “Destructor” guarantees a hard fight for any superhero. Designed by VIPER R&D to knock out or kill powerful superhumans in one or two shots, it often succeeds in that goal. It uses VIPER’s standard blaster technology, coupled with an ultra-efficient power cell which provides enough energy for 30 standard shots; agents can also increase the weapon’s effect by draining more power per shot (at the risk of burning out the weapon altogether). It requires a crew of two to operate properly and comes mounted on a tripod.

Game Information: Energy Blast 20d6, 30 Boostable Charges (+½) (150 Active Points); OAF Bulky (-1½), Crew-Served (2 agents; -¼). Total cost: 54 points.

OPTIONS:

1) V-12A “Destructor Maximus” Blaster Cannon:

This variant of the basic “Destructor” cannon sacrifices some of its power for the ability to fire in automatic mode. Many Heavy Weapons agents choose this model, preferring the flexibility of automatic fire to the sheer power of the V-12. Energy Blast 16d6, Autofire (5 shots; +½), 64 Charges (+½) (160 Active Points); OAF Bulky (-1½), Crew-Served (2 agents; -¼). Total cost: 58 points.



V-12 "Destroyer" Blaster Cannon

2) V-12B "Destructor Optimus" Blaster Cannon:

This form of the V-12 fires a beam that has a much shorter range, but is considerably wider (and thus can potentially injure multiple targets at once). Change to Energy Blast 20d6, Area Of Effect (50" Line 2" wide; +1¼), 30 Charges (+¼) (250 Active Points); OAF Bulky (-1½), Crew-Served (2 agents; -¼). Total cost: 91 points.

3) V-12 Lethal Variant: Some Heavy Weapon crews tune their V-12s to a higher energy frequency, creating a beam that's likely to kill its target. Change to RKA 6½d6. Total cost: 54 points.

V-14T "THUNDERBOLT" CANNON

Effect: Energy Blast 18d6/RKA 6d6

Shots: 25

Combat Modifier(s): None

Range: 450"

Description: Only slightly less powerful than the Destructor, and offering the option of a more focused beam, the Thunderbolt has become a favorite among VIPER Heavy Weapons Specialists since the Technical Division introduced it to the arsenal in 1996. Although it requires a crew of two for easiest use, one person can fire it without too much difficulty if necessary.

Game Information:

Cost V-14T "Thunderbolt" Cannon

41 V-14T "Thunderbolt" Cannon: Multipower, 90-point reserve, 25 Charges for entire Multipower (+¼); all OAF Bulky (-1½), Crew-Served (2 agents; -¼)

3u 1) *Standard Setting:* Energy Blast 18d6; OAF Bulky (-1½), Crew-Served (2 agents; -¼)

3u 2) *Focused Setting:* RKA 6d6; OAF Bulky (-1½), Crew-Served (2 agents; -¼)

Total cost: 47 points.

VF-7 "TORCHIE" FLAMETHROWER

Effect: RKA 5d6/RKA 2d6 3" Radius

Shots: 12

Combat Modifier(s): None

Range: 375"/300"

Description: When VIPER needs to turn up the heat, it issues this weapon to its squadrons. It has proven particularly effective against many ice- and cold-based superhumans. Large and bulky, it includes a 1.2 meter long rifle-like gun attached by an armored hose to an armored tank which holds the fuel. The user wears the tank like a backpack. When he presses the electric trigger on the gun, the weapon projects a large bolt of white-hot flame. VIPER agents call this weapon the "Torchie," or sometimes the "Toaster."

While many VIPER agents admire this weapon for its spectacular effects and raw destructive capabilities, they also fear it. If an attack or object that could set the fuel on fire (such as most energy blasts) pierces the tank, the weapon usually explodes, killing the user and severely injuring anyone near him. (In game terms, the GM should roll 1d6 whenever the fuel tank takes 1 or more BODY damage from an attack that could light the fuel. On a 1-4, the weapon

explodes, doing 1d6 Killing Damage, Explosion for every 2 Charges/shots remaining.)

Game Information:

Cost VF-7 "Torchie" Flamethrower

- 23 VF-7 "Torchie" Flamethrower: Multipower, 75-point reserve; all OAF Bulky (-1½), Limited Power (weapon subject to dangerous rupture; -¼), No Knockback (-¼), 12 Charges for entire Multipower (-¼)
- 2u 1) *Narrow Beam*: RKA 5d6; OAF Bulky (-1½), Limited Power (weapon subject to dangerous rupture; -¼), No Knockback (-¼)
- 2u 2) *Wide Beam*: RKA 2d6, Area Of Effect (3" Radius; +1); OAF Bulky (-1½), Limited Power (weapon subject to dangerous rupture; -¼), No Knockback (-¼)
- 2 *Armored Hose/Tank*: Armor (2 PD/2 ED); OAF Bulky (-1½), Partial Coverage (only protects weapon's hose and tank, not rifle or character; -1)
- 3 *Armored Tank*: Armor (+4 PD/+4 ED); OAF Bulky (-1½), Partial Coverage (only protects weapon's tank, not rifle or character; -1½)

Total cost: 32 points.

VRG-1 "BOOMSLANG" RAILGUN

Effect: RKA 10d6

Shots: 16

Combat Modifier(s): None

Range: 750"

Description: This large, massive weapon uses magnetic energy to hurl a shaped projectile at the target at tremendous velocities. Usually the force of the attack obliterates the target upon impact, though some particularly tough superheroes have survived its effects (but never without severe injury). VIPER has also found it effective for penetrating vault doors, downing aircraft, destroying powered armor, and the like. It requires a crew of five Heavy Weapons agents to operate.

Game Information: RKA 10d6 (150 Active Points); OAF Bulky (-1½), Crew-Served (5 agents; -¾), 16 Charges (-0). Total cost: 46 points.

MISCELLANEOUS PERSONAL WEAPONS

In addition to its various blasters and firearms, VIPER also issues grenades, melee weapons, rifle attachments, and other weaponry to its agents in appropriate circumstances.

VIPER Blaster Attachments

VIPER's technicians can attach any of the following scopes or accuracy enhancers to any VIPER firearm (though laser weapons cannot use accuracy aids; they already have built in low-level aiming lasers). By combining the costs you can create attachments with multiple abilities (such as a scope that provides +1 OCV and UV vision). Agents can use some (such as the Thermal Scope and Ultra-Scope) as separate gadgets; the user doesn't have to attach them to a weapon (though he can build them into a helmet by converting them to OIFs).

Cost Power

- 2 VXA-1 *Aiming Laser*: +1 OCV (5 Active Points); OAF (-1), Only Works With VIPER Firearms (-0)
- 5 VXA-2 *Aiming Laser*: +2 OCV (10 Active Points); OAF (-1), Only Works With VIPER Firearms (-0)
- 1 VXA-3 *Aiming Laser*: +1 versus Range Modifier (3 Active Points); OAF (-1), Only Works With VIPER Firearms (-0)
- 3 VXA-3 *Aiming Laser*: +2 versus Range Modifier (6 Active Points); OAF (-1), Only Works



- With VIPER Firearms (-0)
- 6 *VXA-4 Aiming Laser*: +4 versus Range Modifier (12 Active Points); OAF (-1), Only Works With VIPER Firearms (-0)
 - 10 *VXH Scope*: Absolute Range Sense (3 Active Points); OAF (-1), Only Works With VIPER Firearms (-0) and +6 versus Range Modifier (18 Active Points); OAF (-1), Only Works With VIPER Firearms (-0)
 - 2 *VXIR Thermal Scope*: Infrared Perception (Sight Group); OAF (-1)
 - 2 *VXSL Starlight Scope*: Nightvision; OAF (-1)
 - 4 *VXT-1 Telescopic Sight*: +6 versus Range Modifier for Sight Group; OAF (-1)
 - 6 *VXT-2 Telescopic Sight*: +8 versus Range Modifier for Sight Group; OAF (-1)
 - 7 *VXT-3 Telescopic Sight*: +10 versus Range Modifier for Sight Group; OAF (-1)
 - 2 *VXUV Ultra-Scope*: Ultraviolet Perception (Sight Group); OAF (-1)
 - 5 *VXX X-Ray Scope*: N-Ray Perception (Sight Group; cannot see through force fields, lead, or gold) (10 Active Points); OAF (-1), Only Works With VIPER Firearms (-0)

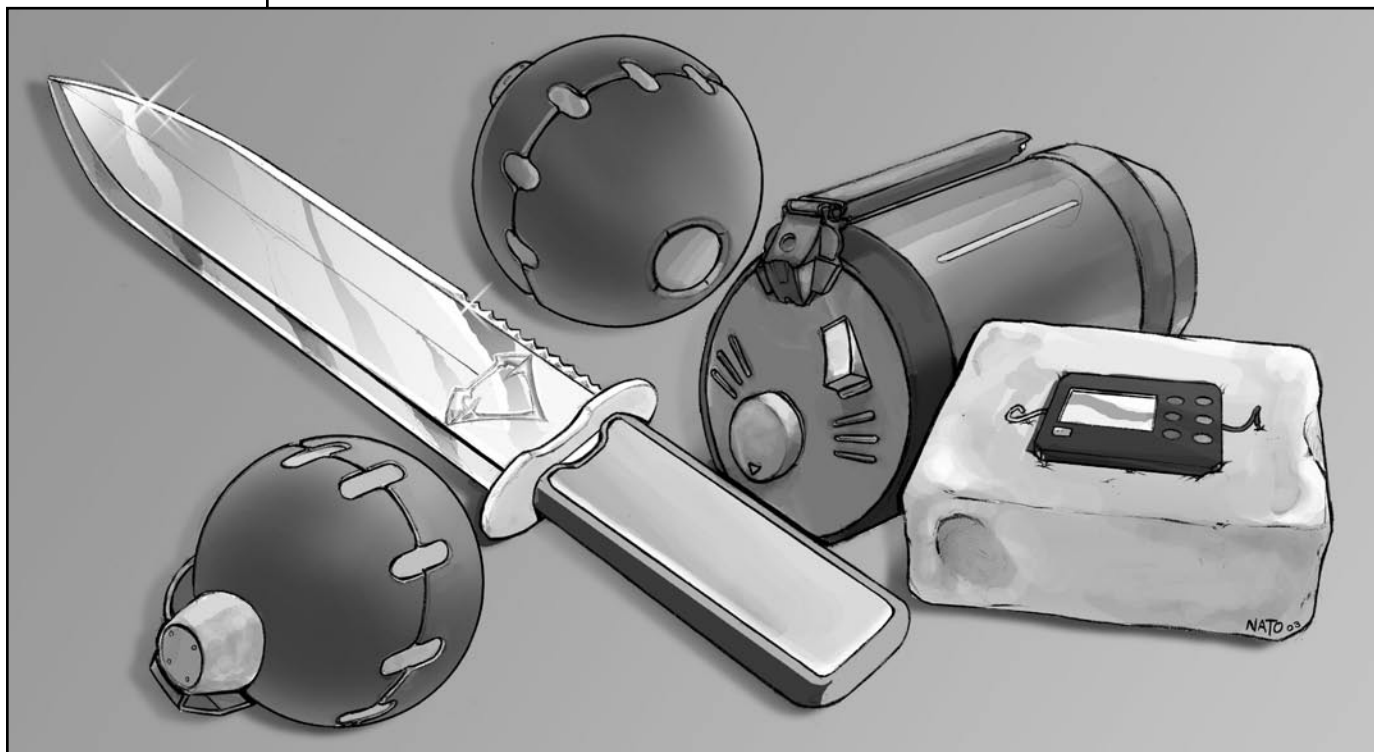
VIPER Melee Weapons

VIPER FANG

Per the Supreme Serpent's orders, this versatile combat knife was added to the agent's standard "kit" in the mid-1990s. Made of drop-forged, case-hardened steel, it holds an edge tenaciously, even when cutting through super-dense flesh. Some agents use a variant, a smaller (but no less sharp) blade that pops out of a spring-sheath on the back of their gauntlets.

Cost Power

- 12 *VIPER Fang*: HKA 1d6 (plus STR), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OAF (-1) plus Range Based On STR (+¼) for the HKA; OAF (-1), 1 Recoverable Charge (-1¼), Lockout (cannot use HKA until Charge is recovered; -½)
- 7 *VIPER Fang (Gauntlet Spring-Sheath Variant)*: HKA ½d6 (plus STR) (10 Active Points); OIF (-½)



SHOCK GAUNTLETS

Some VIPER agents wear gauntlets with tiny, powerful batteries and circuitry sewn into them. When activated, Shock Gauntlets allow the wearer to deliver a stunning touch, or to increase the power of his punches.

Cost Power

- 23 *Shock Gauntlets*: Multipower, 40-point reserve; all OIF (-½), 12 Charges for entire Multipower (-¼)
- 2u 1) *Taser Touch*: Energy Blast 4d6, NND (defense is being electrically insulated or having an ED Force Field; +1); OIF (-½), No

- Range (-½)
 1u 2) *Shock Punch*: HA +4d6; OIF (-½), Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½)
Total cost: 26 points.

VIPER Grenades

VIPER agents use a wide variety of grenades. Squadron Commanders frequently issue them, since they provide many powerful tactical options without adding a lot of weight or bulk to each agent's kit. A smart commander varies the grenades among his men, rather than giving them all the same type. Regardless of type, VIPER grenades usually come in packs or bandoliers of four and are spheres or ovoids about 4-6 cm in diameter. Common types include:

- *VG-1 Frag Grenade*: sprays lethal shrapnel over a wide area.
- *VG-3 Concussion Grenade*: emits an explosion intended primarily to stun personnel rather than kill them or damage vehicles
- *VG-4 Taser Grenade*: this grenade is essentially a tiny, but powerful, battery surrounded by a small explosive charge wrapped in conductive filaments attached to the battery. The explosion throws the filaments out all over a wide area, and the battery then emits a powerful electric shock which the filaments transmit to anything they touch.
- *VG-6 Flame Bomb*: an incendiary grenade; just the thing to accompany the VF-7.
- *VG-7 Strobe Grenade*: emits a bright flash of light accompanied by a pulse of loud sound to blind and deafen the target.
- *VG-9 Smoke Grenade*: creates a large cloud of thick, billowing smoke that blocks sight.
- *VG-12 Anti-Invisibility Grenade*: uses an electro-pulse to disperse a cloud of fine, luminescent powder; between them the pulse and powder negate most forms of invisibility for a short time.
- *VG-14 Psionic Interference Grenade*: this grenade's explosive wave resonates on psychic frequencies, creating a field of energy that affects the use of psionic powers.

Cost Power

- 16 *VG-1 Frag Grenade*: RKA 2d6+1, Explosion (+½) (52 Active Points); OAF (-1), 4 Charges (-1), Range Based On Strength (-¼)
 16 *VG-3 Concussion Grenade*: Energy Blast 7d6, Explosion (+½) (52 Active Points); OAF (-1), 4 Charges (-1), Range Based On Strength (-¼)

- 23 *VG-4 Taser Grenade*: Energy Blast 5d6, NND (defense is being electrically insulated or having an ED FF; +1), Area Of Effect (5" Radius; +1) (75 Active Points); OAF (-1), 4 Charges (-1), Range Based On Strength (-¼)
 18 *VG-6 Flame Bomb*: RKA 2d6, Penetrating (+½), Explosion (+½) (60 Active Points); OAF (-1), 4 Charges (-1), Range Based On Strength (-¼)
 21 *VG-7 Strobe Grenade*: Sight and Hearing Group Flash 8d6, Explosion (+½) (67 Active Points); OAF (-1), 4 Charges (-1), Range Based On Strength (-¼)
 15 *VG-9 Smoke Grenade*: Darkness to Sight Group 5" radius (50 Active Points); OAF (-1), 4 Charges (-1), Range Based On Strength (-¼)
 56 *VG-12 Anti-Invisibility Grenade*: Drain Invisibility 10d6, Area Of Effect (12" Radius; +1), Range Based On STR (+¼) (225 Active Points); OAF (-1), 1 Charge (-2)
 34 *VG-14 Psionic Interference Grenade*: Suppress Mental Powers 6d6, all Mental Powers simultaneously (+2), Area Of Effect (9" Radius; +1) (120 Active Points); OAF (-1), 1 Continuing Charge lasting for 1 Turn (can be shut off with a directed radio pulse; -1¼), Range Based On STR (-¼)

VIPER GRENADE LAUNCHER

While VIPER agents normally throw their grenades, sometimes they need to hurl them greater distances than they can with strength alone. In such cases they use the VIPER Grenade Launcher, which comes in two varieties: a pistol-sized hand-held model; and a smaller version which attaches to the underside of the front part of the barrel of the VB-A1 Blaster Rifle and most other common VIPER rifles. These two devices do not add to the user's STR; they replace it for grenade-throwing purposes. When using them, a character gets no benefit for running before he "throws," but still suffers penalties for "throwing" while prone.

Cost Power

- 12 *VIPER Grenade Launcher (Hand-Held)*: 50 STR (50 Active Points); OAF (-1), Only To Make Standing Or Prone Throws Of VIPER Grenades (-2)
 7 *VIPER Grenade Launcher (Rifle-Mounted)*: 30 STR (30 Active Points); OAF (-1), Only To Make Standing Or Prone Throws Of VIPER Grenades (-2), Only Works With VIPER Firearms (-0)

VIPER PERSONAL WEAPONS QUICK-REFERENCE CHART

Name Of Weapon	Effect/Notes	Shots
Pistols		
VB-S1 “Shorty” Blaster Pistol	Energy Blast 7d6	12
VB-S1XP “Shorty” Blaster Pistol	Energy Blast 8d6	12
VB-S1A “Shorty” Blaster Pistol	Energy Blast 7d6, AP	12
VB-S1B “Shorty” Blaster Pistol	Energy Blast 7d6	12 Boostable
VB-S1C “Stubby” Blaster Pistol	Energy Blast 7d6	4
VB-S1D “Shower” Blaster Pistol	Energy Blast 7d6, AF5	60
VL-S1 “Redeye” Laser Pistol	RKA 2d6; +1 OCV, +1 Range	10
VL-S1XP “Redeye” Laser Pistol	RKA 3d6; +1 OCV, +1 Range	10
VL-S1A “Lightshow” Laser Pistol	RKA 2d6, AF5; +1 OCV, +1 Range	32
VL-S1C “Redeye” Laser Pistol	RKA 2d6, Cont; +1 OCV, +1 Range	10
VL-S1N “Quiet Light” Laser Pistol	RKA 2d6, IPE(Hrg); +1 OCV, +1 Range	10
VN-S1 Needler Pistol	RKA 2d6, AP; +1 OCV, +1 Range	8 or 20
VN-S1XP Needler Pistol	RKA 3d6, AP; +1 OCV, +1 Range	8
VN-S1A Needler Pistol	RKA 2d6, AF5, AP; +1 OCV, +1 Range	32
VS-S1 “Little Rattler” Sonic Pistol	Energy Blast 10d6	8 or 20
VS-S1 “Harpy” Rattler” Sonic Pistol	Energy Blast 10d6 + Hearing Flash 6d6	8
VZ-S1 “Sting” Firearm	RKA 2½d6, AP	14 or 32
VZ-S1 “Sting” Machine Pistol	RKA 2½d6, AF5, AP	32
Rifles		
VB-A1 “Striker” Blaster Rifle	Energy Blast 7-8d6	32
VB-A1 “Striker” Blaster Rifle (SCV)	Energy Blast 9-11d6	32
VB-A1-1 “Ghost Striker” Blaster Rifle	Energy Blast 6-8d6, AffDesol	32
VB-A1A “Eagle” Blaster Sniper Rifle	Energy Blast 8d6, IMR (1,500”), NRM	12 or 24
VB-A1A “Eagle” Blaster Sniper Rifle	Energy Blast 12d6, IMR (2,250”), NRM	12
VB-A1A “Eagle” Blaster Sniper Rifle	Energy Blast 7d6, IMR (1,300”), NRM	12
VB-A2 “Striker-2” Blaster Rifle	Energy Blast 5-8d6	32 or 64
VB-A3 “Firebird” Blaster Rifle	Energy Blast 6-7d6	32 or 64
VB-A4 “Jackhammer” Blaster Rifle	Energy Blast 12d6, AF5, 250” range	30 or 100
VB-A4A “Spikehammer” Blaster Rifle	Energy Blast 12d6, AF3, AP, 250” range	30
VB-A4B “Thunderhammer” Blaster Rifle	Energy Blast 10d6, AF3, AE1, 250” range	30
VB-A5 “Sledgehammer” Blaster Rifle	Energy Blast 14d6, AF5, 350” range	40 or 120
VB-A5A “Brickbuster” Blaster Rifle	Energy Blast 16d6, AF5, Act. 14-, 350” range	40
VB-A5B “Avenger” Blaster Rifle	RKA 5d6, AF5, 350” range	40
VE-A1 “Trapper” Trapweb Launcher	Entangle 8d6, 5 DEF	16 or 32
VE-A2 “Blinder” Blindweb Launcher	Entangle 6d6, 6 DEF, Stops Sight/Hearing/Smell/Taste	16
VF-1 “Bright Noise” Flare Rifle	Sight and Hearing Group Flash 12d6	8 or 20
VF-1 “Bright Noise” Flare Carbine	Sight and Hearing Group Flash 9d6	10
VL-A1 “Redline” Laser Rifle	RKA 2d6+1-3d6	24 or 40
VL-A1 “Redline” Laser Rifle (SCV)	RKA 4d6-3d6+1	24
VRD-A1 “Zapnet” Discharger Rifle	Drain Electrical Powers 6d6, 300” range	8 or 20
VRD-A1XP Zapnet Rifle	Drain Electrical Powers 8d6, Act. 12- Jam, 300” range	8
VRD-A1 “Zapnet” Carbine	Drain Electrical Powers 5d6, 300” range	8
VRD-A2 “Cottonmouth” Neural Interference Rifle	Drain DEX and INT 4d6, 300” range	8 or 15
VRD-A2 Cottonmouth Carbine	Drain DEX and INT 2d6, 100” range	8
VRD-A3 “Brickbreaker” Weakness Rifle	Drain STR 8d6, 300” range	8 or 20
VRD-A4 “Frosty” Ice Rifle	EB 10d6, Drain SPD 3d6, Entangle 4d6, 6 DEF, CE	8 or 16
VRD-A4XP Variant	EB 12d6, Drain SPD 4d6, Entangle 6d6, 6 DEF, CE	8
VRD-A4 “Icer” Ice Rifle	Add RKA 3d6	8 or 16
VS-A1 “Banshee” Sonic Rifle	EB 10d6 Pen, EB 7d6 NND	30 or 60
VS-A1-FL “Fat Lady” Sonic Rifle	EB 10d6 Pen, EB 6d6 AVLD	30
VS-A2 “Big Rattler” Sonic Rifle	EB 12d6 Pen + Hearing Flash 6d6, EB 8d6 AVLD + Hearing Flash 6d6	30
VSC-1 “Spitting Cobra” Acid Sprayer	RKA 1½d6, Cont, Pen, Unc, 30” range	8

Heavy Weapons

V-12 “Destructor” Blaster Cannon	Energy Blast 20d6, Crew2	30 Boostable
V-12A “Destructor Maximus” Blaster Cannon	Energy Blast 16d6, AF5, Crew2	64
V-12B “Destructor Optimus” Blaster Cannon	Energy Blast 20d6, AE(50” x 2” Line), Crew2	30
V-14T “Thunderbolt” Cannon	Energy Blast 18d6, RKA 6d6, Crew2	25
VF-7 “Torchie” Flamethrower	RKA 5d6, RKA 2d6 AE(3” Radius)	12
VRG-1 “Boomslang” Railgun	RKA 10d6, Crew5	16

Blaster Attachments

VXA-1 Aiming Laser	+1 OCV
VXA-2 Aiming Laser	+2 OCV
VXA-3 Aiming Laser	+1 versus Range Modifier
VXA-3 Aiming Laser	+2 versus Range Modifier
VXA-4 Aiming Laser	+4 versus Range Modifier
VXH Scope	Absolute Range Sense, +6 versus Range Modifier
VXIR Thermal Scope	Infrared Perception (Sight Group)
VXSL Starlight Scope	Nightvision
VXT-1 Telescopic Sight	+6 versus Range Modifier for Sight Group
VXT-2 Telescopic Sight	+8 versus Range Modifier for Sight Group
VXT-3 Telescopic Sight	+10 versus Range Modifier for Sight Group
VXUV Ultra-Scope	Ultraviolet Perception (Sight Group)
VXX X-Ray Scope	N-Ray Perception (Sight Group; not through force fields/lead/gold)

Melee Weapons

VIPER Fang	HKA 1d6, RBS	
VIPER Fang (Gauntlet Spring-Sheath)	HKA ½d6	
Shock Gauntlets	EB 4d6 NND/HA +4d6	12

Grenades (all RBS)

VG-1 Frag Grenade	RKA 2d6+1, Explosion	4
VG-3 Concussion Grenade	Energy Blast 7d6, Explosion	4
VG-4 Taser Grenade	Energy Blast 5d6, NND, AE (5” Radius)	4
VG-6 Flame Bomb	RKA 2d6, Pen, Explosion	4
VG-7 Strobe Grenade	Sight and Hearing Group Flash 8d6, Explosion	4
VG-9 Smoke Grenade	Darkness to Sight Group 5” radius	4
VG-12 Anti-Invisibility Grenade	Drain Invisibility 10d6, AE(12” Radius)	1
VG-14 Psionic Interference Grenade	Suppress Mental Powers 6d6, AE (9” Radius)	1 x 1 Turn
VG-17 Knockout Gas Grenade	EB 6d6, Cont, NND, AE (9” Radius)	4 x 1 Turn
VG-17A Knockout Smoke Grenade	EB 4d6, Cont, NND, AE (6” Radius) + Darkness 6” Radius	4 x 1 Turn

Grenade Launcher

Hand-Held	50 STR for throwing
Rifle-Mounted	30 STR for throwing

KEY

Act.:	Activation Roll (the roll follows)	Crew:	Crew-Served (required crew follows)
AE:	Area Of Effect	IPE(Hrg):	Invisible Power Effects (Hearing Group)
AE1:	Area Of Effect (One Hex)	IMR:	Increased Maximum Range
AF3:	Autofire (3 shots)	Jam:	Jammed
AF5:	Autofire (5 shots)	NND:	No Normal Defense
AffDesol:	Affects Desolidified	NRM:	No Range Modifier
AP:	Armor Piercing	Pen:	Penetrating
AVLD:	Attack Versus Limited Defense	RBS:	Range Based On STR
CE:	Change Environment	SCV:	Supercharged Variant
Cont:	Continuous	Unc:	Uncontrolled

VIPER Poisons

Like its namesake, VIPER frequently relies on poison to accomplish its goals and eliminate its enemies. From fast-acting lethal poisons, to poisons causing long, lingering, debilitating illnesses, to poisons designed to sap the strength or willpower of superheroes, VIPER's toxicologists have concocted a pharmacopeia of poisons vast and diverse enough to make a Borgia envious. Some of the toxins VIPER frequently uses include:

LETHAL COMBAT POISON

VIPER uses this poison to swiftly and easily kill its enemies in battle. Since the agents using it must introduce it into the target's body somehow, the best way for a superhero or policeman to protect himself from it is to keep VIPER's weapons from puncturing his skin.

Cost Power

- 41 *VIPER Lethal Combat Poison (blade poison):* RKA 5d6, NND (defense is appropriate Life Support [Immunity]; +1), Does BODY (+1) (225 Active Points); OAF Fragile (-1¼), No Knockback (-¼), No Range (-½), HKA Must Do BODY (-½), 1 Charge (-2)
- 52 *VIPER Lethal Combat Poison (poisoned darts):* RKA 1 point, Penetrating (+½) (7 Active Points); OAF (dart; -1), Range Based On STR (-¼), 4 Charges (-1) (total cost: 2 points) **plus** RKA 5d6, NND (defense is appropriate Life Support [Immunity]; +1), Does BODY (+1) (225 Active Points); OAF Fragile (poison; -1¼), No Knockback (-¼), Dart Attack Must Do BODY (-½), Linked (-¼), Range Based On STR (-¼), 4 Charges (-1) (total cost: 50 points)

SLOW-ACTING COMBAT POISON

This variant of the Lethal Combat Poison works over a longer period of time — instead of killing the victim instantly, it does so slowly, over the course of an hour. VIPER agents use this to take people “hostage”: “Do what we tell you, hero, and we’ll give her the antidote. Otherwise she’s dead as disco in 60 minutes.”

Cost Power

- 33 *VIPER Slow-Acting Combat Poison (blade poison):* RKA 5d6, NND (defense is appropriate Life Support [Immunity]; +1), Does BODY (+1) (225 Active Points); OAF Fragile (-1¼), Gradual Effect (1 Hour [1d6 per 12 minutes]; -1¼), No Knockback (-¼), No Range (-½), Blade Attack Must Do BODY (-½), 1 Charge (-2)
- 41 *VIPER Slow-Acting Combat Poison (poisoned darts):* RKA 1 point, Penetrating (+½) (7 Active Points); OAF (dart; -1), Range Based On STR (-¼), 4 Charges (-1) (total cost: 2 points) **plus** RKA 5d6, NND (defense is appropriate Life Support [Immunity]; +1), Does BODY (+1) (225 Active Points); OAF Fragile (poison; -1¼), Gradual Effect (1 Hour [1d6 per 12 minutes]; -1¼), No Knockback (-¼), Dart Attack Must Do BODY (-½), Linked

(-¼), Range Based On STR (-¼), 4 Charges (-1) (total cost: 39 points)

WEAKNESS POISONS

This suite of poison is another one of VIPER's methods for diminishing its opponents' ability to act and function effectively. Depending on which poison an agent uses, he can render the victim weak and helpless, sap his willpower so he can't resist interrogation or use psionic powers, make him clumsy-footed and fumble-fingered, and so on. Some of these toxins leave the victim weak and helpless for hours or days.

Cost Power

- 22 *VIPER Weakness Poisons (blade poison):* Drain (choose one Characteristic, typically STR, DEX, or EGO) 6d6, Delayed Return Rate (5 points per 20 Minutes; +¾) (105 Active Points); OAF Fragile (-1¼), Blade Attack Must Do BODY (-½), 1 Charge (-2)
- 32 *Variant:* As above, but returns at the rate of 5 points per Day (+1½) (150 Active Points)
- 30 *VIPER Weakness Poisons (poisoned darts):* RKA 1 point, Penetrating (+½) (7 Active Points); OAF (dart; -1), Range Based On STR (-¼), 4 Charges (-1) (total cost: 2 points) **plus** Drain (choose one Characteristic, typically STR, DEX, or EGO) 6d6, Range Based On STR (+¼), Delayed Return Rate (5 points per 20 Minutes; +¾) (120 Active Points); OAF Fragile (poison; -1¼), Dart Attack Must Do BODY (-½), Linked (-¼), Range Based On STR (-¼), 4 Charges (-1) (total cost: 28 points)

KNOCKOUT POISON GAS

Usually even superhumans strong enough to withstand the effects of VIPER's blasters still have to breathe, and that gives VIPER an opening to exploit. The Technical Division developed a special knockout poison, delivered in gaseous form, to take advantage of this weakness. VIPER agents typically carry this poison in grenades. Since the gas cloud covers such a large area, they must either wear helmets with oxygen supplies or use grenade launchers, lest they run the risk of suffering the effects of the gas themselves.

Cost Power

- 44 *VG-17 Knockout Gas Grenade:* Energy Blast 6d6, Continuous (+1), NND (defense is Life Support [Self-Contained Breathing or appropriate Immunity]; +1), Area Of Effect (9" Radius; +1) (120 Active Points); OAF (-1), Range Based On STR (-¼), 4 Charges lasting 1 Turn each (removed by winds or rain; -½)

KNOCKOUT SMOKE

This insidious poison is one of VIPER's best sneak tricks. It looks like the ordinary smoke emitted by the VG-9 Smoke Grenade, but in fact it's a variant of VIPER's knockout gas. A superhero or cop who wades into this stuff thinking it's just smoke soon discovers he's sadly mistaken. Some VIPER Nests have developed similar weapons, such

as clouds of acidic smoke that disintegrates armor and weapons.

Cost VG-17A Knockout Smoke Grenade

47 *VG-17A Knockout Smoke Grenade:* Energy Blast 4d6, Continuous (+1), NND (defense is Life Support [Self-Contained Breathing or appropriate Immunity]; +1), Area Of Effect (6" Radius; +1) (80 Active Points); OAF (-1), Range Based On STR (-¼), 4 Charges lasting 1 Turn each (removed by winds or rain; -½) (total cost: 29 points) plus Darkness to Sight Group 6" radius (60 Active Points); OAF (-1), Range Based On Strength (-¼), Linked (-½), 4 Charges lasting 1 Turn each (removed by winds or rain; -½) (total cost: 18 points)

VIPER Doomsday Weapons

Not all of VIPER's weapons are issued to agents or squadrons. Some are large enough, powerful enough, and/or insidious enough that VIPER can use them to threaten the very safety or existence of the world. Naturally, most of these weapons should become the focus of specific scenarios or sub-plots within scenario arcs; it requires too much effort to build and use them for VIPER to simply reveal one whenever it feels like it. (See also pages 122-23 of *Champions*, which have other doomsday devices VIPER could build.)

VIPER Atmospheric Gas Cloud: If VIPER ever wanted to kill a large number of people while leaving buildings and other objects intact, it could release this poison gas via missiles or other large-scale delivery systems. Specially manufactured to affect only human beings, it has the potential to slaughter billions of people (though it would spare alien and half-human superhumans). But VIPER has to judge the wind patterns carefully, lest the weather shift and blow the gas into areas inhabited by VIPER agents....

RKA 8d6, NND (defense is appropriate Life Support [Immunity]; +1), Does BODY (+1), Area Of Effect (57" Radius; +1), Continuous (+1), MegaArea (1" = 100 km wide, long, and deep; +¾) (690 Active Points); OAF Bulky (-1½), Only Affects Human Beings (-¼), Subject To Wind Shifts (-¼), 1 Charge lasting for 1 Hour (removed by rain or particularly strong winds; -¼). Total cost: 212 points.

VIPER Orbital Blaster Cannon: This enormous blaster weapon, still in the planning stages, will orbit the planet while protected by stealth technology to keep it hidden from the prying sensors of governments and superheroes. It has enough power and range to obliterate entire buildings. In fact, if VIPER had the resources to do so, it could mount the weapon on the Moon and still hit targets on Earth easily.

RKA 20d6, MegaRange (1" = 1,000 km; +1), Area Of Effect (60" Radius; +1) (900 Active Points); OAF Immobile (-2), Extra Time (takes 5 Minutes to build up the energy for each shot; -2), 4 Charges (-1) (total cost: 150 points) plus Cannon Stealth

Technology: Invisibility to Radio and Hearing Sense Groups, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (total cost: 22 points). Total cost: 172 points.

VIPER Seismic Bomb: If VIPER ever wanted to destroy California, Japan, or any other area on or near a major earthquake fault (or simply hold such areas hostage), it could plant this device deep in the ground near the fault. When activated, it makes the fault "slip," creating a short but intense earthquake. It only harms buildings and other large structures, but as they collapse they could kill thousands of people.

RKA12d6, Area Of Effect (32" Radius; +1), MegaArea (each hex equals 50 kilometers, for a total radius of 1,600 km; +¾), Trigger (coded radio signal; +¼) (540 Active Points); OAF Bulky (-1½), 1 Charge (-2), Only Affects Structures And Large Objects In Contact With The Ground (-½). Total cost: 108 points.

VIPER DEFENSIVE & MISCELLANEOUS EQUIPMENT

VIPER agents use a wide variety of equipment besides weapons. Sometimes an agent's success or survival depends as much on how well protected he is, or how good his gear is, as it does on how big and powerful a gun he carries. The devices described here represent only a small portion of the equipment in VIPER's storerooms, so GMs should



feel free to change these items or create new ones.

Defensive Equipment

VIPER BASIC COMBAT UNIFORM (BCU)

VIPER issues a standard uniform, called a Basic Combat Uniform (or "BCU"), to all agents. Colored green and yellow, it features the VIPER cobra's-head symbol on the left breast (with indicia of rank above). Made of a sophisticated armored cloth which protects the wearer from injury, the uniform includes various holsters, pockets, and utility pouches for storing the agent's standard weapons, BEST, and other useful items. VIPER agents who have to operate undetected wear armored clothing instead.

Cost Power

- 9 *VIPER BCU (Basic):* Armor (6 PD/6 ED) (18 Active Points); OIF (-½), Activation Roll 14- (does not protect Hit Locations 3-5 or 6-7; -½)
- 12 *VIPER BCU (Elite):* Armor (8 PD/8 ED) (24 Active Points); OIF (-½), Activation Roll 14- (does not protect Hit Locations 3-5 or 6-7; -½)
- 11 *VIPER BCU (Fire-Retardant):* Armor (6 PD/6 ED) (18 Active Points); OIF (-½), Activation Roll 14- (does not protect Hit Locations 3-5 or 6-7; -½) plus Armor (+4 ED) (6 Active Points); OIF (-½), Only Versus Limited Type Of Attack (fire; -½), Activation Roll 14- (does not protect Hit Locations 3-5 or 6-7; -½)
- 7 *VIPER Armored Clothing:* Armor (4 PD/4 ED) (12 Active Points); IIF (-¼), Activation Roll 14- (does not protect Hit Locations 3-5 or 6-7; -½)



VIPER Force Belt

VIPER HELMET

In addition to the BCU, VIPER provides each agent with a helmet. The standard helmet comes equipped with communications systems that allow the agent to receive and transmit radio signals. The more advanced version, issued to Elite Agents, features more advanced communications gear that lets the agent receive and transmit any type of electronic signal (the helmet's built-in computer creates a heads-up display on the helmet's faceplate for visual data), as well as nightsight gear. If necessary, VIPER technicians can install many other systems in a helmet, such as psionic shielding, a self-contained oxygen supply, vision- and hearing-enhancing equipment, flare protection, and the like.

Cost VIPER Helmet (Basic)

- 2 *Protection:* Armor (2 PD/2 ED) (6 Active Points); OIF (-½), Activation Roll 8- (only protects Hit Locations 3-5; -2)
- 6 *Communications System:* Radio Perception/Transmission (Radio Group) (10 Active Points); OIF (-½), Affected As Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-¼)

Total cost: 8 points.

Cost VIPER Helmet (Elite)

- 3 *Protection:* Armor (4 PD/4 ED) (12 Active Points); OIF (-½), Activation Roll 8- (only protects Hit Locations 3-5; -2)
- 6 *Communications System:* HRRP (Radio Group) (12 Active Points); OIF (-½), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-½)
- 3 *Nightvision System:* Nightvision (5 Active Points); OIF (-½)

Total cost: 12 points.

Cost Additional Helmet Systems (can be installed in any helmet)

- 5 *Acoustic Shielding:* Hearing Group Flash Defense (8 points) (8 Active Points); OIF (-½)
- 5 *Flare Shielding:* Sight Group Flash Defense (8 points) (8 Active Points); OIF (-½)
- 8 *Hearing Enhancers:* +4 versus Range Modifier for Hearing Group (12 Active Points); OIF (-½)
- 7 *Oxygen Supply:* Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing) (10 Active Points); OIF (-½), 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (1 Hour; -0)
- 7 *Psionic Shielding:* Mental Defense (10 points + EGO/5) (10 Active Points); OIF (-½)
- 8 *Telescopic Faceplate:* +4 versus Range Modifier for Sight Group (12 Active Points); OIF (-½)

VFF-1/1A FORCE FIELD BELTS

When the armor offered by the BCU won't suffice to protect an agent from the enemy's attacks, VIPER may issue him one of its force field belts. The basic model, the VFF-1, protects the wearer against typical physical and energy attacks only. The advanced VFF-1A model supplements that protection with defense against various attacks commonly used by superhumans, such as Mental Powers or blinding attacks. Both versions have long-life batteries providing plenty of energy.

Cost Power

- 24 *VFF-1 Force Field Belt:* Force Field (12 PD/12 ED), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (36 Active Points); OIF (-½)
- 54 *VFF-1A Force Field Belt:* Force Field (12 PD/12 ED/10 Mental Defense/10 Sight Group Flash Defense/10 Power Defense), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (81 Active Points); OIF (-½)

VFF-10 FORCE FIELD GENERATOR

VIPER agents use this device on the battlefield to create a large screen of defensive energy which provides them instant cover from attacks. However, if an attack penetrates the screen, the entire force field collapses, forcing the agents to re-initialize the generator.

Force Wall (12 PD/12 ED, 6" long), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (105 Active Points); OAF Bulky (-1½). Total cost: 42 points.

DRAGON SERIES BATTLE ARMORS

Having experienced first-hand the effectiveness of the powered armor suits worn by superheroes, VIPER decided in the early 1980s to develop its own suits of battle armor for its agents. Technological stumbling blocks, cost overruns, internal politics, bureaucratic delays, and other problems kept this program from creating a functional, efficient suit of battle armor until 1995, after the Supreme Serpent eliminated most of the difficulties. Code-named the "Dragon" series of armors, these suits have helped to even the balance of power on many of VIPER's battlefields. Though nowhere near as complex or powerful as the armors worn by some superheroes, the Dragon armors nevertheless provide agents with a major boost in power.

In addition to the systems listed below, VIPER's technicians have, at various times and places, attached grenade launchers, flamethrowers, additional blasters, and many other devices to Dragon armor. Thus, GMs should feel free to customize the suits to fit their PCs and campaigns.

Cost Basic Dragon Battle Armor

- 32 *Armor:* Armor (16 PD/16 ED) (48 Active Points); OIF (-½)
- 50 *Right Gauntlet Blaster:* Energy Blast 10d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (75 Active Points); OIF (-½)
- 5 *Left Gauntlet Blaster:* As Right Gauntlet Blaster

- 52 *Sensory/Communications Suite:* As a VIPER Elite Helmet, including all optional attachments

Total Cost: 139 points

Steel Dragon Battle Armor: As Basic armor, but increase Armor to 22 PD/22 ED, Hardened (+¼) (82 Active Points, 55 Real Points; total cost for armor is 162 points)

Dragonfly Battle Armor: As Basic armor, but add:

- 30 *Jetpack:* Flight 15", Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (45 Active Points); OIF (-½)

Total Cost: 169 points

Movement Devices**VFL-4 JETPACK**

VIPER issues the VFL-4 Jetpack to Air Cavalry agents, and other agents who need to take to the air. Though using it eventually tires an agent out, the mobility and maneuverability it grants makes the fatigue worth it. Using the VFL-4 requires a special 1-point Transport Familiarity.

Flight 20", Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼) (50 Active Points); OIF (-½). Total cost: 33 points.

VJB-2 JUMPBOOTS

When jetpacks aren't available, agents have to make do with the VJB-2 Jumpboots. With these

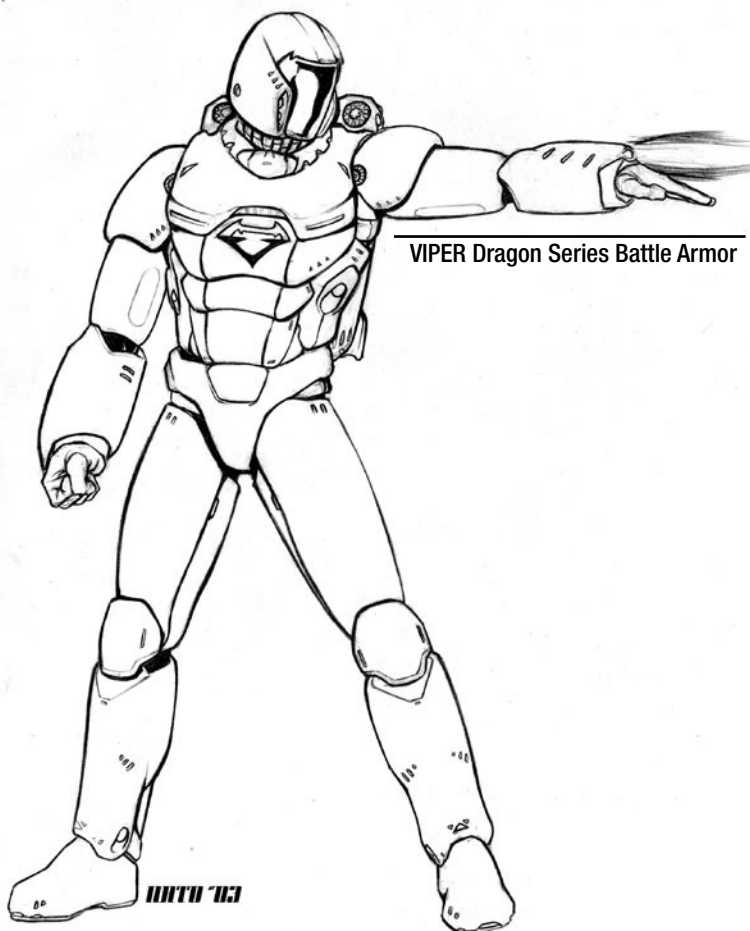
VIPER WRIST COMPUTER

Well-prepared agents wear this device, which combines a chronometer with a compass, simple GPS tracker, calculator, and a digital voice recorder able to store up to 30 minutes of recorded conversation and reminders. The GPS tracker works off of signals transmitted by VIPERSAT-3, thereby preventing the authorities from tracing agents through it.

Cost Power

- 2 Absolute Time Sense; OIF (-½)
- 2 Bump of Direction; OIF (-½)
- 2 Eidetic Memory; OIF (-½), Audio only (-1)
- 2 Lightning Calculator; OIF (-½)

Total cost: 8 points.



VIPER Dragon Series Battle Armor

boots on, your average agent makes an Olympic high jumper look puny.

Leaping +15", Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (22 Active Points); OIF (-½). Total cost: 15 points.

Reconnaissance Devices

POWER BINOCULARS

VIPER agents use these binoculars to view objects a long distance away. A built-in laser range-finder allows them to determine the exact distance to the target if necessary.

+12 versus Range Modifier for Sight Group (18 Active Points); OAF (-1) (total cost: 9 points) plus Absolute Range Sense (3 Active Points); OAF (-1) (total cost: 1 point). Total cost: 10 points.

SCOUTING GLASSES

VIPER agents on undercover missions use these seemingly ordinary eyeglasses to gather information about a target. They include miniaturized telescopic lenses and a micro-camera which records digital images of anything the agent looks at. To activate either feature, the wearer need only touch the glasses in a specific way, as if adjusting them.

Cost Scouting Glasses

- 4 *Telescopic Lenses:* +4 versus Range Modifier for Sight Group (6 Active Points); IAF (-½)
- 2 *Micro-Camera:* Eidetic Memory (5 Active Points); IAF (-½), Visual Images Only (-½)

Total cost: 6 points

Miscellaneous Devices

VIPER BEST (BASIC ESCAPE TOOLKIT)

Most VIPER agents carry this collection of small tools — “your BEST friend,” as their escape and evasion trainers say — to assist them with escaping pursuers and performing other tasks. Typically it comes in a small cartridge belt worn around the upper arm or thigh. It includes minor explosive charges, a basic pick gun, a laser cutting torch, and pepper to foil pursuers who track by scent.

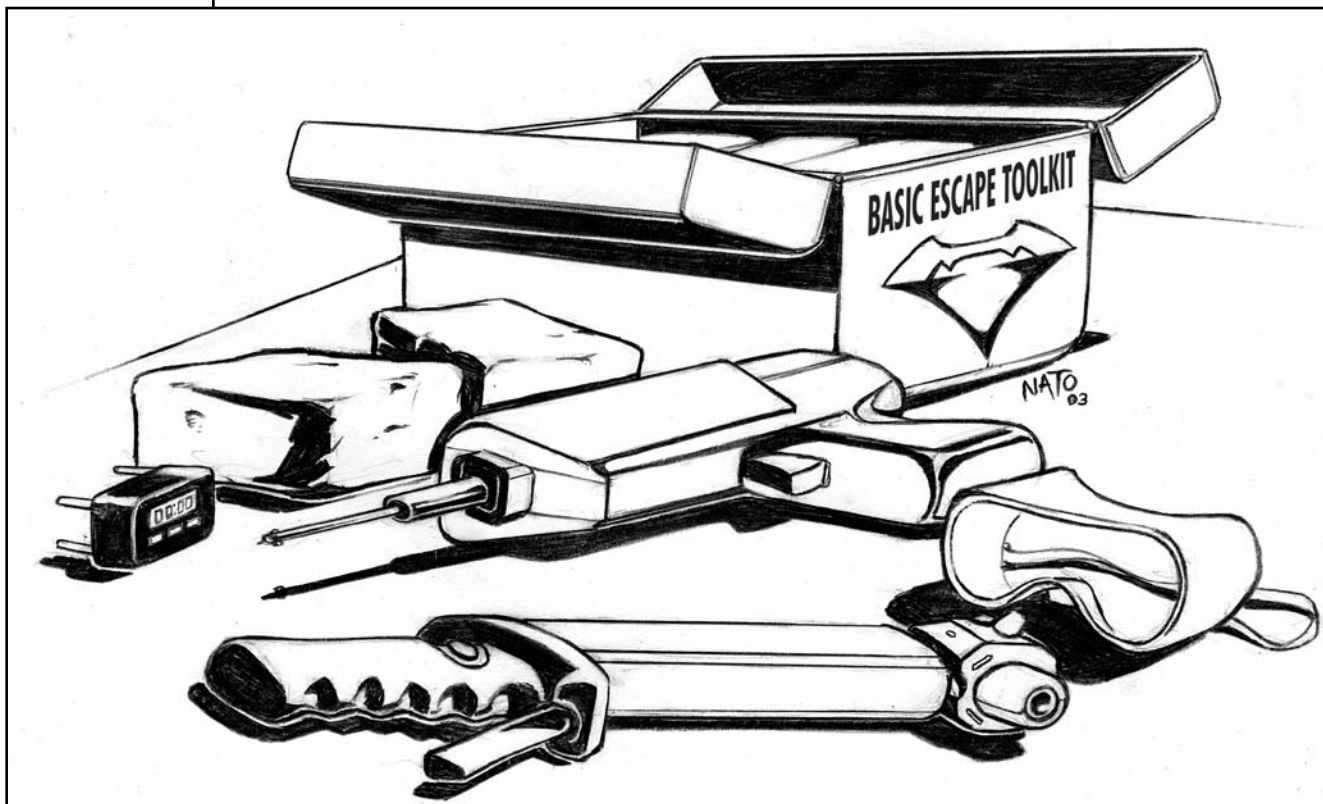
Cost Power

- 8 *VIPER BEST:* Multipower, 12-point reserve; OIF (belt/collection of OAFs; -½)
- 1u 1) *Microexplosives:* RKA ½d6; OAF (-1), 2 Charges (-1½), No Range (-½)
- 1u 2) *Pick Gun:* Lockpicking 11-; OAF (-1)
- 1u 3) *Miniaturized Laser Torch:* RKA 1 point, Penetrating (+½); OAF (-1), 10 Charges (-¼)
- 1u 4) *Pepper Packet:* Images to Smell/Taste Group, 1" radius, Uncontrolled (+½), Usable As Attack (“sticks” to person who breathes it in; +1); OAF (-1), Only Affects Victims Who Inhale It (-¼), 1 Charge lasting 1 Hour (victim can cancel effect by smelling something else equally strong, wind or rain may remove the pepper; -¼)

Total cost: 12 points.

VIPER SKILL KITS

VIPER provides its specialized field personnel — such as Crime Evasion, Medical, and Communications agents — with “kits” of high-tech equipment designed to make the agent’s job easier.



+2 to appropriate Skill Roll (e.g., Paramedics for Medical Specialist) (4 Active Points); OAF (-1). Total cost: 2 points.

STEALTH MATRIX SUIT

One of the most advanced devices created by VIPER, the Stealth Matrix Suit bends light waves around the wearer, effectively rendering him invisible. Observant characters can detect the “fringe” where the light bends, and typically the effect shorts out the suit’s battery before too long; the Technical Division has scientists working to correct these flaws.

Invisibility to Sight Group, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (30 Active Points); IIF (-¼), Activation Roll 14- Burnout (-¼). Total cost: 20 points.

THE SERPENTINE COMPUTER NETWORK

VIPER links its Nests and processes and stores its data with a powerful computer network code-named “Serpentine.” (Technically, the main computer is Serpentine, and the Nest- and vehicle-based units are “Serpentine Nodes,” but most agents just call it the “Serpentine Network.”) One of the most sophisticated computers in the world, with sub-processor units in every Nest and many VIPER vehicles, it has the ability to operate VIPER’s vast communications net (in conjunction with VIPER-SAT-3; see below) and run all the automated systems in each Nest.

VIPER has gone to extreme lengths to ensure that the Serpentine Network remains virus-free and secure from intrusion or tampering by outsiders (primarily superheroes and law enforcement). Serpentine has sophisticated subroutines to detect and counteract attempts to “hack” it. Additionally, in the event the authorities capture or damage one of its units, it can cause that unit to automatically self-destruct. VIPER’s multiple data backup units, scattered throughout the globe, prevent any significant loss of data in the event the main Serpentine servers, located in the world headquarters, must self-destruct.

Serpentine itself is an AI — the only one VIPER possesses. The Nest- and vehicle-based units are highly sophisticated, but not artificially intelligent.

SERPENTINE

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
35	INT	25	16-	PER Roll 16-
20	EGO	20	13-	ECV: 7
20	DEX	30	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
5	SPD	20		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
Total Characteristic Cost: 95				

Cost	Powers	END
17	<i>Communications:</i> HRRP (Radio Group), Discriminatory, Invisible To Tracing (+¼); Affected As Hearing Groups (And Partly As Sight Group) As Well As Radio Group (-¼)	0
40	<i>Serpentine Network Links:</i> Mind Link, any Serpentine Network computer, any 64 minds at once, No LOS Needed; Affected As Radio Group, Not Mental Group (-¼)	0
91	<i>Network Sensor Systems:</i> Multipower, 137-point reserve; all Only Through VIPER Sensor/Communications Systems (-½)	
6u	1) <i>Local Sensors:</i> Clairsentience (Sight and Hearing Groups), Mobile Perception Point (cannot move through solid objects), Multiple Perception Points (up to eight at once), 4x Range (1,500”), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Only Through VIPER Sensor/Communications Systems (-½)	0
9u	2) <i>Worldwide Sensors:</i> Clairsentience (Sight and Hearing Groups), Mobile Perception Point (cannot move through solid objects), Multiple Perception Points (up to eight at once), MegaScale (1” = 1,000 km, can scale down to 1” = 1 km; +1¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Only Through VIPER Sensor/Communications Systems (-½)	0
5	<i>Sensor Systems:</i> Infrared Perception (Sight Group)	0
5	<i>Sensor Systems:</i> Ultraviolet Perception (Sight Group)	0
5	<i>Sensor Systems:</i> Nightvision	0
3	<i>Sensor Systems:</i> Ultrasonic Perception (Hearing Group)	0
20	<i>Sensor Systems:</i> Radar (Radio Group), Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees)	0
25	<i>Shielding:</i> Power Defense (25 points)	0
15	<i>Shielding:</i> Radio Group Flash Defense (15 points)	0
10	<i>Psychic Shielding:</i> Mental Defense (14 points total)	0
16	<i>Self-Destruct System:</i> RKA 8d6; No Range (-½), Self Only (-2), 1 Charge which Never Recovers (-4)	[1nr]

Skills

21	Computer Programming 25-
11	Criminology 20-
31	Cryptography 30-
11	Electronics 20-
17	AK: Earth 30-
3	KS: Archived Recent News 16-
3	KS: Current News 16-
7	KS: Organized Crime 20-
7	KS: Radar Types And Signatures 20-
17	KS: VIPER 30-

7	KS: World Criminals 20-
7	KS: World Law Enforcement 20-
7	KS: World Militaries & Military Equipment 20-
7	KS: World Superhumans 20-
3	<i>Voice Recognition Software</i> : Language: English
11	Mechanics 20-
11	Security Systems 20-
3	SS: Astronomy 16-
3	SS: Biochemistry 16-
3	SS: Biology 16-
3	SS: Chemistry 16-
3	SS: Computer Science 16-
3	SS: Electronic Engineering 16-
3	SS: Force Field Physics 16-
3	SS: Genetics 16-
3	SS: Geology 16-
3	SS: Mathematics 16-
3	SS: Nuclear Physics 16-
3	SS: Pharmacology/Toxicology 16-
3	SS: Physics 16-
3	SS: Robotics 16-
3	Systems Operation 16-
200	More Skills, as appropriate

Talents

3	<i>Chronometer</i> : Absolute Time Sense
5	<i>Memory/Recorders</i> : Eidetic Memory
3	<i>Calculator</i> : Lightning Calculator
8	<i>Scanner</i> : Speed Reading (x1,000)
13	<i>Translator</i> : Universal Translator 16-; Earth languages only (-½)
40	<i>System Taps</i> : 40 points' worth of Computer Links

Programs

1	Diagnose Malfunctions
1	Engage/Operate Computer Security (Including Self-Destruct System)
1	Monitor Base Security Systems, Report Anomalies
1	Operate Base Sensors, Report Anomalies
1	Scan and Enter Data
1	Scramble/Unscramble Transmissions/Receptions
1	Search Reference Material For Information On A Topic
1	Send/Receive Data
10	Ten Other Programs, as Appropriate

Total Abilities Cost: 783**Total Computer Cost: 878****Value Disadvantages**

25	Hunted: UNTIL 14- (As Pow, NCI, Capture)
30	Hunted: US Military And Law Enforcement 11- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
25	Psychological Limitation: Slavishly Loyal To VIPER (Very Common, Total)

Total Disadvantage Points: 80**Total Cost: 798/5 = 160**

Description: The master Serpentine computer, located at the world headquarters in the Mbang Mountains, is an incredibly advanced, sentient computer capable of performing numerous functions at once. In addition to its general computing powers, it can link to any other Serpentine Network

computer, or any other VIPER security, sensor, or communication system, to “see” and “hear” through them or obtain data from them. Unbeknownst to Nest Leaders and superheroes alike, Serpentine often uses VIPER equipment to observe them and then reports back to the Supreme Serpent.

Contrary to VIPER's general fears about AI computers, Serpentine has a programmed-in loyalty to VIPER which it would never violate. However, it's important to remember that its allegiance is to *VIPER*, not to any one person in (or commanding) VIPER. For example, if Serpentine concluded that the Council Of Thirty no longer served VIPER's goals and purposes, it might takes steps to arrange for the Council's removal from the organization.

VIPER'S NEST SERPENTINE NODE

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
23	INT	13	14-	PER Roll 14-
18	DEX	24	13-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
4	SPD	12		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
Total Characteristic Cost: 49				

Cost	Powers	END
12	<i>Communications</i> : HRRP (Radio Group), Invisible To Tracing (+¼); Affected As Hearing Groups (And Partly As Sight Group) As Well As Radio Group (-¼)	0
20	<i>Serpentine Network Links</i> : Mind Link, any Serpentine Network computer, any 2 minds at once, No LOS Needed; Affected As Radio Group, Not Mental Group (-¼)	0
72	<i>Nest Sensors</i> : Clairsentience (Sight and Hearing Groups), Mobile Perception Point (cannot move through solid objects), Multiple Perception Points (up to eight at once), 4x Range (1,500”), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Only Through Nest's Sensor/Communications Systems (-¼)	0
5	<i>Sensor Systems</i> : Infrared Perception (Sight Group)	0
5	<i>Sensor Systems</i> : Ultraviolet Perception (Sight Group)	0
5	<i>Sensor Systems</i> : Nightvision	0
3	<i>Sensor Systems</i> : Ultrasonic Perception (Hearing Group)	0
10	<i>Shielding</i> : Power Defense (10 points)	0
8	<i>Shielding</i> : Radio Group Flash Defense (8 points)	0
16	<i>Self-Destruct System</i> : RKA 8d6; No Range (-½), Self Only (-2), 1 Charge which Never Recovers (-4)	[1nr]

Skills

15	Computer Programming 20-
11	Criminology 18-
23	Cryptography 24-
11	Electronics 18-
9	AK: Local Region 20-
3	KS: Archived Recent News 14-
3	KS: Current News 14-
3	KS: Entertainment Materials 14-
3	KS: Organized Crime 14-
3	KS: Radar Types And Signatures 14-
9	KS: VIPER 20-

- 3 KS: World Criminals 14-
- 3 KS: World Law Enforcement 14-
- 3 KS: World Militaries & Military Equipment 14-
- 5 KS: World Superhumans 16-
- 3 *Voice Recognition Software*: Language: English
- 11 Mechanics 18-
- 11 Security Systems 18-
- 30 Science Skills (GM's choice, based on Nest's needs)
- 3 Systems Operation 14-
- 80 More Skills, as appropriate

Talents

- 3 *Chronometer*: Absolute Time Sense
- 5 *Memory/Recorders*: Eidetic Memory
- 3 *Calculator*: Lightning Calculator
- 4 *Scanner*: Speed Reading (x10)
- 13 *Translator*: Universal Translator 14-; Earth languages only (-½)
- 20 *System Taps*: 20 points' worth of Computer Links

Programs

- 1 Diagnose Malfunctions
- 1 Display Entertainment Materials
- 1 Engage/Operate Computer Security (Including Self-Destruct System)
- 1 Monitor Base Security Systems, Report Anomalies
- 1 Operate Base Sensors, Report Anomalies
- 1 Scan and Enter Data
- 1 Scramble/Unscramble Transmissions/Receptions
- 1 Search Reference Material For Information On A Topic
- 1 Send/Receive Data
- 8 Eight Other Programs, as Appropriate

Total Abilities Cost: 466**Total Computer Cost: 515****Value Disadvantages**

- 25 Hunted: UNTIL 14- (As Pow, NCI, Capture)

Total Disadvantage Points: 25**Total Cost: 490/5 = 98**

Description: This writeup represents a typical Serpentine Node for a VIPER Nest. A larger, more important Nest would have a better Node; some lesser Nests might have worse ones. The GM should customize the computer to suit the needs and location of the Nest, the personality and whims of the Nest Leader, and so forth.

VIPER VEHICLE SERPENTINE NODE

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll 13-
18	DEX	24	13-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
4	SPD	12		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
Total Characteristic Cost: 44				
Cost	Powers			END
12	Communications: HRRP (Radio Group), Invisible To Tracing (+¼); Affected As Hearing Groups (And Partly As Sight Group) As Well As Radio Group (-¼)			0
16	Serpentine Network Links: Mind Link, any Serpentine Network computer, any 1 mind at once, No LOS Needed; Affected As Radio Group, Not Mental Group (-¼)			0
5	Sensor Systems: Infrared Perception (Sight Group)			0
5	Sensor Systems: Ultraviolet Perception (Sight Group)			0
5	Sensor Systems: Nightvision			0
3	Sensor Systems: Ultrasonic Perception (Hearing Group)			0
20	Sensor Systems: Radar (Radio Group), Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees)			0
10	Shielding: Power Defense (10 points)			0
8	Shielding: Radio Group Flash Defense (8 points)			0
16	Self-Destruct System: RKA 8d6; No Range (-½), Self Only (-2), 1 Charge which Never Recovers (-4)			[1nr]
Skills				
3	Combat Driving 13-			
3	Combat Piloting 13-			
9	Computer Programming 16-			
17	Cryptography 20-			
10	AK: Local Region 20-			
3	KS: Archived Recent News 13-			
3	KS: Current News 13-			
3	KS: Organized Crime 13-			
3	KS: Radar Types And Signatures 13-			
5	KS: VIPER 15-			
3	KS: World Criminals 13-			
3	KS: World Law Enforcement 13-			
3	KS: World Militaries & Military Equipment 13-			
3	KS: World Superhumans 13-			
3	Voice Recognition Software: Language: English			
20	Science Skills (GM's choice, based on Nest's needs)			
3	Systems Operation 13-			
10	TFs (as appropriate for type of vehicle)			
10	WFs (as appropriate for vehicle)			
10	More Skills, as appropriate			
Talents				
3	Chronometer: Absolute Time Sense			
5	Memory/Recorders: Eidetic Memory			
3	Calculator: Lightning Calculator			
Programs				
1	Diagnose Malfunctions			
1	Engage/Operate Computer Security (Including Self-Destruct System)			
1	Monitor Radar System, Report Lock-Ons			
1	Operate Vehicle Sensors, Report Anomalies			

- 1 Pilot Vehicle From Point A To Point B
- 1 Plot Distance, Travel Times Between Specified Locations
- 1 Scan and Enter Data
- 1 Scramble/Unscramble Transmissions/Receptions
- 1 Search Reference Material For Information On A Topic
- 1 Send/Receive Data
- 3 Three Other Programs, as Appropriate

Total Abilities Cost: 251
Total Computer Cost: 295

Value Disadvantages
25 Hunted: UNTIL 14- (As Pow, NCI, Capture)

Total Disadvantage Points: 25
Total Cost: 270/5 = 54

Description: This writeup represents a typical Serpentine Node for a VIPER vehicle, such as the Phalanx Armored Van or the Dragon Jet. Not only does it function as a sophisticated autopilot (using its Combat Driving/Piloting abilities), but it provides information to the vehicle's occupants and can even operate the vehicle's weaponry if necessary. It also comes with a full communications suite and a link to the overall Serpentine Network.

Not all VIPER vehicles have a Serpentine Node; typically VIPER's technicians only install them aboard the larger, more important vehicles. A vehicle with a Node usually has its standard communications system removed in favor of the better one in the Node, but sometimes retains the standard system as a backup.



Like any other large organization, VIPER often needs ways to transport its personnel from one point to another — for example, from a Nest to the scene of a robbery and back again. For this it relies on its enormous and varied fleet of vehicles. Ranging from more or less normal street vehicles with a little armor plating to experimental spaceplanes, VIPER's vehicles provide it with mobility and increased firepower for its many missions.

For further information about designing Vehicles in the *HERO System*, please refer to *The Ultimate Vehicle*.

GROUND VEHICLES

GECKO SPORTSCAR

Val	Char	Cost	Notes
3	Size	15	2" x 1"; -3 KB; -2 DCV
25	STR	0	Lift 800 kg; 5d6 HTH [0]
22	DEX	36	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
13	BODY	0	
7	DEF	15	
4	SPD	8	Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
Total Characteristic Cost: 74			
Movement: Ground: 32"/128"			
Swimming: 0"/0"			

Abilities & Equipment		END
Cost	Power	
21	<i>Motorized Wheeled Vehicle:</i> Ground Movement +26" (32" total), x4 Noncombat; OAF Bulky (standard tires; -1½), Only On Appropriate Terrain (-¼), 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (easily-obtained fuel; 6 Hours; -0)	[1cc]
-2	<i>Ground Vehicle:</i> Swimming -2" (0" total)	
27	<i>Concealed Laser Headlights:</i> RKA 3d6, Armor Piercing (+½); IIF Bulky (-¾), Limited Arc Of Fire (60 degrees, same level; -¾), 16 Charges (-0)	[16]
12	<i>Concealed Caltrop Dropper:</i> RKA 1d6, Area Of Effect (10" Cone; +1), Armor Piercing (+½), Continuous (+1), Uncontrolled (removable by spending a Full Phase to sweep them aside; +½); IIF Bulky (-¾), Activation Roll 14- (-½), No Range (-½), Limited Arc Of Fire (60 Degrees behind vehicle, only on same horizontal level; -¾), Only Affects Characters Moving On The Ground (-¼), Combat Driving Roll Cancels Effect (-¼), Automatically Targets Hit Location (tires; -0), 4 Charges (-1)	[4]
5	<i>Communications System:</i> HRRP; OIF Bulky (-1), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-½)	0
Skills		
6	<i>Superb Handling:</i> +3 with Ground Movement	

Total Abilities & Equipment Cost: 69
Total Vehicle Cost: 143

Value Disadvantages

- 10 Distinctive Features: Sportscar (Concealable With Difficulty; Noticed And Recognizable)

Total Disadvantage Points: 10

Total Cost: 133/5 = 27

Additional Equipment

- 54 Serpentine Node

Description: Looking like a sleek, sexy, but otherwise completely ordinary sportscar, the VIPER Gecko serves the needs of undercover agents and Nest Leaders who have to move around in normal society without revealing their criminal ties — but who may need extra speed and firepower on occasion. It can reach speeds of almost 200 miles per hour.

Options:

- 1) *Aqua-Gecko:* This version of the Gecko can also function as a small submersible craft. Change Swimming -2" to Swimming 4". Total vehicle cost 147 points; total cost 27 points.
- 2) *Rocket Gecko:* This form of the Gecko has a rack of six rockets concealed beneath its roof; with the press of a button the driver can raise the rack and fire a missile at his foes. Add RKA 2d6, Armor Piercing (+½), Explosion (+½), No Range Modifier (+½) (75 Active Points); IIF Bulky (-¾), Limited Arc Of Fire (180 Degrees forward, only on same horizontal level; -½), Extra Time (travels at the rate of 120" per Segment, taking a minimum of one Extra Segment to reach its target; -½), 6 Charges (-¾) (total cost: 21 points). Total vehicle cost 164 points; total cost 31 points.

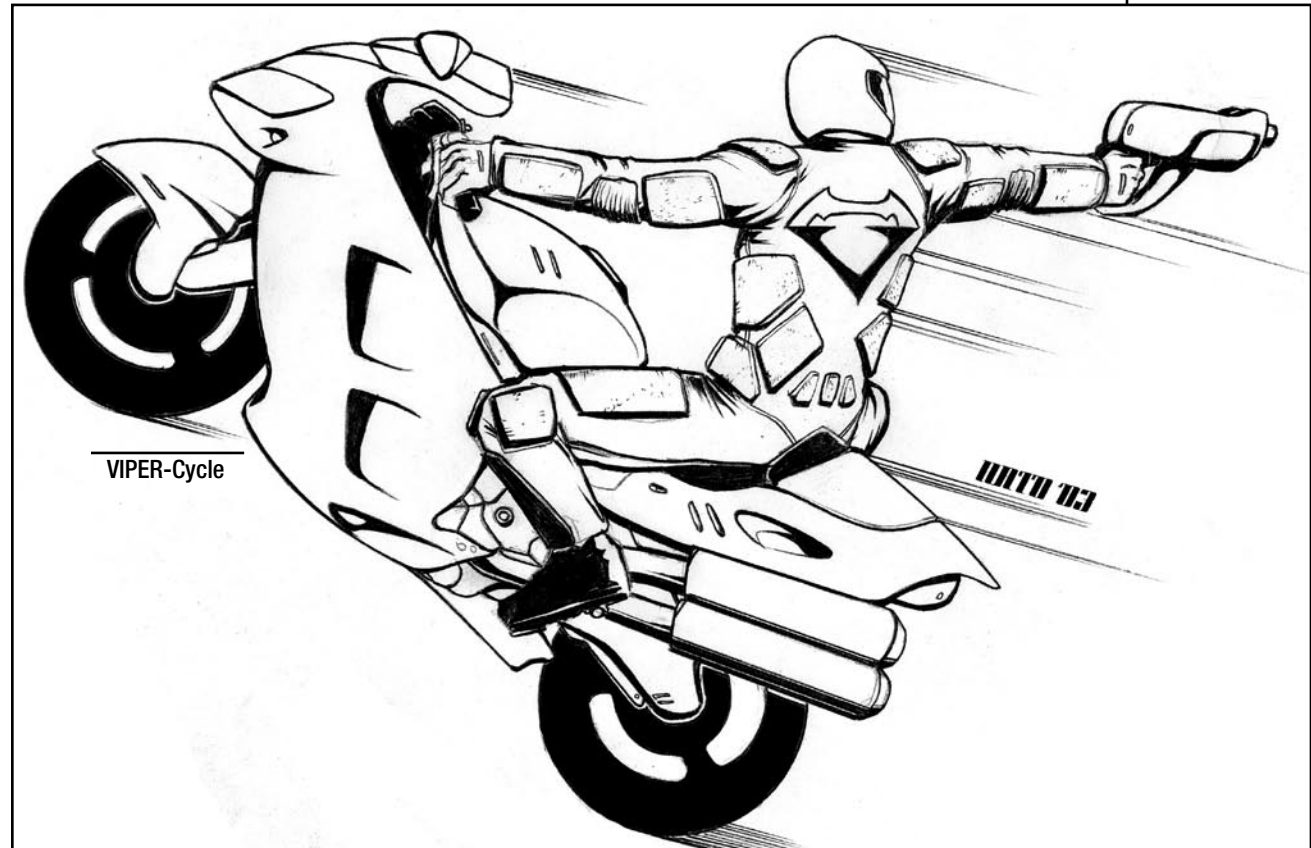
VIPER-CYCLE

Val	Char	Cost	Notes
1	Size	5	1.25" x .64"; -1 KB; -0 DCV
25	STR	10	Lift 800 kg; 5d6 HTH [0]
18	DEX	24	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
11	BODY	0	
4	DEF	4	Does Not Protect Occupant (-½)
4	SPD	12	Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
			Total Characteristic Cost: 55

Movement: Ground: 28"/112"
Swimming: 0"/0"

Abilities & Equipment

Cost	Power	END
18	<i>Motorized Two-Wheeled Vehicle:</i> Ground Movement +22" (28" total), x4 Noncombat; OAF Bulky (standard tires; -1½), Only On Appropriate Terrain (-¼), 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (easily-obtained fuel; 6 Hours; -0) [1cc]	
6	<i>Solid Tires:</i> (6 DEF, 6 BODY)	0
-2	<i>Ground Vehicle:</i> Swimming -2" (0" total)	
18	<i>Forward Blaster:</i> RKA 2d6, Autofire (3 shots; +¼), 30 Charges (+¼); OIF Bulky (-1), Limited Arc Of Fire (60 Degrees forward; -½) [30]	
5	<i>Communications System:</i> HRRP; OIF Bulky (-1), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-½)	0
Skills		
4	<i>Superb Handling:</i> +2 with Ground Movement	
Total Abilities & Equipment Cost: 49		
Total Vehicle Cost: 104		



Value Disadvantages

5 Physical Limitation: Two-Wheeled (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)

Total Disadvantage Points: 5
Total Cost: 99/5 = 20

Description: Many VIPER Nests rely on this motorcycle — small, maneuverable, and easily taught to new agents — as a mainstay of their fleet of ground vehicles. Using VIPER's advanced internal combustion engine technology to achieve speeds higher than those of many conventional motorcycles, and armed with a small forward blaster, it allows agents to employ wolfpacking tactics to destroy larger vehicles (or superhumans).

Options:

- 1) *Jump-Jets:* Some VIPER-Cycles come equipped with special rear-mounted jets so they can jump farther than normal. Add Leaping +5" (5 Active Points); Only Adds To Jumping (-1) (total cost: 2 points). Total vehicle cost 106 points; total cost 20 points.
- 2) *Missile Cycle:* Like the Rocket Gecko, this variant has concealed rockets it can fire, but only two. Add RKA 2d6, Armor Piercing (+½), Explosion (+½), No Range Modifier (+½) (75 Active Points); IIF Bulky (-¾), Limited Arc Of Fire (180 Degrees forward, only on same horizontal level; -½), Extra Time (travels at the rate of 120" per Segment, taking a minimum of one Extra Segment to reach its target; -½), 2 Charges (-1¼) (total cost: 19 points). Total vehicle cost 123 points; total cost 24 points.

PHALANX ARMORED VAN

Val	Char	Cost	Notes
4	Size	20	2.5" x 1.25"; -4 KB; -2 DCV
30	STR	0	Lift 1,600 kg; 6d6 HTH [0]
12	DEX	6	OCV: 4/DCV: 4
14	BODY	0	
8	DEF	18	
3	SPD	8	Phases: 4, 8, 12
Total Characteristic Cost: 52			

Movement: Ground: 25"/100"

Abilities & Equipment

Cost	Power	END
16	<i>Motorized Two-Wheeled Vehicle:</i> Ground Movement +19" (25" total), x4 Noncombat; OAF Bulky (standard tires; -1½), Only On Appropriate Terrain (-¼), 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (easily-obtained fuel; 6 Hours; -0) [1cc]	
6	<i>Solid Tires:</i> (6 DEF, 6 BODY)	0
-2	<i>Ground Vehicle:</i> Swimming -2" (0" total)	
27	<i>Concealed Forward Blaster:</i> RKA 2d6, Auto-fire (5 shots; +½), 64 Charges (+½); IIF Bulky (-¾), Limited Arc Of Fire (60 Degrees forward; -½) [64]	
10	<i>Concealed Rear, Port, and Starboard Blasters:</i> As Concealed Forward Blaster, but with different angles of fire [64]	
5	<i>Communications System:</i> HRRP; OIF Bulky (-1), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-½)	0

Total Abilities & Equipment Cost: 62
Total Vehicle Cost: 114

Value Disadvantages

None

Total Disadvantage Points: 0
Total Cost: 114/5 = 23

Additional Equipment

54 Serpentine Node

Description: As far as the average guy on the street can tell, this vehicle is just an ordinary van — maybe it belongs to a family, or some company uses it to make deliveries. But it's actually a cleverly disguised VIPER vehicle. Built so that a casual glance cannot detect even its armor and solid tires, the VIPER Van provides the perfect means to get a squadron of agents (up to eight of whom can ride in the back, with one driver and one more agent up front) to a mission site undetected.

Options:

- 1) *Heavy Phalanx:* This form of the Phalanx comes with extra armor. Increase to DEF 10. Total vehicle cost 120 points; total cost 24 points.
- 2) *Spiked Phalanx:* Some Phalanxes have a caltrop dropper installed. Add RKA 1d6, Area Of Effect (10" Cone; +1), Armor Piercing (+½), Continuous (+1), Uncontrolled (removable by spending a Full Phase to sweep them aside; +½); IIF Bulky (-¾), Activation Roll 14- (-½), No Range (-½), Limited Arc Of Fire (60 Degrees behind vehicle, only on

same horizontal level; $-\frac{3}{4}$), Only Affects Characters Moving On The Ground ($-\frac{1}{4}$), Combat Driving Roll Cancels Effect ($-\frac{1}{4}$), Automatically Targets Hit Location (tires; -0), 4 Charges (-1) (total cost: 12 points). Total vehicle cost 126 points; total cost 25 points.

3) *Phalanx-XP*: Nests that frequently get involved in vehicular combat often install more powerful weapons on their Phalanxes. Increase Concealed Blasters to RKA 3d6. Total vehicle cost 127 points; total cost 25 points.

ANACONDA-CLASS LIGHT TANK

Val	Char	Cost	Notes
5	Size	25	3.2" x 1.6" -5 KB; -3 DCV
35	STR	0	Lift 3,200 kg; 7d6 HTH [0]
15	DEX	15	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
15	BODY	0	
12	DEF	30	
4	SPD	15	Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
Total Characteristic Cost: 85			

Movement: Flight: 24"/96"
Ground: 0"/0"

Abilities & Equipment

Cost	Power	END
53	<i>Hover Generator</i> : Flight 24", x4 Noncombat, Sideways Maneuverability ($+\frac{1}{2}$); Must Remain Within 4" Of A Surface ($-\frac{1}{2}$)	0
-12	<i>Hover Only</i> : Ground Movement -6" (0" total)	

-2	<i>Hover Only</i> : Swimming -2" (0" total)	
36	<i>Forward Blaster</i> : RKA 4d6, 60 Charges ($+\frac{1}{2}$); OIF Bulky (-1), Limited Arc Of Fire (60 Degrees forward; $-\frac{1}{2}$)	[60]
18	<i>Rear Blaster</i> : RKA 2d6, Armor Piercing ($+\frac{1}{2}$); OIF Bulky (-1), Limited Arc Of Fire (60 Degrees rearward; $-\frac{1}{2}$), 15 Charges (-0)	[15]
10	<i>Port, Starboard, And Second Rear Blasters</i> : As Rear Blaster, with different arcs of fire	[15]
5	<i>Communications System</i> : HRRP; OIF Bulky (-1), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group ($-\frac{1}{2}$)	0

Total Abilities & Equipment Cost: 108

Total Vehicle Cost: 193

Value Disadvantages

25	<i>Distinctive Features</i> : VIPER combat vehicle (Not Concealable; Causes Extreme Reaction [fear])
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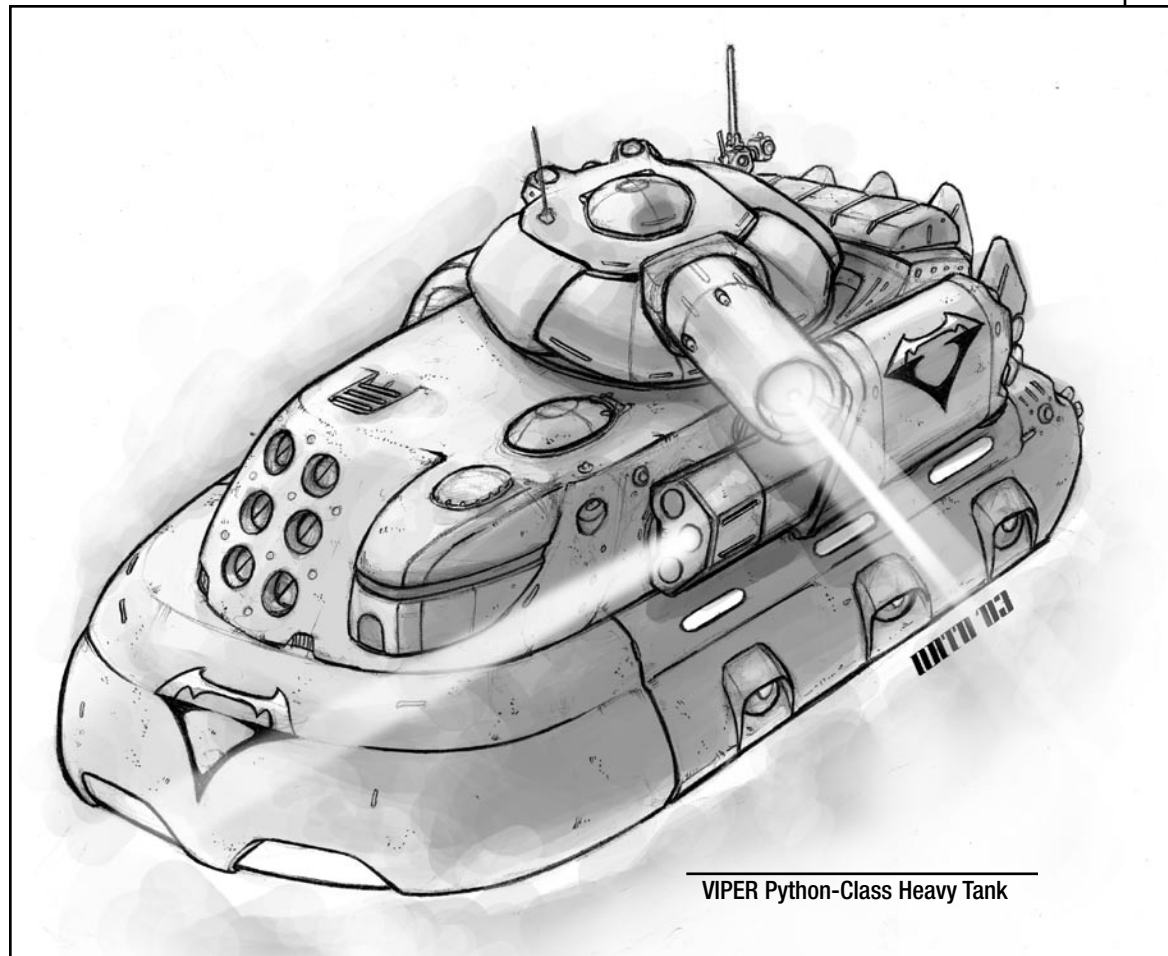
Total Disadvantage Points: 25

Total Cost: 168/5 = 34

Additional Equipment

54	<i>Serpentine Node</i>
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Description: A mainstay of many Nests' arsenals, the *Anaconda*-class Light Tank (or "LT" to many agents) features strong weapons and reasonably sturdy armor. Though not nearly as powerful or durable as the infamous *Python*-class Heavy Tank



VIPER Python-Class Heavy Tank

(see below), the *Anaconda* has more speed and greater concealability, both of which count for a lot in the urban environments where VIPER usually operates. For example, when VIPER needs to approach a target stealthily, it often loads several *Anacondas* into a tractor-trailer truck, unleashing them only when the truck nears the combat zone — a tactic VIPER can't use with the larger, much heavier *Python*.

The *Anaconda* uses a crew of two, and can carry up to four additional agents if necessary. Like the *Python*, it uses hover technology, rather than tracks or wheels, to move.

Options:

1) *Smoke Generator*: Some *Anacondas* come equipped with smoke generators so they can provide themselves with cover when necessary. Add Darkness to Sight Group 5" radius; OIF Bulky (-1), 4 Charges lasting 1 Turn each (-½), No Range (-½). Total vehicle cost 210 points; total cost 37 points.

2) *Airacobra-class Variant*: This variant type of *Anaconda* uses an enhanced hover generator to attain even higher speeds. Increase to Flight 28". Total vehicle cost 201 points; total cost 35 points.

PYTHON-CLASS HEAVY TANK

Val	Char	Cost	Notes
9	Size	45	8" x 4"; -9 KB; -6 DCV
55	STR	0	Lift 50 tons; 11d6 HTH [0]
12	DEX	6	OCV: 4/DCV: 4
19	BODY	0	
16	DEF	54	Hardened (+¼)
3	SPD	8	Phases: 4, 8, 12
Total Characteristic Cost: 113			

Movement:	Flight:	20"/80"
	Ground:	0"/0"
	Swimming:	20"/80"

Abilities & Equipment

Cost	Power	END
45	<i>Hover Generator</i> : Flight 20", x4 Noncombat, Sideways Maneuverability (+½); Must Remain Within 4" Of A Surface (-½)	0
34	<i>Underwater Hover Mode</i> : Swimming +18" (20" total), x4 Noncombat, Sideways Maneuverability (+½)	0
-12	<i>Hover Only</i> : Ground Movement -6" (0" total)	
75	<i>Turreted Blaster</i> : RKA 5d6, Armor Piercing (+½), 60 Charges (+½); OIF Bulky (-1)	[60]
36	<i>Forward Secondary Blaster</i> : RKA 3d6, Auto-fire (5 shots; +½), 60 Charges (+½); OIF Bulky (-1), Limited Arc Of Fire (60 Degrees in one direction; -½)	[60]
10	<i>Port, Starboard, Rear Secondary Blasters</i> : As Forward Secondary Blasters, but with different angles of fire	[60]
45	<i>Turreted Grenade Launcher</i> : RKA 3d6, Explosion (-1 DC/2"; +¾), 30 Charges (+¼); OIF Bulky (-1)	[30]
10	<i>Oxygen Supply</i> : Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing)	0
5	<i>Communications System</i> : HRRP (Radio	

Group); OIF Bulky (-1), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-½)

10 *Radar Array*: Radar (Radio Group), Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees); OIF Bulky (-1)

Skills

20 *Targeting Systems*: +4 with Ranged Combat

Total Abilities & Equipment Cost: 278

Total Vehicle Cost: 391

Value Disadvantages

25 *Distinctive Features*: VIPER combat vehicle (Not Concealable; Causes Extreme Reaction [fear])

Total Disadvantage Points: 25

Total Cost: 366/5 = 73

Additional Equipment

54 *Serpentine Node*

Description: The heaviest of VIPER's ground vehicles, this awesome machine uses hover technology to propel itself at speeds approaching 80 miles an hour over the ground and through the water (it's fully submersible). Heavily armored, it features more weapons than the *Anaconda* Light Tank or other VIPER ground vehicles, including its powerful turreted blaster cannon. When initially deployed on 12 test tanks, the blaster cannon was still in the experimental stages, not always reliable, and required a twelve-second recharge period between shots. Further work ironed out these difficulties, and when the Supreme Serpent deemed the cannon ready for full distribution, technicians installed it on all *Pythons*. It significantly boosts the craft's fire-power and has been responsible for the deaths of three superheroes in the past five years. As of 2003, VIPER has 67 *Pythons* in its fleet.

The *Python* requires a crew of three specially-trained agents and can carry three more as passengers (with full equipment storage for all six persons). However, it lacks long-term living quarters or other such amenities; it's a work vehicle, not a pleasure craft.

Options:

1) *Smoke Generator*: Some *Pythons* come equipped with smoke generators so they can provide themselves with cover when necessary. Add Darkness to Sight Group 10" radius; OIF Bulky (-1), 4 Charges lasting 1 Turn each (-½), No Range (-½). Total vehicle cost 424 points; total cost 80 points.

2) *Force Field Generator*: Some *Pythons* come equipped with a short-term force field generator to provide extra defense when they face superheroes. Add +10 DEF; OIF Bulky (-1), 8 Charges lasting 1 Turn each (-0). Total vehicle cost 406 points; total cost 76 points.

3) *Ringhal-class Flying Tank*: This VIPER tank has full aerial capabilities. Remove the Limitation *Must Remain Within 4" Of A Surface* (-½) from Flight. Total vehicle cost 413 points; total cost 78 points.

AIR VEHICLES

VIPER AIR-CYCLE

Val	Char	Cost	Notes
1	Size	5	1.25" x .64"; -1 KB; -0 DCV
20	STR	5	Lift 400 kg; 4d6 HTH [0]
20	DEX	30	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
14	BODY	3	
5	DEF	6	Does Not Protect Occupant (-½)
4	SPD	10	Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12

Total Characteristic Cost: 59

Movement: Ground: 0"/0"
Flight: 35"/140"

Abilities & Equipment

Cost	Power	END
112	<i>Hover Generator:</i> Flight 35", x4 Noncombat Multiple, Sideways Maneuverability (+½)	0
-12	<i>Flight Only:</i> Ground Movement -6" (0" total)	
-2	<i>Flight Only:</i> Swimming -2" (0" total)	
33	<i>Forward Blaster:</i> RKA 2d6, Armor Piercing (+½), Autofire (5 shots; +½), 50 Charges (+½); OIF Bulky (-1), Limited Arc Of Fire (180 Degrees; -¼)	[50]
5	<i>Rear Blaster:</i> As Forward Blaster	[50]
5	<i>Communications System:</i> HRRP (Radio Group); OIF Bulky (-1), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-½)	0
10	<i>Radar Array:</i> Radar (Radio Group),	

Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees);
OIF Bulky (-1) 0

Skills

8 *Maneuverable:* +4 with Flight

Total Abilities & Equipment Cost: 159

Total Vehicle Cost: 218

Value Disadvantages

25 *Distinctive Features:* VIPER combat vehicle (Not Concealable; Causes Extreme Reaction [fear])

Total Disadvantage Points: 25

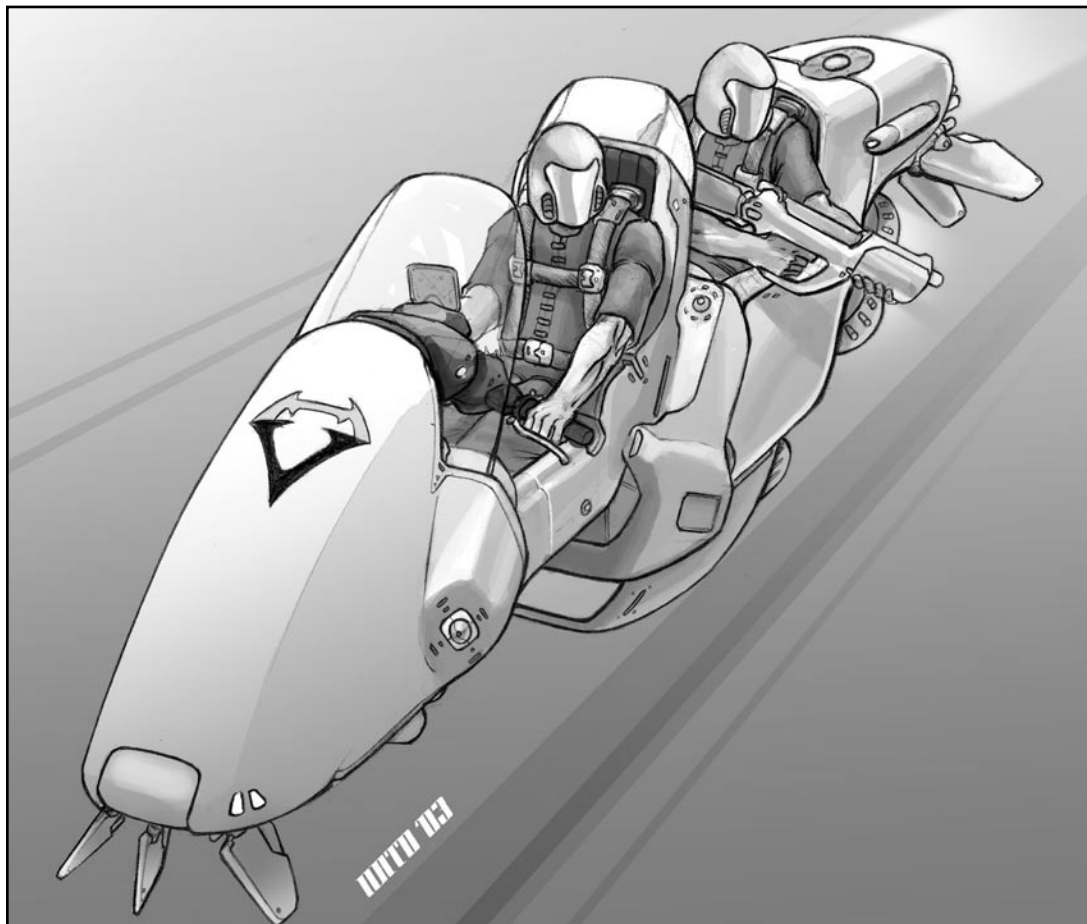
Total Cost: 193/5 = 39

Description: When VIPER needs agents in the air, but doesn't have enough Air Cavalry personnel to do the job, it breaks out the Air-Cycle, a small one- or two-man aircraft. Able to attain speeds in excess of 200 miles an hour, extremely maneuverable, and reasonably well-armed for a vehicle of its size, it allows groups of agents to swarm into a landing zone quickly, or provide extensive air cover for squadrons on the ground.

Options:

1) *Enhanced Firepower:* This form of the Air-Cycle has heavier weaponry. Increase the Forward Blaster to RKA 3d6. Total vehicle cost 235 points; total cost 42 points.

2) *High-Speed Air-Cycle:* Increase to x8 Non-combat. Total vehicle cost 226 points; total cost 40 points.



3) *Stealth-Cycle*: This form of the Air-Cycle uses special baffles to dampen the noise from its hover generator and rockets. Add Invisible To Hearing Group (+¼) for Flight. Total vehicle cost 237 points; total vehicle cost 42 points.

FALCON HOVER-VAN

Val	Char	Cost	Notes
4	Size	20	2.5" x 1.25"; -4 KB; -2 DCV
35	STR	5	Lift 3,200 kg; 7d6 HTH [0]
12	DEX	6	OCV: 4/DCV: 4
19	BODY	5	
6	DEF	12	
4	SPD	18	Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
Total Characteristic Cost: 66			

Movement: Flight: 26"/104"
Ground: 0"/0"

Abilities & Equipment

Cost	Power	END
85	<i>Hover Generator</i> : Flight 26", x4 Noncombat Multiple, Sideways Maneuverability (+½)	0
-12	<i>Flight Only</i> : Ground Movement -6" (0" total)	
-2	<i>Flight Only</i> : Swimming -2" (0" total)	
45	<i>Forward Blaster</i> : RKA 3d6, Armor Piercing (+½), Autofire (5 shots; +½), 60 Charges (+½); OIF Bulky (-1), Limited Arc Of Fire (60 Degrees forward; -½)	[60]
10	<i>Rear, Port, And Starboard Blasters</i> : Three more Forward Blasters, but with different angles of fire	[60]
5	<i>Communications System</i> : HRRP; OIF Bulky (-1), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-½)	0
10	<i>Radar Array</i> : Radar (Radio Group), Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees); OIF Bulky (-1)	0

Skills

4 *Maneuverable*: +2 with Flight

Total Abilities & Equipment Cost: 145

Total Vehicle Cost: 211

Value Disadvantages

25 *Distinctive Features*: VIPER combat vehicle (Not Concealable; Causes Extreme Reaction [fear])

Total Disadvantage Points: 25

Total Cost: 186/5 = 37

Additional Equipment

54 *Serpentine Node*

Description: VIPER's primary vehicle for transporting agents to and from missions is the Falcon Hover-Van, which uses the organization's standard hover technology. Built for speed and maneuverability, in properly-trained hands the Hover-Van can reach a velocity of approximately 155 miles per hour, maneuver adroitly and even "slide" straight sideways. It packs enough firepower to demolish police cars and other such targets easily. It has a crew of two specially trained pilots, and can carry an additional 17 agents and their equipment.

Options:

1) *Falcon-XP Hover-Van*: This version of the *Falcon* has even greater firepower. Increase Forward Blaster to RKA 4d6. Total vehicle cost 226 points; total cost 40 points.

2) *Stealth-Falcon*: This form of the *Falcon* uses special baffles to dampen the noise from its hover generator and rockets. Add Invisible To Hearing Group (+¼) for Flight. Total vehicle cost 226 points; total vehicle cost 40 points.

QUETZALCOATL AERIAL GUNSHIP

Val	Char	Cost	Notes
9	Size	45	8" x 4"; -9 KB; -6 DCV
60	STR	5	Lift 100 tons; 12d6 HTH [0]
18	DEX	24	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
20	BODY	1	
10	DEF	24	
4	SPD	12	Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
Total Characteristic Cost: 111			

Movement: Ground: 0"/0"
Flight: 25"/200"

Abilities & Equipment

Cost	Power	END
90	<i>Hover Generator</i> : Flight 25", x8 Noncombat Multiple, Sideways Maneuverability (+½)	0
-12	<i>Flight Only</i> : Ground Movement -6" (0" total)	
-2	<i>Flight Only</i> : Swimming -2" (0" total)	
45	<i>Forward Blaster (Starboard)</i> : RKA 3d6, Armor Piercing (+½), Autofire (5 shots; +½), 60 Charges (+½); OIF Bulky (-1), Limited Arc Of Fire (60 Degrees forward; -½)	[60]
10	<i>Port, Starboard, And Rear Blasters</i> : As Forward Blaster, but with different angles of fire	[60]
62	<i>Forward Missile Launcher</i> : RKA 5d6, Explosion (-1 DC/2"; +¾), Increased Maximum Range (4,225"; +¼), No Range Modifier (+½); OIF Bulky (-1), 4 Charges (-1)	[4]
5	<i>Rear Missile Launcher</i> : As Forward Missile Launcher	[4]
10	<i>Oxygen Supply</i> : Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing)	0
10	<i>Radar Array</i> : Radar (Radio Group), Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees); OIF Bulky (-1)	0

Skills

4 *Maneuverable*: +2 with Flight

Total Abilities & Equipment Cost: 222

Total Vehicle Cost: 333

Value Disadvantages

25 *Distinctive Features*: VIPER combat vehicle (Not Concealable; Causes Extreme Reaction [fear])

Total Disadvantage Points: 25

Total Cost: 308/5 = 62

Additional Equipment

54 Serpentine Node

Description: The *Quetzalcoatl* (named for the feathered serpent god of Aztec myth) is VIPER's most common air combat vehicle and the means by which squadrons attempt to obtain air superiority during major battles. With its cruising speed of about 300 miles per hour, and its powerful blasters and two batteries of missiles, it's one of the most advanced aircraft in the world today. The *Quetzalcoatl* has a crew of two specially trained pilots, who live in quarters on the craft.

But the *Quetzalcoatl* does more for VIPER than fight. Large enough to carry 10 agents with all of their equipment, and possessing a full communications and sensor array, including a Serpentine Node, the *Quetzalcoatl* can also act as a troop transport or mobile command center.

As of 2003, VIPER has 61 *Quetzalcoatl*s in its fleet.

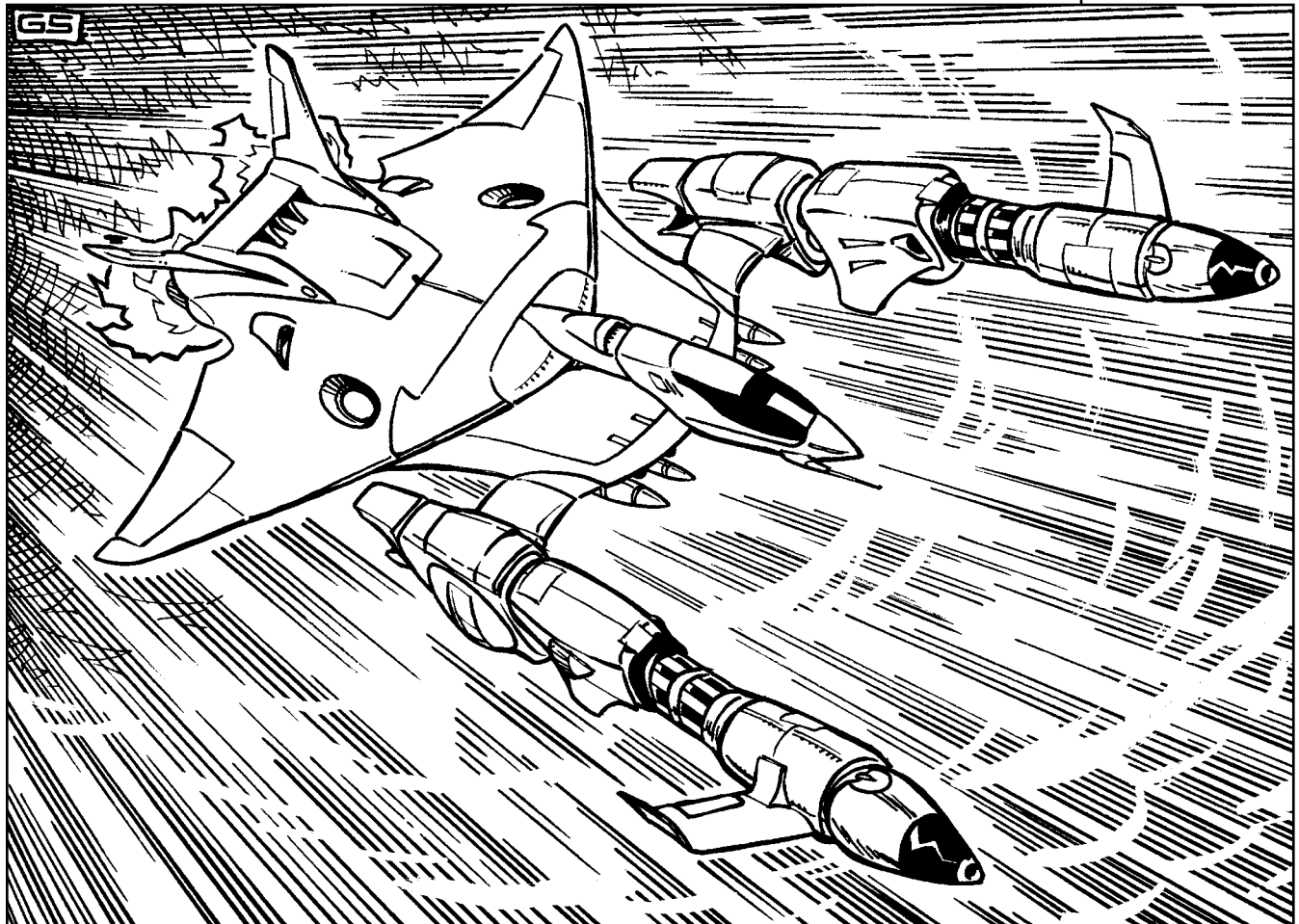
DRAGON JET

Val	Char	Cost	Notes
11	Size	55	12.5" x 6.4"; -11 KB; -7 DCV
65	STR	0	Lift 200 tons; 13d6 HTH [0]
24	DEX	42	OCV: 8/DCV: 8
21	BODY	0	
8	DEF	18	
5	SPD	16	Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
Total Characteristic Cost: 131			

Movement: Ground: 0"/0"
Flight: 60"/960"

Abilities & Equipment

Cost	Power	END
202	<i>Hover Generator:</i> Flight 60", x16 Noncombat Multiple, Sideways Maneuverability (+½)	0
-12	<i>Flight Only:</i> Ground Movement -6" (0" total)	
-2	<i>Flight Only:</i> Swimming -2" (0" total)	
90	<i>Dorsal Turreted Blaster:</i> RKA 6d6, Armor Piercing (+½), Autofire (5 shots; +½), 60 Charges (+½); OIF Bulky (-1), Limited Arc Of Fire (60 Degrees; -½)	[60]
5	<i>Ventral Turreted Blaster:</i> As Dorsal Turreted Blaster	[60]
75	<i>Starboard Wing Missile Array:</i> RKA 6d6, Explosion (-1 DC/2"; +¾), Increased Maximum Range (5,050"; +¼), No Range Modifier (+½); OIF Bulky (-1), 4 Charges (-1)	[4]
5	<i>Port Wing Missile Array:</i> As Starboard Wing Missile Array	
39	<i>Bomb Rack:</i> RKA 4d6, Armor Piercing (+½), Explosion (-1 DC/2"; +¾); OIF Bulky (-1), Dropped (-½), 4 Charges (-1)	[4]
10	<i>Oxygen Supply:</i> Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing)	0
10	<i>Radar Array:</i> Radar (Radio Group), Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees); OIF Bulky (-1)	0
6	<i>Radar Array:</i> +12 versus Range Modifier for Radar; OIF Bulky (-1)	0



Skills

4 *Maneuverable:* +2 with Flight

Total Abilities & Equipment Cost: 432
Total Vehicle Cost: 563

Value Disadvantages

25 Distinctive Features: VIPER combat vehicle
 (Not Concealable; Causes Extreme Reaction
 [fear])

Total Disadvantage Points: 25
Total Cost: 538/5 = 108

Additional Equipment

54 Serpentine Node

Description: VIPER's largest, longest range, and most powerful aircraft is the fearsome Dragon Jet. Able to attain speeds in excess of Mach 2, it can launch from any VIPER Nest, reach any point on the planet, attack, and return to home base. It has two blaster batteries, one dorsal and one ventral, mounted on concealed pop-up turrets, giving it the ability to hit targets all around it. Additionally, it has two racks of missiles (one under each wing) and a complement of four powerful bombs for use against ground-based targets. As of 2003, VIPER has six of these jets in its fleet.

The Dragon Jet requires a minimum crew of three, though it functions best with seven crewmen. It has living quarters for six agents; typically, the seventh crewman is a high-ranking VIPER officer assigned by the Nest launching the vehicle. Additionally, it can carry 25 agents plus all their equipment. Its vertical takeoff and landing (VTOL) thrusters allow it to touch down quickly, offload its troops, and then return to the skies before the enemy can target it.

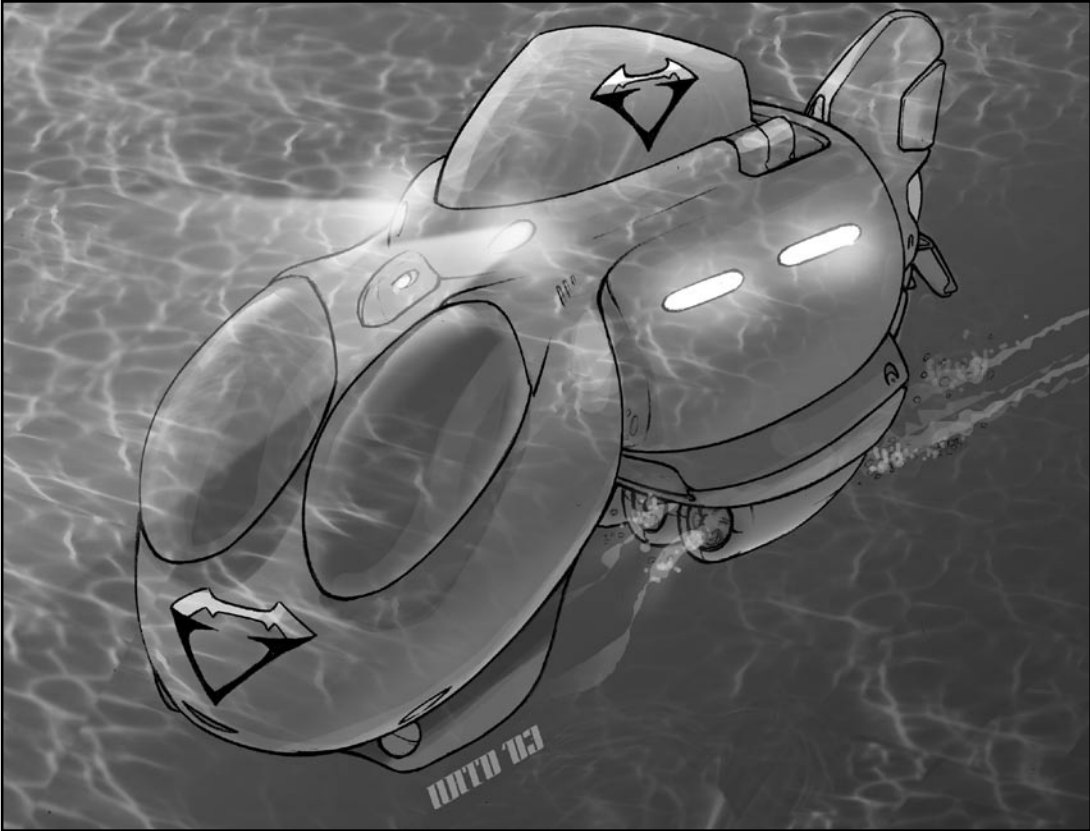
MISCELLANEOUS VEHICLES

SEA SERPENT MINI-SUB

Val	Char	Cost	Notes
6	Size	30	4" x 2"; -6 KB; -4 DCV
40	STR	0	Lift 6,400 kg; 8d6 HTH [0]
15	DEX	15	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
16	BODY	0	
8	DEF	18	
3	SPD	5	Phases: 4, 8, 12
Total Characteristic Cost: 68			

Movement: Ground: 0"/0"
 Swimming: 25"/100"

Abilities & Equipment		END
Cost	Power	
12	<i>Water Movement:</i> Swimming +23" (25" total), x4 Noncombat Multiple; Limited Maneuverability (-½), Side Effects (propeller does KA 2d6 to anyone coming in contact with bottom stern of vehicle, occurs automatically, only affects environment around vehicle; -¾)	0
-12	<i>Aquatic Only:</i> Ground Movement -6" (0" total)	
32	<i>Forward VIPedoes:</i> RKA 3d6, Armor Piercing (+½), Explosion (+½), No Range Modifier (+½); OIF Bulky (-1), Only Versus Targets In/On The Water (-1), 8 Charges (-½)	[8]
5	<i>Rear VIPedoes:</i> As Forward VIPedoes	[8]
13	<i>Submersible:</i> Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing; Safe Environment: High Pressure, Intense Cold)	0
5	<i>Communications Systems:</i> HRRP (Radio	



- Group); OIF Bulky (-1), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-½) 0
- 13 *Periscope*: Clairsentience (Sight Group), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OIF Bulky (-1), Limited Range (8"); -¼ 0
- 11 *Active Sonar Array*: Active Sonar (Hearing Group), Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees), Telescopic (+8 versus Range Modifier); OIF Bulky (-1), Affected As Sight Group As Well As Hearing Group (-½) 0
- 8 *Passive Sonar Array*: +4 PER with Hearing Group; OIF Bulky (-1) plus Ultrasonic Perception (Hearing Group); OIF Bulky (-1) plus Telescopic (+4 versus Range Modifier for Hearing Group); OIF Bulky (-1) 0

Total Abilities & Equipment Cost: 87

Total Vehicle Cost: 155

Value Disadvantages

- 25 Distinctive Features: VIPER combat vehicle (Not Concealable; Causes Extreme Reaction [fear])

Total Disadvantage Points: 25

Total Cost: 130/5 = 26

Additional Equipment

- 54 Serpentine Node

Description: VIPER's *Sea Serpent*-class Mini-Sub, able to carry up to four fully-equipped Environmental Combat Specialist agents (Aquatic), in addition to its pilot, can descend to the bottom of the sea or allow VIPER to travel unseen beneath the waves. If enemies pursue, it can use its powerful "VIPedo" torpedoes to blow them out of the water.

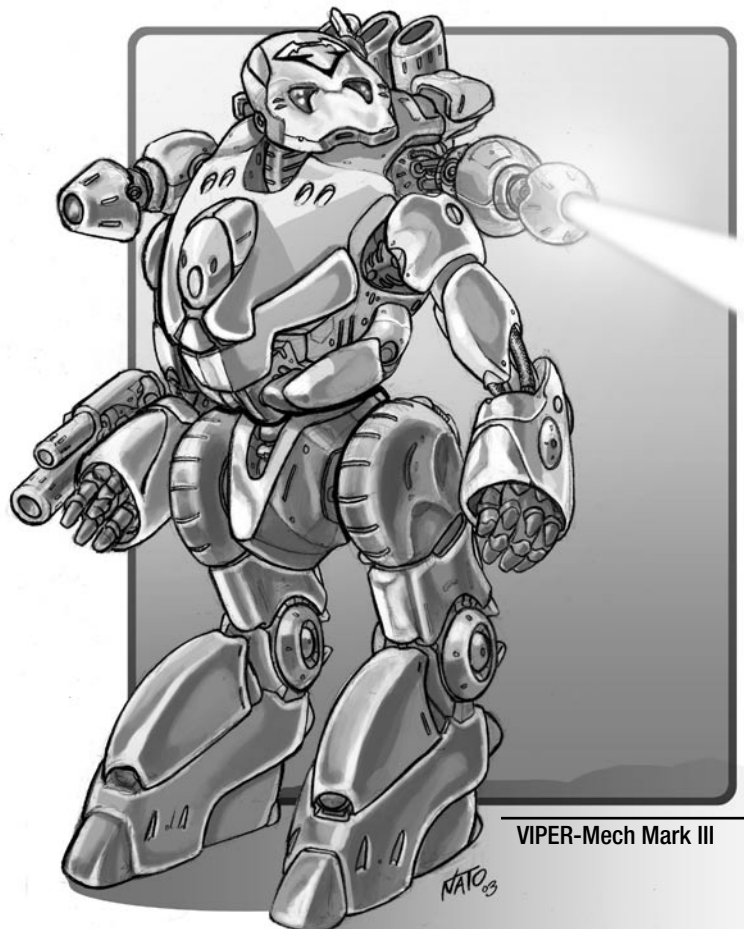
VIPER ROBOTS

Although VIPER's experiences with "auto-mated agents" — robots — remains decidedly mixed (superheroes seem to have an extraordinary knack for destroying the things, or even turning them against their creators), it continues to conduct experiments in this field. Its latest effort, the VIPER-Mech Mark III, is the most powerful and versatile robot it has ever created.

VIPER-MECH MARK III

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
50	STR	40	19-	Lift 25 tons; 10d6 [0]
25	DEX	45	14-	OCV: 8/DCV: 8
10	CON	0	11-	
23	BODY	26	14-	
15	INT	5	12-	PER Roll 12-
0	EGO	0	—	ECV: N/A
25	PRE	15	14-	PRE Attack: 5d6
4	COM	-3	10-	
12	PD	27		Total: 12 PD (12 rPD)
12	ED	33		Total: 12 ED (12 rED)
5	SPD	15		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
12	REC	0		
0	END	-10		
—	STUN	—		Total Characteristics Cost: 193

Movement: Running: 11"/22"
Leaping: 10"/20"
Flight: 15"/30"



VIPER-Mech Mark III

Cost	Powers	END
15	<i>Robot Body</i> : Does Not Bleed	0
45	<i>Robot Body</i> : Takes No STUN	0
25	<i>Tireless</i> : Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) on 50 STR	0
11	<i>Tireless</i> : Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) on Running	0
5	<i>Tireless</i> : Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) on Leaping	0
1	<i>Tireless</i> : Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) on Swimming	0
100	<i>Onboard Weaponry</i> : Multipower, 100-point reserve	
9u	1) <i>Palm Blaster</i> : Energy Blast 12d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
6u	2) <i>Forearm Blaster</i> : Energy Blast 12d6, Armor Piercing (+½); 8 Charges (-½)	[8]
5u	3) <i>Eyebeam Blaster</i> : Energy Blast 20d6; 4 Charges (-1)	[4]
4u	4) <i>Duo-Palm Blaster</i> : Energy Blast 10d6, Area Of Effect (11" Cone; +1); Gestures (both hands; -½), No Range (-½), 8 Charges (-½)	[8]
7u	6) <i>Right Shoulder-Mounted Laser</i> : RKA 3d6, Armor Piercing (+½); 16 Charges (-0)	[16]
7u	7) <i>Left Shoulder-Mounted Laser</i> : RKA 2d6, Armor Piercing (+½), Autofire (5 shots; +½), 60 Charges (+½)	[60]
9u	8) <i>Chest-Mounted Flare Generator</i> : Sight Group Flash 12d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
5u	9) <i>Chest-Mounted Trapweb Launcher</i> : Entangle 8d6 BODY, 8 DEF; 8 Charges (-½)	[8]
36	<i>Robot Body</i> : Damage Resistance (12 PD/12 ED)	0
60	<i>Heavy</i> : Knockback Resistance -10"	0
45	<i>Robot Body</i> : Life Support: Total	0
45	<i>Jetpack</i> : Flight 15", Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
10	<i>Robot Legs</i> : Running +5" (11" total)	0
12	<i>Communications</i> : HRRP (Radio Group), Invisible To Tracing (+¼); Affected As Hearing Groups (And Partly As Sight Group) As Well As Radio Group (-¼)	0
16	<i>Serpentine Network Links</i> : Mind Link, any Serpentine Network computer, any 1 mind at once, No LOS Needed; Affected As Radio Group, Not Mental Group (-¼)	0
5	<i>Sensor Systems</i> : Infrared Perception (Sight Group)	0
5	<i>Sensor Systems</i> : Ultraviolet Perception (Sight Group)	0
5	<i>Sensor Systems</i> : Nightvision	0
3	<i>Sensor Systems</i> : Ultrasonic Perception (Hearing Group)	0
20	<i>Sensor Systems</i> : Radar (Radio Group), Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees)	0
30	<i>Shielding</i> : Power Defense (10 points)	0

30	<i>Shielding</i> : Radio Group Flash Defense (10 points)	0
16	<i>Self-Destruct System</i> : RKA 8d6; No Range (-½), Self Only (-2), 1 Charge which Never Recovers (-4)	[1nr]

Talents

17	<i>Onboard Computer Systems</i> : Absolute Range Sense, Absolute Time Sense, Bump Of Direction, Eidetic Memory, Lightning Calculator
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Skills

15	+5 with Onboard Weaponry Multipower
3	Computer Programming 12-
3	Cryptography 12-
3	Electronics 12-
4	Language: English

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 637**Total Cost: 830****200+ Disadvantages**

25	Distinctive Features: VIPER Robot (Not Concealable; Causes Extreme Reaction [fear])
20	Hunted: UNTIL 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
5	Physical Limitation: Affected By Cyberkinesis (has EGO 25 for purposes of cyberkinetic powers, and can be affected by cyberkinesis-based Presence Attacks) (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)
5	Physical Limitation: Large (approximately twice human size and eight times human mass) (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)
575	Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 830

Description: Building upon the Mech-VIPER Mark I of the mid-1980s and Mark II Mech-VIPER of the early 1990s, VIPER's laboratories recently developed their most powerful robotic servant yet — the VIPER-Mech Mark III. VIPER technicians have already completed six Mark IIIs and issued them to the appropriate Nests; more are on their way soon.

As befits a combat robot, the Mark III bristles with weaponry. In addition to the obvious blaster ports and attachments in the palms of its hands and on its forearms, it has lasers mounted on both shoulders, and can also fire energy beams from its "eyes." A large lens in the center of its chest can generate blinding pulses of light, and smaller ports mounted above and to the right and left of the lens fire in tandem to catch opponents in tough, sticky trapweb.

The Mark III's INT represents its sophisticated computer brain. It's not actually sentient, but it often seems to be thanks to its highly-developed processor system. If it encounters a situation completely strange to it, the GM may have it make an INT Roll to react appropriately.

VIPER RECON-DRONE MARK VII

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 [0]
20	DEX	30	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
10	CON	0	11-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
20	INT	10	13-	PER Roll 13-
0	EGO	0	—	ECV: N/A
10	PRE	0	11-	PRE Attack: 2d6
10	COM	0	11-	
6	PD	15		Total: 6 PD (6 rPD)
6	ED	15		Total: 6 ED (6 rED)
4	SPD	10		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
5	REC	0		
0	END	-10		
—	STUN	—		Total Characteristics Cost: 75

Movement: Running: 11"/22"
Flight: 15"/30"

Cost	Powers	END
15	<i>Robot Body:</i> Does Not Bleed	0
45	<i>Robot Body:</i> Takes No STUN	0
7	<i>Tireless:</i> Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) on 15 STR	0
11	<i>Tireless:</i> Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) on Running	0
5	<i>Tireless:</i> Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) on Leaping	0
1	<i>Tireless:</i> Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) on Swimming	0
40	<i>Built-In Blaster:</i> Energy Blast 10d6; 12 Charges (-¼) [12]	
18	<i>Robot Body:</i> Damage Resistance (6 PD/6 ED)	0
45	<i>Robot Body:</i> Life Support: Total	0
45	<i>Concealed Jets:</i> Flight 15"; Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
10	<i>Robot Legs:</i> Running +5" (11" total)	0
12	<i>Communications:</i> HRRP (Radio Group), Invisible To Tracing (+¼); Affected As Hearing Groups (And Partly As Sight Group) As Well As Radio Group (-¼)	0
16	<i>Serpentine Network Links:</i> Mind Link, any Serpentine Network computer, any 1 mind at once, No LOS Needed; Affected As Radio Group, Not Mental Group (-¼)	0
5	<i>Sensor Systems:</i> Infrared Perception (Sight Group)	0
5	<i>Sensor Systems:</i> Ultraviolet Perception (Sight Group)	0
5	<i>Sensor Systems:</i> Nightvision	0
3	<i>Sensor Systems:</i> Ultrasonic Perception (Hearing Group)	0
20	<i>Sensor Systems:</i> Radar (Radio Group), Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees)	0
9	<i>Enhanced Sensors:</i> +3 PER with all Sense Groups	0

15	<i>Shielding:</i> Power Defense (5 points)	0
15	<i>Shielding:</i> Radio Group Flash Defense (5 points)	0
7	<i>Unimpressed:</i> +15 PRE; Only To Protect Against Presence Attacks (-1)	0
14	<i>Self-Destruct System:</i> RKA 7d6; No Range (-½), Self Only (-2), 1 Charge which Never Recovers (-4) [1nr]	

Talents

17	<i>Onboard Computer Systems:</i> Absolute Range Sense, Absolute Time Sense, Bump Of Direction, Eidetic Memory, Lightning Calculator
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Skills

10	+2 with all Skills listed below
3	Bugging 12-
3	Concealment 12-
4	Language: English
3	Lipreading 12-
3	Lockpicking 13-
3	Security Systems 12-
3	Shadowing 12-
5	Stealth 14-
3	Tracking 12-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 425

Total Cost: 500

200+ Disadvantages

5	<i>Physical Limitation:</i> Affected By Cyberkinesis (has EGO 20 for purposes of cyberkinetic powers, and can be affected by cyberkinesis-based Presence Attacks) (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)
295	Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 500

Description: VIPER doesn't design all of its robots for combat purposes. It also needs to gather information on robbery targets, potential blackmail victims, and the like, and it has found robots ideally suited to these tasks in some situations. The Mark VII Recon-Drone, one of the organization's most popular "spy-bots," comes in a variety of innocent-looking configurations. It might resemble a small animal (such as a cat or dog), an ordinary person, or perhaps an everyday object. Its main purpose is to observe and record, then report what it learns to its VIPER masters, but it does come equipped with an onboard blaster in case it's cornered, and a self-destruct system to keep it from falling into enemy hands.

The Mark VII's INT represents its sophisticated computer brain. It's not actually sentient, but it often seems to be thanks to its highly-developed processor system. If it encounters a situation completely strange to it, the GM may have it make an INT Roll to react appropriately.

VIPER SCIENCE



TECHNOLOGY VIPER DOESN'T WORK ON

VIPER specifically refrains from conducting research in two technological fields.

The first is artificial intelligence. The Supreme Serpent doesn't want VIPER to have any sentient machines other than the Serpentine Network. He feels they pose too big a risk in too many ways; the last thing he wants to deal with is another Mechanon, for example. Even Serpentine makes him a little uncomfortable, but he's willing to rely on its programmed loyalty... for now.

The second is nuclear weapons. While VIPER easily has the technological acumen and resources to create nuclear bombs, the Council Of Thirty surmises (correctly) that if the governments of the world had any solid suspicions VIPER was working on nukes, they would redouble their efforts to dismantle the organization. In short, nuclear weapons pose too many public relations problems; VIPER can build other doomsday devices without causing itself the same trouble.

VIPER is renowned for its use of advanced technology in the commission of crimes and acts of terrorism. Since the organization's inception, it's striven to take advantage of its lack of bureaucracy and moral scruples to develop weapons, vehicles, and other systems that can out-perform those of the authorities. Since VIPER scientists can conduct tests on humans (kidnap victims, captured heroes, VIPER Academy flunk-outs...) whenever they need to, don't have to obtain Congressional approval (and tolerate Congressional oversight) for new projects, and have an enormous budget to work with, they can make technological advances the world's governments and law enforcement agencies generally cannot.

VIPER recruits scientists the same way it recruits agents — from among the disaffected, the criminal, those who feel their talents aren't appreciated or aren't properly compensated. (In some cases it may blackmail scientists into working with it.) Scientists are just as likely as anyone else to give in to their base emotions or have desires they cannot satisfy through conventional channels. For many, the freedom that VIPER offers — the large research budgets, the ability to work on whatever one wants without having to worry about regulations or public opinion — is an intoxicating thing that attracts them like a moth to a flame. Others just want a lot of money. VIPER has recruited many former Soviet scientists using these two lures (and others), but it also has many Technical Division personnel from other countries around the globe.

STATE OF THE VIPER ART

When it comes to VIPER science, the term "bleeding edge" takes on real meaning. VIPER's always working on newer, bigger, better ways to hurt other people, conquer the world, and make committing crimes easier. Some of its current technological research projects include:

Project Ageless: VIPER's immortality project. VIPER leaders want to live longer, so the immortality project is one which for some reason never seems to receive budget cuts. Ageless involves studies of the relationship of genetics, bio-chemicals, and cellular decay. VIPER also hopes that inhibiting neurological decay will lead to smarter and more perceptive humans, another VIPER research goal.

Ageless has seen some success over the years; the Duchess, among other VIPER leaders, has used its results to extend her lifespan and youth. But it's far from achieving its ultimate goals.

Project Awakening: The stated purpose of Project Awakening, better known among the VIPER rank and file as "the Clutch," is to "devise methods and procedures by which to unlock the latent psychic powers of the human mind." VIPER's scientists have experimented with gene splicing, "telepathic massage" of the brain, and even implanting tissues from telepaths in the (probable) psionic centers of people's brains, and more — all so far with less than promising results.

Assuming Project Awakening were to succeed — which in turn means assuming the Project's scientists are correct when they state that all humans have the potential to possess psionic powers — it would vastly increase VIPER's combat and espionage capabilities. Concerned about the possible implications of the Project (such as squadrons of "psi-VIPERs" taking over the organization, or PSI stealing the Project's data), the Supreme Serpent has reduced funding for and deprioritized Awakening. Additionally, on orders from the Serpent-General, the Watch keeps a close eye on the Clutch. VIPER does not intend to create psionic operatives only to have them turn on it.

Project Evolution: This particularly creepy scientific project encompasses VIPER's plan to increase serpentine intelligence via the implantation of customized brain tissue and special proteins. This project has already created snakes with the ability to recognize over a dozen different symbols and attack a target on command.

Project Flamel: VIPER's always looking for more ways to generate revenue. One research effort associated with this goal is Project Flamel, which seeks ways to transmute base metals into gold — the ancient goal of the alchemists. If it can devise a way to duplicate the powers of superhumans such as Zorran the Artificer, not only could VIPER fill its coffers with gold, it could create irresistible transmutative weaponry.

Project High Ground: Ever since UNTIL completed the GATEWAY space station, some VIPER scientists have pushed the idea that VIPER should compete on the "high frontier" as well. While somewhat skeptical, the Council Of Thirty has allowed Project High Ground to proceed with the understanding that the Project's scientists have to do more than just create a viable space station — they must find a way to (a) conceal the station after it's built, and (b) prevent UNTIL and the governments of the world from finding out about it while it's being built.

Project Mendel: Also known as "Project Stein," this is VIPER's ongoing effort to find ways to create

superhumans on demand. Currently led by Dr. Timothy Blank (see below), Mendel has enjoyed numerous isolated successes over the years (such as the creation of Sidewinder), it has never succeeded in finding reliable ways to create large numbers of superhumans (even “temporary supers” who possess powers for a short time and then “burn out” and die). If Project Mendel ever achieves the breakthrough it’s long looked for, VIPER may become unstoppable.

Project Red Dragon: VIPER would like to make its Dragon armor (page 115) more widely available, but it’s too expensive and difficult to manufacture. Project Red Dragon’s goal is to find ways to make Dragon armor easier and cheaper to make so any Nest that wants a suit or two can afford it.

Project Spearhead: The development of VIPER weapons of mass destruction. Rather than attempting to create nuclear weapons, Project Spearhead is investigating a number of technological breakthroughs. The ones on which it’s expending the most effort are the Orbital Blaster Platform and an EMP bomb with an effective radius of hundreds of kilometers (not yet in production).

Project Two-Step: VIPER does not have, and desperately wants, teleportation technology. Equipped with teleporters, VIPER agents could infiltrate any target facility, steal what they wanted, and then escape without a trace. Fortunately for the world, the secret of teleportation continues to elude VIPER’s scientists... though underworld rumors hint they’re getting close to success.

Project Viperium: Inspired by the development of metals such as kendrium, VIPER seeks to create a super-metal of its own. Dubbed “viperium,” this theoretical substance would allow VIPER to protect its vehicles and facilities with armor that is both better and lighter weight than existing armors. Other versions of viperium would improve VIPER body armors.

Project Whipsnake: VIPER’s quest to build a mass driver under the jungles of equatorial Africa. This device will have the capacity to hurl large objects into orbit or launch ballistic missiles with relatively low fuel requirements, giving VIPER the power to hit any target on the globe.

THE FIX: THE STARS OF TECHNICAL DIVISION

VIPER has a lot of top-notch scientists working for it, but even among the Technical Division’s ranks, some minds and talents stand out from the pack. They’re known as “the Fix” for reasons no one can remember. They include:

DR. TIMOTHY BLANK

A world-class expert on the subjects of biology, biochemistry, genetics, and the biological bases for superhuman powers, Timothy Blank left the Biology Department at the University of Florida at Vibora Bay after it was revealed he was both conducting experiments on human subjects without approval *and* using several of his graduate students and fellow professors as the subjects of other experiments without their knowledge. He “defected” to VIPER one step ahead of the law and immediately put his talents to work for it. Thanks to his breakthroughs, Project Mendel has had a few successes; he’s helped VIPER create several supervillains (such as Diamondback). Doctor Blank has indicated that he’s on the verge of further advances in the area of splicing ophidian and human DNA.

In addition to his scientific and intellectual arrogance, Dr. Blank possesses a high degree of megalomania. Although he’s kept his intentions to himself, he long ago decided *he* should be the Supreme Serpent. He’s funneled money away from other efforts, such as Project Ageless, and into his own private accounts for years to prepare for a takeover. When the time is right — in other words, after he’s exploited VIPER’s resources to develop the techniques and weapons he can use to engineer a coup — he plans to kill the Supreme Serpent and Council Of Thirty and take their place. Even if his plot fails, it’s sure to cause major harm to VIPER.

DR. JACOB GOLDSTEIN

A former top scientist in the Harmon Industries aerospace division, Jacob Goldstein left the company, taking many valuable technical secrets with him, after a disagreement with his superiors that turned violent (he shot one and pummelled the other bloody with a telephone). VIPER got wind of the situation, tracked him down, and talked him into joining by promising him an unlimited research budget and a chance to work without bureaucratic restrictions.

Doctor Goldstein hasn’t regretted his decision to join the snakes. Now he can work on cutting-edge flight systems without having to tolerate miles of red tape and dozens of inspectors. He’s made significant strides in improving the efficiency of VIPER’s hovercraft, and Technical Division expects more advances from him in the future. He’s currently begun working on ways to improve the VFL-4 Jetpack.

DR. MANFRED KLAUSS

An expert on psychology and neurobiology, Dr. Klauss (a descendant of Myron Klauss) has worked extensively on Project Awakening and other VIPER projects pertaining to psionic powers, superhuman psychology, and the like. Among many other developments, he's responsible for the creation of the VBZ-3 Berserkization Ray, a prototype weapon firing a beam that causes the victim to go berserk. The weapon has proved highly successful in field trials on superhumans, but unfortunately Dr. Klauss has not yet found a way to control or direct the victim — the berserk superheroes are as likely to turn on VIPER agents and villains as their own comrades, which does VIPER no good. Klauss continues to work on the Berserkization Ray and hopes to make it a viable VIPER weapon someday.

PROFESSOR JULIE MATHEWSON

A world-renowned professor of biology at Georgetown University, Julie Mathewson joined VIPER years ago so she could conduct research in her field — human genetics — without having to restrict herself to legally and ethically mandated procedures. To her, only knowledge matters, and if she has to hurt a few people to get it, well, they're making a sacrifice for science and the betterment of mankind.

Since joining VIPER, Prof. Mathewson has refined her studies to focus on the mechanisms through which mutations affect human genes. She's trying to find out why the same procedure turns one person into a superhuman, and leaves another person a drooling idiot. She also wants to know why the same procedure successfully affects two people differently. If her research bears fruit, VIPER will have at its fingertips the means to create entire armies of supers.

DR. PHILLIPPE MOREAU

A renegade among renegades, Dr. Moreau is perhaps the most unprincipled biologist working

for VIPER today (and given the presence of his hated rival, Dr. Blank, that's saying a lot). In his work on "uplifting" animals and imbuing humans with animalistic abilities and qualities, he hasn't hesitated to inflict whatever harm is necessary to get the job done. Other VIPER scientists long ago learned to ignore the screams coming from his laboratories — they know Dr. Moreau prefers to work without anaesthesia.

DR. IRENA VELTOVSKI

A "refugee" from Larisagrad, where she claims "jealous colleagues were threatening my life," Dr. Velovski is an expert on computer systems. She has already created several subroutines that have improved the functioning of the Serpentine Network, and the Council Of Thirty expects even better breakthroughs from her over the next decade.

DR. PARK LEE-WEN

A former citizen of North Korea, Dr. Park was "kidnapped" by VIPER agents after he contacted the organization and expressed interest in joining. Now that VIPER has given him a state of the art laboratory, an essentially unlimited budget, and the freedom not to have to work on intercontinental missile systems, his true genius for small weapons design has come to the fore. In his five years with Technical Division, he's already developed some major system improvements for VIPER blaster weapons, and he predicts some significant breakthroughs in blaster beam power within the next two years.

Small and pasty-faced from spending too little time outdoors, Dr. Park presents an appearance of startling contrasts. His salt-and-pepper hair is always neatly groomed, his glasses polished, his shirts and pants clean and wrinkle-free. But he wears the same dingy lab jacket every day, its pockets crammed with a plethora of spare parts, well-used tools, calculators, and pens. It's hard to tell whether he's a neatnik or a slob at heart.



VIPER: chapter six

THE DRAGON BRANCH

DRAGON BRANCH PLOT SEEDS

A “war” breaks out between two factions of Dragon Branch over some real or imagined slight. The PCs have to stop the battle between the two sides from destroying the city... and perhaps diminish VIPER’s roster of superhumans in the process.

Ripper’s Omicron technology goes into overdrive, rendering him far bigger, stronger, and tougher than ever. The PCs have to battle Dragon Branch for the chance to try to stop him — and if they win, then they have to stop him. As the conflict rages, Ripper’s rampage through the city continues....

The PCs discover Dragon Branch has established a covert operation to recruit young superhumans. They have to find a way to stop the project without causing a fight in the middle of a crowded city — and without making VIPER and its superhumans seem a valid option for the impressionable teens.

DRAGON BRANCH



Membership: As of 2003, over 30 superhumans scattered all over the world (see accompanying text box for a partial list).

Background/History: In the minds of both the public and superheroes, Dragon Branch looms large; some think it runs VIPER, or at least holds far more importance than it does. While VIPER values its superhumans, particularly those who have accumulated years of experience in VIPER’s service, it doesn’t kowtow to them or give them free rein. It expects loyalty, obedience, and diligent service — and for the most part, it receives just that. If a superhuman becomes too much trouble, VIPER can always eliminate him and find another one to take his place. The leaders of VIPER consider Dragon Branch an asset they should use, not a precious resource to coddle or save.

Group Relations: Given the size of Dragon Branch, and the fact that it’s composed of selfish, and often mentally disturbed, criminals, it’s surprising it holds together as well as it does. The strong hands of the Council Of Thirty and the Supreme Serpent have a lot to do with this, but even they would admit the group is far from perfect. Rivalries, hatreds, and factions persist, sometimes leading to fights between Dragons... or, worse, causing a Dragon squad to botch a job. In either case, VIPER’s leaders swiftly impose harsh punishment on everyone

involved in the hope of minimizing such incidents (a tactic that largely succeeds).

Oculon, one of the oldest and most seasoned of VIPER’s supers, leads Dragon Branch by default. But if appropriate, he cedes authority to any “colleague” who seems better suited to lead a particular mission or has a real “feel” for it... or whom he’d like to embarrass by giving them a job they’re not suited for. He’s most likely to trust one of the older, stabler superhumans, such as VIPER-X or Freon.

Within the ranks of the Dragons, age, experience, and the possession of innate superpowers all hold more sway. Many of VIPER’s younger supers, particularly those whose powers derive from devices, have little or no say in how Dragon Branch conducts its activities. This creates strain in the group from time to time, and may eventually cause serious rifts in the organization. Delusion, in particular, resents this state of affairs and makes no bones about his disdain for the “old guys” and their clueless ways.

Tactics: VIPER rarely assembles the entire Dragon Branch in any one place. Instead it assigns some members to specific Nests full time, and uses the others (including all the ones with character sheets in this chapter) as “floaters” who go where they’re needed. When a Nest calls for Dragon Branch assistance, or the leadership plans a job that requires Dragons, VIPER sends the Dragons best suited to the task at hand.

Since Dragon Branch can’t work and practice together as a whole, it possesses few defined tactical maneuvers. Instead, it trains members to work well with others in combat situations and to adapt to the circumstances. In game terms, most Dragons have the *Teamwork* Skill and use it frequently.

Campaign Use: Sometimes agents and blasters aren’t enough to challenge a team of superheroes. In that case, a Nest calls in VIPER’s biggest guns: Dragon Branch. Ranging from relatively weak or one-dimensional superhumans like Bloodstar to incredibly powerful ones such as Ripper or Oculon, Dragon Branch represents a significant threat to world security. It provides some “muscle” for VIPER when agents and VIPER-Mechs aren’t enough to challenge the PCs. Given the size of the “team,” you can easily choose (or create) just the right members to provide a challenging fight for your PCs.

Dragon Branch does not Hunt heroes on its own. It only does so when VIPER orders it to, how VIPER orders it to.

OTHER VIPER SUPERVILLAINS

Here’s a quick rundown on some of the other villains that belong to VIPER. This list does not include Nest Leader or other members who have superpowers they use on VIPER’s behalf, just full-time supervillains in the organization. Under Location, “Varies” indicates a villain who goes wherever Dragon Branch needs him.

Name	Powers	Location
Adder	Poison-spitting, knife-wielding super-agent	Varies
Bloodstar	High-DEX, high-SPD weaponmaster	Varies
Boruto (“Volt”)	Electricity powers	Japan
Brute	Super-strength	Varies
Copperhead	Powered armor	Varies
Delusion	Holographic super-technology	Miami
Epoch	Time manipulation	Cairo
Gauntlet	Power gauntlets	Varies
Hayaikaze (“Swiftwind”)	Speedster, wind manipulation powers	Japan
Hiss	Mental powers	Varies
Iron Lightning	Magnetism, electricity powers	Southern Africa
Ji nli (“Goldforce”)	Telekinetic powers	Hong Kong
Minuet	Mind control via music	Varies
Nucleon	Energy projection and control	Varies
Spitfire	Uses special “fire blaster” energy pistols	Varies
Tornado	Whirling/speedster powers	Varies
Tungarak	Super-strength, earth powers	Varies
Whitefire	Fire powers	Varies

BOA CONSTRICTOR

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
60	STR	50	21-	Lift 100 tons; 12d6 [6]
20	DEX	30	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
28	CON	36	15-	
15	BODY	10	12-	
8	INT	-2	11-	PER Roll 11-
8	EGO	-4	11-	ECV: 3
25	PRE	15	14-	PRE Attack: 5d6
6	COM	-2	10-	
25	PD	13		Total: 25 PD (10 rPD)
25	ED	19		Total: 25 ED (10 rED)
5	SPD	20		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
33	REC	30		
60	END	2		
60	STUN	1		Total Characteristics Cost: 218

Movement: Running: 11"/22"
Leaping: 17"/34"

Cost Powers **END**

<i>Martial Arts: Wrestling</i>				
	Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
4	Escape	+0	+0	75 STR vs. Grabs
3	Hold	-1	-1	Grab, 70 STR to hold
4	Forearm	+0	+2	12d6 Strike
3	Slam	+0	+1	12d6 + vel/5; Target Falls
10	<i>Skilled At Wrestling:</i> Reduced Endurance on 60 STR (½ END; +¼); Only For Grabs And Escapes (-½)			
10	<i>Tough As A Snake:</i> Damage Resistance (10 PD/10 ED)			
10	<i>Covered In Snake Skin:</i> Lack Of Weakness (-5) for Normal Defenses and Resistant Defenses			
14	<i>Hardy As A Snake:</i> Healing 2d6 (Regeneration; 2 BODY per Turn), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Persistent (+½); Extra Time (1 Turn; -1¼), Self Only (-½)			
3	<i>Immunity To Venom:</i> Life Support (Immunity: Ophidotoxins)			
10	<i>Climbs Like A Snake:</i> Clinging (normal STR)			
10	<i>Fast As A Snake:</i> Running +5" (11" total)			
5	<i>Fast As A Snake:</i> Leaping +5" (17" total)			
5	<i>Snake Vision:</i> Infrared Perception (Sight Group)			
10	<i>Constrictor's Body:</i> Stretching 2"			

Perks

- 3 Contact: Biker Gang 8-
- 5 Fringe Benefit: Membership (Dragon Branch)

Skills

- 9 +3 with Wrestling
- 8 +1 with All Combat
- 3 Acrobatics 13-
- 3 Acting 14-
- 2 Animal Handling (Snakes) 11-
- 3 Breakfall 13-
- 3 Climbing 13-
- 2 KS: The Superhuman World 11-

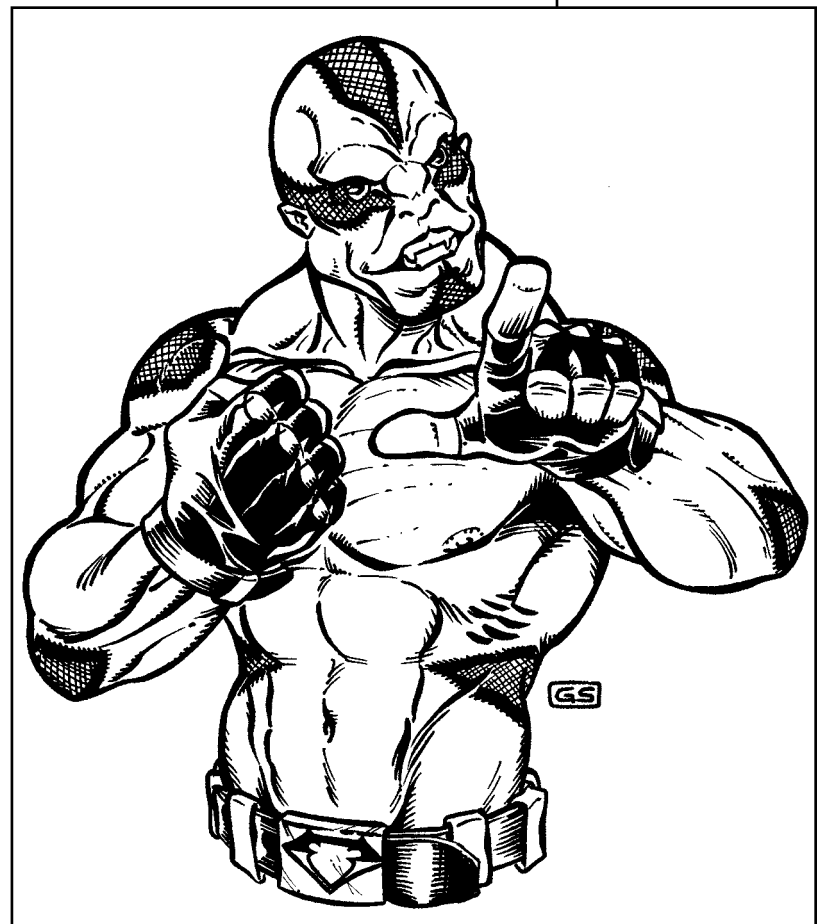
- 2 KS: The Wrestling World 11-
- 2 KS: The Local Underworld 11-
- 3 KS: VIPER 12-
- 2 KS: Wrestling 11-
- 3 Oratory 13-
- 3 PS: VIPER Agent 12-
- 3 Stealth 13-
- 1 TF: Two-Wheeled Motorized Ground Vehicles

Total Powers and Skills Cost: 161**Total Character Cost: 379****200+ Disadvantages**

- 25 Hunted: UNTIL 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
- 25 Hunted: Champions 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Compulsive Showoff (Common, Moderate)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Vengeful (Common, Strong)
- 15 Reputation: VIPER supercriminal, 11- (Extreme)
- 20 Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)
- 15 Social Limitation: Public Identity (Jack Dunnet) (Frequently, Major)
- 54 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 379

Background/History: Jack Dunnet came from a broken home; he and his older brother Dave stuck together closely to protect themselves from their parents as much as possible. When Dave joined a Milwaukee motorcycle gang, he brought Jack in, too. Unfortunately for Jack, when the cops were



BOA CONSTRICTOR PLOT SEEDS

The fact that Boa Constrictor's mutation lay dormant for so long may indicate there could be quite a few potential snake-men out there. VIPER has been investigating the possibility....

Boa Constrictor terrorizes a city mall — but when he's captured, it turns out this Boa Constrictor is not Jack Dunnet, but someone else who was in prison at the same time as Dunnet (and who volunteered for the same medical experiment) who mutated into an almost identical man-serpent. The PCs have to find out what happened in that prison and how many other Boa Constrictor-level mutants might be out there.

It's a wrestling challenge like none before when Bulldozer ("that's Mr. B-U-L-L-Dozer to you, pal, because the first syllable in Bulldozer is Bull!") decides to challenge VIPER's most notorious wrestling villain to a match in a ring that he's set up in the busiest intersection in town. Will Boa Constrictor accept the challenge? Will any traffic be able to move in the downtown core for the next hour? Will VIPER use this "battle of the century" as a diversion to stage a real operation? Will the match last long enough for the PCs to wolf down a tub of popcorn? And just how the hell did Bulldozer manage to set up a wrestling ring in the middle of town anyway?

after Dave for shooting a man during a motorcycle theft, Dave panicked and hid the gun at Jack's place. The cops found it, and Jack ended up with a prison sentence.

Jack made some useful contacts in prison, but overall it was a brutal experience that only made him tougher and meaner than ever. He got out early after volunteering for some medical experiments to test new medicines, and immediately went to visit Dave. Faced with the possibility of having his "little" brother snap him like a twig, Dave offered to use his contacts to set Jack up as a pro wrestler. Jack liked the sound of that.

Jack was soon a star attraction of "Beyond Wrestling — Ring Wars," a sleazy promotion that used fake violence (stabblings, shootings, and other atrocities) to "spice up" the storylines between its stable of wrestlers. Since VIPER'd been active in the area of late, Jack became "the Constrictor," a "bad guy" wrestler who took his orders from a mysterious man in green (the promotion didn't mention VIPER by name but it was fairly obvious who the Constrictor was working for). Ironically, instead of getting angry, VIPER loved the gimmick. Members of local Nests attended the matches regularly. Jack was a big hit.

Jack became a big fish in the little pond of Beyond Wrestling, and was thinking maybe he could move on to greater things — when a "crucifixion match" gone wrong resulted in his accidentally killing his biggest rival, Gord McGillen. It was an accident, but Gord's mobster brother didn't care. He got revenge by having Jack's brother, Dave, thrown out a fourteenth story window. Then he threw Jack into a tankful of poisonous snakes — "Let's see you wrestle your way outta this, tough guy."

But Jack, to his surprise, didn't die. Unbeknownst to him, the "medicines" that had been tested on him in prison were experimental sera from VIPER's bio-engineering research division. The overdose of serpent venom mutated Jack, making him bigger, stronger, and snakelike. He shed his humanity like a snake's skin, smashed his way out of the snake tank, and slaughtered the mobsters who'd tried to kill him. He decided the snakes must've been radioactive — after all, isn't that how everyone gets superpowers?

VIPER, naturally enough, had kept an eye on the subjects of its clandestine experiment. When it found out what had happened to Jack, it made him an offer to come work for it. VIPER persuaded Jack it was his only refuge, and Jack bought the argument hook, line, and sinker. VIPER sent him to Dr. Timothy Blank, who stabilized his condition. Since then, Boa Constrictor has gone on to become one of the most loyal and dependable superhuman operatives in VIPER history. Next to Oculon, he's the most frequently deployed super in Dragon Branch and has terrorized VIPER's enemies around the globe.

Personality/Motivation: Using the Agent personality type scheme, Jack would be classified as a "Bubba." Under the snakeskin, he's really an average guy, despite having a life story that would play as a particularly sordid episode of "Behind The Mask." He likes to drink beer, watch football, and ogle pretty

girls. He's actually more laid back than he used to be before his mutation. At the same time, the years in prison have left their scars — Boa Constrictor always watches his back, never fully trusts anyone, and demonstrates his strength whenever it's appropriate to discourage people from messing with him — and when anyone crosses the line, he deals with them violently and quickly.

Boa Constrictor has a pronounced vengeful streak. Being beaten in a fight is one thing, but when someone tries to get obnoxious or cute with him, Boa Constrictor gets really angry. He'd rather die than be humiliated in front of people he cares about (even his drinking buddies).

Quote: "You think you're tough, boy? Try being dropped into a pit of radioactive snakes!"

Powers/Tactics: Boa Constrictor is a mutated serpent-man with an altered genetic code whose natural regenerative abilities allow him to push his strength well beyond the limits of his physiology. He can also stretch and contort his body in unnatural ways; but even he finds this power a little "creepy," so he doesn't use it as much as he might. Unlike most other VIPER serpent-human hybrids, Boa Constrictor shows few side effects from the transformation process; the only serious affliction is sterility.

In combat, Boa Constrictor likes to wrestle, because that's what he's good at. His favorite tactic is to find a good spot for an ambush above the potential battlefield, reach down and grab one of the combatants, and squeeze the life out of the victim while they both hang suspended in mid-air.

Campaign Use: Boa Constrictor occupies the role of grunt, the sort of third-tier villain who can give a starting PC a good fight but who'll end up losing the battle. He's a snake-themed superagent to place on the front lines of a VIPER battle. His wrestling motif makes him a natural rival for many bricks, particularly those with jock backgrounds or who are naturally competitive. If the PC treats him with a bit of respect, it could turn into a friendly rivalry (and maybe even a way to wean Boa Constrictor from VIPER); otherwise, Boa Constrictor becomes a vengeful, implacable enemy.

To make Boa Constrictor tougher or weaker, adjust his Characteristics. A stronger Boa Constrictor would have more DEX, INT, SPD, and STUN. A weaker one would have STR 50, DEX 18, and perhaps a few other reductions. You could also add or subtract wrestling maneuvers.

Boa Constrictor does not Hunt heroes on his own. He only does so when VIPER orders him to, how it orders him to.

Appearance: Jack Dunnet was a big guy even before the transformation, but as Boa Constrictor, he stands 6'8" and is close to 310 pounds of solid muscle. He is a man-serpent with scaled grey-green skin and the markings of a boa constrictor snake. He goes shirtless, and wears leather pants, heavy leather boots, and fingerless leather gloves, a carry-over from his biker days.

DIAMONDBACK

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
50	STR	40	19-	Lift 25 tons; 10d6 [5]
20	DEX	30	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
30	CON	40	15-	
20	BODY	20	13-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll 11-
10	EGO	0	11-	ECV: 3
23	PRE	13	14-	PRE Attack: 4½d6
8	COM	-1	11-	
25	PD	15		Total: 25 PD (20 rPD)
20	ED	14		Total: 20 ED (20 rED)
5	SPD	20		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
20	REC	8		
60	END	0		
60	STUN	0		Total Characteristics Cost: 199

Movement: Running: 9"/18"
 Leaping: 10"/20"
 Swimming: 6"/12"

Cost Powers END

16	<i>Poison Spittle:</i> RKA 1 point, Continuous (+1), NND (defense is Force Field; +1), Does BODY (+1); Limited Range (8"; -¼), 8 Charges lasting for 1 Turn each (neutralized with vinegar; -0) [8 x 1 Turn]				
22	<i>Claws:</i> HKA 1d6 (2d6 with STR), Armor Piercing (+½)	2			
10	<i>Fangs:</i> HKA 1 point (½d6 with STR), Penetrating (x2; +1)	1			
35	<i>Venom:</i> Drain CON 3d6, Delayed Recovery Rate (points return at the rate of 5 per Minute; +¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Fangs Must Do BODY (-½)	1			
	<i>Martial Arts:</i> VIPER Brawling				
	Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes	
4	Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort	
4	Dodge	—	+5	Dodge, Affects All Attacks, Abort	
4	Punch	+0	+2	12d6 Strike	
3	Throw	+0	+1	10d6 + v/5; Target Falls	
20	<i>Scaly Skin:</i> Damage Resistance (20 PD/20 ED)				0
60	<i>Tough Body:</i> Physical and Energy Damage Reduction, Resistant, 50%				0
6	<i>Serpentine Form:</i> Life Support (Extended Breathing: 1 END per Turn; Immunity to Zootoxins)				0
6	<i>Serpent's Speed:</i> Running +3" (9" total)				1
4	<i>Serpent's Speed:</i> Swimming +4" (6" total)				1

Perk

5 Fringe Benefit: Membership (Dragon Branch)

Skills

20	+4 HTH
2	Animal Handler (Snakes) 14-
3	Concealment 11-
3	Fast Draw (Small Arms) 13-
2	Gambling (Card Games) 11-
3	Interrogation 14-
2	KS: The Superhuman World 11-

2	KS: VIPER 11-
3	Paramedics 11-
3	Security Systems 11-
7	Stealth 15-
3	Streetwise 14-
3	Tactics 11-
3	Teamwork 11-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 258

Total Cost: 457

200+ Disadvantages

20	Hunted: UNTIL 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
20	Hunted: Champions 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
10	Hunted: VIPER 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
20	Psychological Limitation: Ruthless, Cruel, And Sadistic (Very Common, Strong)
20	Psychological Limitation: Casual Killer (Very Common, Strong)
15	Reputation: VIPER supercriminal, 11- (Extreme)
20	Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)
15	Social Limitation: Secret Identity (Bernard Jamison) (Frequently, Major)
117	Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 457

Background/History: VIPER's experiments with creating superhumans often focus on the organization's namesake — snakes. VIPER scientists work with serpent genetic material, poisons, and organs



DIAMONDBACK PLOT SEEDS

Dr. Timothy Blank (page 132) decides to make his play to take control of VIPER — and Diamondback discovers that the evil doctor has implanted genetic “hooks” in him that allows Blank to take control of his mind with ease. Diamondback finds himself unwillingly turned against the Supreme Serpent — and what’s worse, VIPER thinks he’s doing it of his own free will! He has to trick the PCs into helping him so he can go back to serving his true masters.

VIPER scientists use Diamondback’s venom to develop some powerful new acids and poisons for the organization. After encountering them in battle against agents, the PCs discover the only way to create antidotes is to use Diamondback’s venom... and that means tracking him down, capturing him, and obtaining samples.

Diamondback secretly contacts the PCs. He claims VIPER’s had him brainwashed for years, that he desperately wants his human form back, and that he’ll do anything they ask if they’ll just help him become normal again. Is he telling the truth, or is it part of an elaborate VIPER ploy?

to find ways to enhance normal humans into the realm of the superhuman.

One such human was Bernard Jamison. Recruited into VIPER in the early 1990s, Jamison fit the organization perfectly. He was tough, ruthless, and cruel, but took orders well and had just the right touch of ambition. His ambition led him to volunteer for some of VIPER’s experiments to grant agents superhuman abilities. He figured superpowers would take him a lot further in the organization than his trigger finger.

He was right — though he hadn’t counted on all the consequences of the experiment. Through a series of operations and drug treatments, Dr. Timothy Blank and a group of Project Mendel scientists spliced Jamison’s DNA with that of several types of serpent. Over the course of several months, during which the scientists carefully observed him, he mutated, losing his hair and other mammalian features and replacing them with serpentine ones. His skin became scaly, and he grew claws and fangs. He also developed enormous strength. VIPER considered the experiment a rousing success. Dubious at first, and angry that the scientists could not reverse the change at will, Jamison gradually came to accept his new body and the powers it gave him. After some years he was so comfortable with it that he wouldn’t have changed back even if he could.

Since then, Diamondback has been one of the mainstays of Dragon Branch. Strong, quick, and capable, he’s commanded teams of supercriminals and agents on dozens of missions, and participated in hundreds more as combat support. Superhumans have captured him several times, but with VIPER’s assistance, he always finds a way to escape. Because he has callously killed several UNTIL and PRIMUS agents, he occupies a prominent place on both organizations’ “Most Wanted” lists.

Personality/Motivation: Diamondback possesses all the mercy, kindness, and sympathy of his name-sake. He has no consideration for the lives and feelings of anyone else (except those more powerful than him, such as the Supreme Serpent). In combat, he enjoys fighting dirty and inflicting as much pain as possible. After the battle ends, he often turns his attention to the interrogation of captured enemies. After all, a few drops of spittle in the right places is enough to make just about anyone talk....

Though not cold-blooded, Diamondback has psychologically adopted certain snake-like traits as his own. He dislikes cold temperatures and loves heat; he spends much of his free time in VIPER’s saunas, hot tubs, and desert combat camps. He also enjoys swimming, or even just laying around in warm, shallow water.

Quote: “I don’t need a bite to poison you!”

Powers/Tactics: By merging his DNA with that of certain ophidians, VIPER’s scientists gave Diamondback strength, resilience, and reflexes far in excess of human normal. He strikes with the speed of a cobra and the strength of an anaconda. He loves to fight, to feel his enemies’ flesh pulp beneath his powerful fists.

But that’s not all he can do. His powers also include certain venoms, perfect for use on opponents who can stand up to him in hand-to-hand combat. One type of poison he injects with his fangs (which, thanks to his strength and durability, can punch through almost any flesh). This poison weakens his foes, making them more vulnerable to his other attacks. If he can’t get close enough to bite, he can also spit an acidic poison over a range of 8”. Able to eat through nearly anything (though not energy fields), it can cause severe burns and injuries to even the toughest superhumans. One particularly vicious attack Diamondback enjoys making is a multiple-Power attack where he bites a foe and spits on him at the same time.

Vinegar neutralizes Diamondback’s acidic spittle. Dousing a spittle wound with vinegar immediately stops the spittle from causing any further damage to the victim (though it does not heal burns already caused).

Campaign Use: There’s nothing much unusual about Diamondback — he’s tough, strong, and serves VIPER loyally. It’s unlikely superheroes would encounter him outside of specific VIPER combat missions.

To make Diamondback tougher, boost his SPD, STR, and DEX, making him more of a “brick.” You might also consider adding a few inches of Stretching; that would fit well with his other serpentine powers and give him a way to surprise his foes. To weaken him, get rid of his natural weapons and venoms.

Diamondback does not Hunt heroes on his own. He only does so when VIPER orders him to, how it orders him to.

Appearance: Like many other VIPER superhumans, Diamondback has a disturbingly serpentine appearance. A mesh of fine greenish scales, much tougher than leather, has replaced his skin, though somehow without diminishing his sense of touch. He has no bodily hair whatsoever, nor a nose, and his eyes are those of a snake. Claws tip his fingers, fangs fill his mouth, and his tongue is forked. Except in cold weather, he usually wears nothing more than a loincloth or kilt-like garment, plus metallic bracers on his wrists.

DRACONIS

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
40	STR	30	17-	Lift 6,400 kg; 8d6 [4]
23	DEX	39	14-	OCV: 8/DCV: 8
30	CON	40	15-	
15	BODY	10	12-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll 13-
20	EGO	20	13-	ECV: 7
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
12	COM	1	11-	
13	PD	5		Total: 21 PD (8 rPD)
13	ED	7		Total: 21 ED (8 rED)
5	SPD	17		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
14	REC	0		
60	END	0		
50	STUN	0		Total Characteristics Cost: 187
Movement: Running: 6"/12"				
Flight: 12"/24"				
Cost	Powers		END	
120	<i>Force Manipulation:</i> Multipower, 120-point reserve			
15m	1) <i>Force Lifting:</i> Telekinesis (40 STR), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)		3	
6u	2) <i>Disrupt Force Fields:</i> Suppress Force Fields 10d6, Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)		3	
4u	3) <i>Strangulation Bubble:</i> RKA ½d6, NND (defense is Life Support [Self-Contained Breathing] or not needing to breathe; +1), Does BODY (+1), Continuous (+1)		4	
7u	4) <i>Force Blast:</i> Energy Blast 12d6, Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)		3	
7u	5) <i>Force Prison:</i> Entangle 6d6, 6 DEF, Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)		3	
9u	6) <i>Abrasion Field:</i> RKA 3d6+1 (physical), Armor Piercing (+½), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)		3	
7m	7) <i>Telekinetic Flight:</i> Flight 12", Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)		0	
18m	8) <i>Dragon Wall:</i> Force Wall (14 PD/0 ED, 5" long and 2" tall), Transparent To Energy (+½), Hardened (+¼), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)		4	
21	<i>Draconis Toxin Gun:</i> RKA 1 point, Penetrating (+½); OAF (-1), 4 Charges (-1) plus Drain DEX and CON 4d6, two Characteristics simultaneously (+½), Delayed Recovery Rate (points return at the rate of 5 per Minute; +¼); OAF (-1), RKA Must Do BODY (-½), Linked (-¼), 4 Charges (-1)		[4]	
12	<i>VIPER BCU:</i> Armor (8 PD/8 ED); OIF (-½), Activation Roll 14- (-½)		0	
10	<i>Strong Willed:</i> Mental Defense (14 points total)		0	
5	<i>VIPER Communicator:</i> High Range Radio Perception (Radio Group); OAF (-1), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-½)		0	
5	<i>Psionically Aware:</i> Mental Awareness		0	

Perks

5 Fringe Benefit: Membership (Dragon Branch)

Talents

3 Absolute Range Sense

Skills

9 +3 with Force Manipulation Multipower
 3 Bureaucratics 13-
 3 Demolitions 13-
 3 High Society 13-
 3 KS: Military History 13-
 2 KS: The Military/Mercenary/Terrorist World 11-
 3 KS: The Psionic World 13-
 2 KS: VIPER 11-
 3 Language: English (fluent; Greek is native)
 3 Lockpicking 13-
 3 Oratory 13-
 3 Power: Telekinesis Tricks 14-
 4 SS: Archaeology 14-
 3 Tactics 13-
 3 Teamwork 13-

Total Powers and Skills Cost: 304

Total Character Cost: 491

200+ Disadvantages

20 Hunted: UNTIL 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
 20 Hunted: Champions 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
 10 Hunted: VIPER 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
 15 Psychological Limitation: Megalomania (Common, Strong)
 10 Psychological Limitation: Transfixed By Battle (Common, Moderate)
 5 Psychological Limitation: Obsessed With Ancient Battlefields (Uncommon, Moderate)
 15 Reputation: VIPER supercriminal, 11- (Extreme)
 20 Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)
 15 Social Limitation: Secret Identity (Alexander Dracoulides) (Frequently, Major)
 161 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 491

Background/History: An obsessive student of military history, Alexander Dracoulides was convinced he was the reincarnation of a great historical general. In an effort to revive his "latent memories" of those times, he visited ancient battlefields, consulted Gypsies, and worked with hypnotists. He squandered his family fortune and got nowhere.

One day he made the mistake of taking the advice of a "shaman" and ingested a copious amount of drugs before going to sleep on a battlefield. He didn't receive the visions of ancient glory he so longed for — he ended up spending two years in a coma in a hospital in Cyprus. When he awoke, he discovered his muscles had atrophied badly... but he could move objects with the power of his mind! As he went through physical therapy, he practiced with his telekinetic powers, more convinced than ever that he was destined to become a world conqueror.

Through devious channels, VIPER found out about "Draconis" ("of the Dragon," the "imperial name" Dracoulides had chosen for himself). It sent

DRACONIS
PLOT SEEDS

A popular daytime television talk show sends troubled teens to "boot camp" to straighten them out (and gives overstressed housewives with teenaged children the vicarious thrill of seeing smart-mouthed teenagers receive extremely harsh punishment). A photograph of one of these boot camps reveals a figure in the background who might be Draconis! What's really going on with the "Sally Jen" show and its approach to "tough love"?

It's no longer enough for Draconis to command living troops; now he plans to find a way to develop his powers so he can summon soldiers from the past to fight on his behalf. Can you stop him before (as Sapphire says) "he commits a crime against nature as well as humanity?"

Alexander Dracoulides surrenders himself to the authority, claiming he's *never* been responsible for his actions: someone crawled inside his head when he was in a coma in Cyprus and took control of his mind. Was Draconis responsible for his actions, or has he been a victim for his entire career... and if so, who took control of him?

a recruitment team to pay him a visit. Upon discovering his delusions of conquest and grandeur, the VIPER agents played upon them, convincing him that joining VIPER was just the first step on his road to rulership of Earth.

VIPER has since had cause to question the wisdom of the recruiters' tactic. While Draconis did join the organization and has served as part of Dragon Branch ever since, he's a poor follower — he persists in his megalomania. After considerable badgering, he persuaded the Council Of Thirty to give him command of a Nest in the northwest United States. Except on the battlefield, where he showed a high degree of tactical skill, he was a miserable leader; it didn't take long before his Nest was crushed in rather spectacular fashion by the unlikely combination of PRIMUS and PSI (the latter saw him as a rival psionic who could attract telepaths to VIPER).

That defeat took a little of the wind out of Draconis's sails, but not much. He continues to agitate for leadership positions, and clearly seems to think VIPER should serve him, not the other way around. Conflict between Draconis and the Council is not yet frequent, but is on the rise, and it's causing concern in some quarters of VIPER that the organization has another rogue supervillain on its hands. Serpent-General Cliffe already has several contingency plans in place to deal with Draconis should the need arise.

Personality/Motivation: Draconis is a megalomaniac. He still accepts orders from his VIPER superiors, especially in non-combat situations, but once he gets to the battlefield he's likely to do what he wants — and if possible he wants to lead. Most Nest Leaders have learned to hand him a squad of agents, indicate an objective, and then let him alone. This usually satisfies him... but if he decides someone has pawned a stupid or meaningless mission off on him, watch out!

Draconis has such a lofty opinion of "the glory of battle" that combat often transfixes him. On his first Phase in any combat, he must make an EGO Roll. If he succeeds, he can take actions

as he wishes. If he fails, he takes no action (though he defends himself at full DCV), but just watches the battle in delight; he may attempt the EGO Roll again each Phase until he snaps out of it or the battle ends. (An enemy telepath could also use this quirk against him to force him to make additional rolls later in a battle.)

Quote: "You think I and my men are jokes? Come, upbraid me with your savage wit... wait a minute, you can't laugh while I'm squeezing the air out of your lungs, can you?"



Powers/Tactics: Draconis is a mutate with powers of force manipulation. He can shape planes of force for various purposes (protecting himself or others, blasting or strangling people, and so forth). He can also exert some control over other force fields. VIPER scientists suspect he may actually have much greater powers, involving telepathy and other psionic abilities, but his personal obsessions hold him back.

Draconis's tactics depend on whether he's alone or leading a team of agents. While he's in command, he's content to use his powers to bolster agents; for example, he'll put up his "Dragon Wall" to protect agents as they fire, or use his telekinesis to grab a target so agents can more easily direct their fire against it. When fighting by himself, he'll combat his foes directly with force blasts, force prisons, abrasion fields, and more. He also carries a dart-gun with poisoned darts; he likes to use this to surprise and weaken his foes.

Campaign Use: Draconis serves two purposes in the game. One, you can use him to bolster groups of agents, giving them tactical options they'd otherwise lack. Second, he's a time bomb waiting to go off; eventually, he'll turn on VIPER, and the PCs may be able to take advantage of the situation to attack the snakes.

The "split from VIPER" plot has been done to death in many campaigns, so if you use Draconis in this way, try to really *show* the players the tension between VIPER and Draconis, and perhaps add an unexpected twist or two. Alternatively, you can use him as a "VIPER makes an example of him" character: he breaks from VIPER, only to discover an experimental device was secretly implanted in him that either neutralizes his powers, or kills him.

To make Draconis weaker, reduce his Multipower reserve so he can't use so many powers at once, and/or reduce the Active Points in his individual powers. To make him tougher, increase the Multipower reserve — or better yet, shift some of the defense, movement, and utility powers to an Elemental Control, and give him more attacks in the Multipower. You could also boost a few of his existing powers (for example, increase his Telekinesis to 60 STR).

Draconis does not Hunt heroes on his own. He only does so when VIPER orders him to, how it orders him to. He chafes at this, though, particularly if he feels a hero has insulted or belittled him. VIPER's refusal to let him pursue a vendetta against a hero he's come to hate may be what finally pushes him over the edge.

Appearance: Draconis is a bearded Caucasian male with a Mediterranean skin tone in his early 30s. He wears a green VIPER-style costume with black trim, plus a long flowing cape attached to a pair of shoulder pads with a facing snake motif. He carries his tranquilizer pistol in a holster on his right hip on most occasions. When he speaks in English, his Greek accent is quite noticeable.

FREON

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 [1]
20	DEX	30	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
23	CON	26	14-	
13	BODY	6	12-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll 12-
12	EGO	4	11-	ECV: 4
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
10	COM	0	11-	
8	PD	5		Total: 28 PD (20 rPD)
8	ED	3		Total: 28 ED (20 rED)
5	SPD	20		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
10	REC	4		
50	END	2		
40	STUN	7		Total Characteristics Cost: 125

Movement: Running: 21"/42"

Cost	Powers	END
70	<i>Ice Powers:</i> Multipower, 70-point reserve	
7u	1) <i>Ice Blast I:</i> Energy Blast 14d6	7
7u	2) <i>Ice Blast II:</i> Energy Blast 9d6, Invisible to Sight Group (+½)	7
7u	3) <i>Ice Blast III:</i> Energy Blast 9d6, Area of Effect (One Hex Accurate; +½)	7
6u	4) <i>Ice Darts:</i> RKA 2d6, Armor Piercing x2 (+1)	6
3u	5) <i>Ice Bonds I:</i> Entangle 4d6, 8 DEF; Vulnerable (Fire/Heat; -1)	6
3u	6) <i>Ice Bonds II:</i> Entangle 4d6, 5 DEF, Explosion (+½); Vulnerable (Fire/Heat; -1)	7
4u	7) <i>Ice Sheet:</i> Change Environment (create ice sheet) 32" radius, -4 to DEX Rolls to move on, Personal Immunity (+¼); Only Affects Characters Who Are Moving On The Ground (-¼)	5
15	<i>Ice Powers:</i> Elemental Control, 30-point powers	
55	1) <i>Ice Armor:</i> Force Field (20 PD/20 ED), Hardened (+¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
7	2) <i>Ice Form:</i> Invisibility to Sight Group, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Only When Not Moving (-1)	3
12	3) <i>Ice Slides:</i> Running +15" (21" total); Physical Manifestation (-¼)	3
45	4) <i>Cold Rage:</i> Succor Ice/Cold Powers 4d6, all Ice/Cold Powers simultaneously (+2)	6

Martial Arts: VIPER Brawling

Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
4 Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort
4 Dodge	—	+5	Dodge, Affects All Attacks, Abort
4 Punch	+0	+2	5d6 Strike
3 Throw	+0	+1	3d6 + v/5; Target Falls

Perk

5 Fringe Benefit: Membership (Dragon Branch)

Skills

12 +4 with Ice Powers Multipower

3 Combat Driving 13-

FREON PLOT SEEDS

When a superhero's Cold Ray blaster hits Freon, Freon and VIPER discover that he has developed the power to absorb cold and use it to vastly augment his powers. VIPER is now racing to transport Freon to Ice Station VIPER so he can become one of the most powerful superhumans in the world, while the heroes have to try to intercept him and keep him far, far away from any chilly regions.

A childhood friend of Freon's has gone to the tabloids to "expose" him based on some of the unusual incidents from his adolescence. Freon sets out to stop this person and trash the tabloid; the heroes have to find out what's going on and stop it.

After VIPER take too long to bust Freon out of jail following a botched mission, his loyalty to the organization reverses itself. Determined to get revenge on his superiors, he decides to turn state's evidence against VIPER. He approaches the heroes with a plea for help. Will they believe him? If so, can they protect him from the hit squads VIPER sends to eliminate him?

- 3 Computer Programming 12-
- 3 Concealment 12-
- 5 Cramming
- 2 Gambling (Card Games) 12-
- 2 KS: History 11-
- 3 KS: The Superhuman World 12-
- 2 KS: VIPER 11-
- 7 Paramedics 14-
- 2 PS: VIPER Agent 11-
- 5 SS: Biology 14-
- 3 SS: Genetics 12-
- 3 SS: Medicine 12-
- 3 Stealth 13-
- 3 Streetwise 13-
- 3 Tactics 12-
- 3 Teamwork 13-
- 3 WF: Small Arms, Blades

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 287

Total Cost: 457

200+ Disadvantages

- 10 Distinctive Features: Mutant (Not Concealable; Always Noticed; Detectable Only By Unusual Senses)
- 5 Distinctive Features: unusually low body temperature (Easily Concealed)
- 20 Hunted: UNTIL 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
- 20 Hunted: Champions 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
- 10 Hunted: VIPER 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Pyrophobia (Fear Of Fire) (Common, Strong)

- 15 Reputation: VIPER supercriminal, 11- (Extreme)
- 20 Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)
- 15 Social Limitation: Secret Identity (Fred Ellsworth) (Frequently, Major)
- 20 Vulnerability: 2 x STUN from Fire/Heat Attacks (Common)
- 20 Vulnerability: 2 x BODY from Fire/Heat Attacks (Common)
- 87 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 457

Background/History: Born in 1970, Fred Ellsworth was an ordinary enough kid growing up in North Dakota. Then puberty hit, and he suddenly began experiencing wracking pains throughout his body. This went on for over a week, with no doctor able to tell his family what was happening. When the pain finally passed, he found out, at first by accident and then by experimentation, that he had developed strange powers over ice and cold.

For a while, Fred hid his powers; after all, winters are long and cold in North Dakota. But by the time he was in late high school, a few too many people were looking at him funny and asking questions. After he used his “ice bonds” power to stop a bully from beating him up, he ran away from home before “they could lock me up and experiment on me.”

Fred made his way to San Francisco, committing minor crimes along the way to support himself. Shortly after he got to the Bay Area, VIPER leaders there heard about “the new supercriminal” in town and had agents track him down. Making Fred an offer of lavish pay — and a new home, a place he could “belong” — they recruited him into the organization in 1990. Fred soon became a loyal member of Dragon Branch, and has remained so ever since. He’s no fool; he knows a good thing when he sees one.

Personality/Motivation: A lot of agents consider Freon a little childish — he likes to make stupid jokes, insult his enemies, and sometimes even show off his powers. But he usually only gets that way when he’s clearly got an advantage over his foes, or when he becomes frustrated over his inability to affect or defeat more powerful superhumans. In ordinary circumstances, he’s clever and competent, a professional supercriminal with more than a decade of experience committing crimes.

Quote: “Just stay cool, hero. Chill out.”

Powers/Tactics: Freon is a mutant whose powers give him control over cold and ice. He can use them for a wide variety of effects, from several types of chilling blasts, to super-hardened “ice darts” propelled at such speeds that they easily pierce armor, to encasing his opponents in blocks of ice. He can also surround himself with a suit of “ice armor” that protects him from his enemies’ attacks. When he gets angry or determined enough, he can boost all of his powers using his Succor ability, but this costs a lot of END so he can’t keep it going for long.

But Freon’s abilities don’t end there. To give himself a high degree of battlefield mobility, he learned



how to make “ice slides” that allow him to move at great speeds. To keep his enemies from following him, he can lay down a sheet of ice over a large area, causing everyone in that area to slip, stumble, and fall. Most interestingly of all, he can convert his entire body to transparent ice, effectively rendering himself invisible as long as he doesn’t move (people who get close enough to him when he’s in this state have a chance to see him).

Freon’s body temperature is 30 degrees colder than an average human’s. People who touch his skin can sense this, so he usually wears long pants and long-sleeved shirts (even in summertime, which sometimes looks odd, but he can use his powers at an extremely low level to keep himself cool). This also renders him vulnerable to attacks based on fire or heat, which has given him a healthy case of pyrophobia (fear of fire). He won’t go anywhere *near* a fire — not even a candle flame or hearth fire — if he can avoid doing so. He often becomes visibly nervous, even agitated, when near fire or heat sources.

Freon’s powers depend on having a reasonable amount of moisture in the atmosphere, so they work at lesser effect (typically 75-50% of normal Active Points) in deserts and similar areas, and may not work at all in outer space or other places with no water. Knowing this, Freon actively avoids any such areas, and VIPER tries not to send him to them. (Thus, his powers do not take this as a Limitation.)

To keep himself occupied during “down time,” Freon has taken advantage of VIPER’s vast datafiles and corps of experts to study a wide variety of subjects — genetics (of particular interest to him due to his mutant heritage), computers, and many more.

Campaign Use: Freon is pretty much a straightforward VIPER supervillain, loyal to the organization because of all it’s done for him and ever interested in not rocking the boat. He likes the status quo just fine and wants to maintain it; in the event someone in Dragon Branch tried to mount a coup against the Supreme Serpent, Freon would probably inform VIPER’s leaders and side with them in any conflict.

If you want to make Freon more powerful, you have two options. First, you can increase the reserve of his Multipower and the size of his Elemental Control. Second, you could give him more powers (perhaps by choosing some from the *Ice And Cold Powers* section of *The UNTIL Superpowers Database*). To weaken him, reduce his Multipower to a 50- or 60-point reserve, decrease his Armor to 10 PD/10 ED, get rid of his Succor power, and perhaps remove a point of SPD.

Freon does not Hunt heroes on his own. He only does so when VIPER orders him to, how it orders him to.

Appearance: Freon wears a light blue and white costume — the basic bodysuit is light blue, with white gloves, belt, trunks, boots, and shoulder piece (the lower edges have an “icicle” motif). His “mask” consists of a plate of ice he molds to the front of his face; it leaves his ears and blonde hair uncovered. Out of uniform he’s a pretty average-looking guy — 5’7”, white, blue eyes, clean-shaven — someone who could easily blend into a crowd (and often has as part of VIPER missions).

HALFJACK

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
40	STR	30	17-	Lift 6,400 kg; 8d6 [4]
23	DEX	39	14-	OCV: 8/DCV: 8
25	CON	30	14-	
20	BODY	20	13-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll 12-
14	EGO	8	12-	ECV: 5
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
8	COM	-1	11-	
12	PD	4		Total: 27 PD (15 rPD)
8	ED	3		Total: 23 ED (15 rED)
5	SPD	17		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
15	REC	4		
50	END	0		
53	STUN	0		Total Characteristics Cost: 167

Movement: Running: 11”/22”
Leaping: 28”/56”

Cost	Powers	END		
60	<i>Cybernetic Body Powers:</i> Multipower, 60-point reserve			
6u	1) <i>Ionic Blaster:</i> Energy Blast 12d6; 15 Charges (-0)	[15]		
4u	2) <i>Laser:</i> RKA 3d6; 15 Charges (-0)	[15]		
6u	3) <i>Stun Ray:</i> Energy Blast 6d6, NND (defense is FF; +1); 15 Charges (-0)	[15]		
6u	4) <i>Muscular Paralysis Ray:</i> Drain STR 4d6, Ranged (+½); 15 Charges (-0)	[15]		
6u	5) <i>Flare Beam:</i> Sight Group Flash 12d6; 15 Charges (-0)	[15]		
	<i>Martial Arts: VIPER Brawling</i>			
	Maneuver	OCV		
		DCV		
		Notes		
4	Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort
4	Dodge	—	+5	Dodge, Affects All Attacks, Abort
4	Punch	+0	+2	10d6 Strike
3	Throw	+0	+1	8d6 + v/5; Target Falls
37	<i>Force Field Generator:</i> FF (15 PD/15 ED), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)			1
18	<i>Armored Body:</i> Armor (12 PD/12 ED); Activation Roll 11- (-1)			0
10	<i>Armored Body:</i> Lack of Weakness (10 points) for Normal and Resistant Defenses; Activation Roll 11- (-1)			0
10	<i>Flare Compensators:</i> Sight Group Flash Defense (10 points)			0
12	<i>Heavy:</i> Knockback Resistance (-12")			0
5	<i>Infrared Sensors:</i> Infrared Perception (Sight Group)			0
12	<i>Telescopic Lenses:</i> Telescopic for Sight Group (+8 versus Range Modifier)			0
10	<i>Right Leg Servos:</i> Running +5" (11" total)			1
20	<i>Right Leg Servos:</i> Leaping +20" (28" forward, 14" upward)			2

Perk

5 Fringe Benefit: Membership (Dragon Branch)

HALFJACK PLOT SEEDS

While on the “low” end of one of his mood swings, Halfjack hears a report about a doctor who’s developed revolutionary new procedures in organ cloning and tissue regeneration. He kidnaps the doctor and demands that he replace his (Halfjack’s) cybernetic half with flesh. The heroes have to rush to find the two of them before Halfjack becomes frustrated and kills the doctor.

Mechanon regards Halfjack as an abomination; how dare he sully technology with his putrid flesh? He decides to teach VIPER a lesson by killing Halfjack and destroying a few Nests to boot. The heroes may sit back and gleefully watch... until Mechanon’s methods begin racking up a body count of innocent civilians. He’s got to be stopped!

Interface decides he needs an ally for his next scheme, and that Halfjack would be perfect. He uses a mind control ray to turn Halfjack away from VIPER. The heroes have to try to stop the two cyborgs’ scheme while dealing with the fact that VIPER’s tearing the city apart looking for its wayward supervillain.

Talents

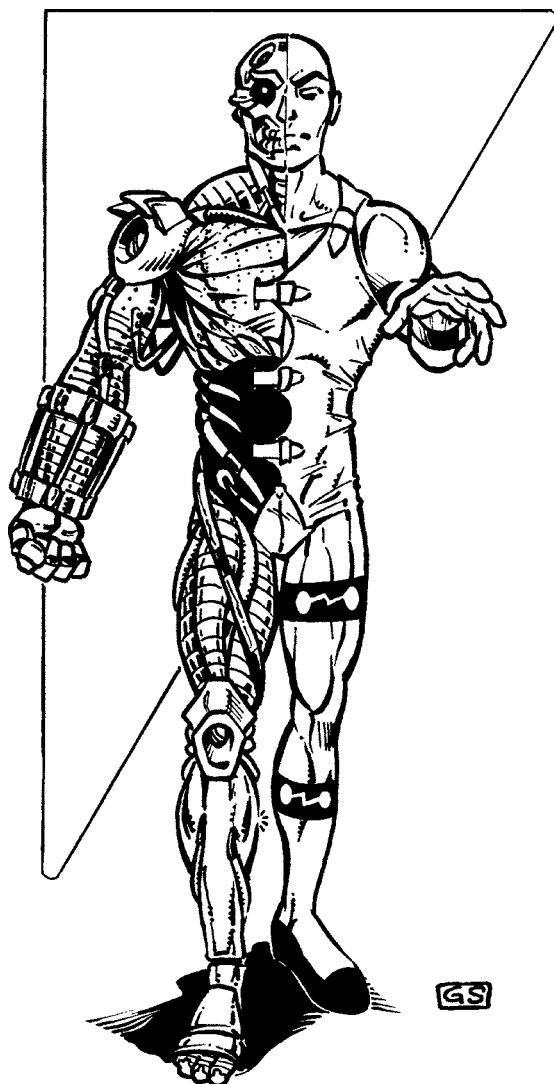
- 17 *Onboard Computer*: Absolute Range Sense, Absolute Time Sense, Bump of Direction, Eidetic Memory, and Lightning Calculator
 3 Resistance (3 points)

Skills

- 20 +2 Overall
 3 Combat Driving 14-
 3 Combat Piloting 14-
 3 Electronics 12-
 3 Fast Draw (Small Arms) 13-
 3 Interrogation 13-
 2 KS: The Superhuman World 11-
 2 KS: VIPER 11-
 3 Paramedics 12-
 2 PS: VIPER Agent 11-
 5 SS: Chemistry 14-
 3 SS: Cybernetics 12-
 3 Stealth 13-
 3 Streetwise 13-
 2 Survival (Tropical) 12-
 3 Tactics 12-
 3 Teamwork 12-
 3 WF: Blades, Small Arms

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 331

Total Cost: 498

**200+ Disadvantages**

- 25 Hunted: UNTIL 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
 25 Hunted: Champions 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
 15 Hunted: VIPER 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
 5 Physical Limitation: always weighs 3,200 kg (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)
 15 Psychological Limitation: Loves/Hates Cybernetic Half Of His Body (Common, Strong)
 20 Psychological Limitation: Casual Killer (Very Common, Strong)
 15 Reputation: VIPER supercriminal, 11- (Extreme)
 20 Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)
 15 Social Limitation: Public Identity (James "Jack" Smith) (Frequently, Major)
 10 Vulnerability: 2x STUN from Electrical Attacks (Uncommon)
 5 Vulnerability: 1½x BODY from Electrical Attacks (Uncommon)
 128 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 498

Background/History: There was a time when Jack Smith was just another VIPER agent — an Elite agent, sure, highly trained and extremely competent, but still just an agent. He had a reputation for brutality, but in VIPER that's not really a drawback.

Then came the day when he ran left when he should have run right. An overzealous superhero hit the right side of his body with a powerful energy blast, nearly killing him. His comrades managed to escape with his body; they figured they were taking it back to the Nest for burial.

But Jack was stronger and more stubborn than that. Despite the agonizing pain, he clung to life, passing in and out of consciousness. When VIPER's doctors saw him, they realized the right half of his body was virtually destroyed. It was a miracle he had survived this long, and he wouldn't last the night if they didn't take drastic measures. They made a fateful decision: call in the cybernetics experts.

The cyberneticists cut away the dead flesh and replaced Jack's right-side skeletal structure with carbon steel, using the same substance to reinforce his remaining bones to handle the load. Then they attached other systems to mimic the organs he had lost, a robotic arm and leg, and other pieces. It took almost a week of non-stop work, but Jack lived through it and didn't reject the new parts due to massive doses of special anti-rejection drugs.

Thanks to the doctors' work, the new Jack was stronger, faster, and more durable than any normal human. But his powers came a price: the right half of his body was now cold, unfeeling metal and silicon. Alternately fascinated and repulsed by his current state, Jack somehow resigned himself to his fate and went back to work for VIPER — but this time as part of the prestigious Dragon Branch.

Personality/Motivation: Halfjack's psyche is a confused mass of thoughts and emotions, mostly relating to his half-robotic body. Sometimes he loves his

cybernetic parts — they grant him great strength and agility, not to mention the functional equivalent of superpowers, and have brought him wealth untold. But at other times he loathes them, realizing all too well how they separate him from humanity and make him a freak. This quasi-bipolar disorder, coupled with his natural violent tendencies and temper, have made him sociopathic. He thinks nothing about murdering a few cops, or a couple of innocent bystanders, or a hostage or agent who simply looks at him wrong. His VIPER disciplinary record is filled with instances of his having casually murdered someone the organization desperately wanted to ransom, or brainwash, or obtain information from.

Quote: “My robotic parts make me perfect. Your flesh makes you weak.”

Powers/Tactics: Halfjack’s superhuman abilities derive from his half-cyborg body. VIPER’s doctors replaced the badly injured right half of his body with robotic parts, which VIPER has, over the years, upgraded. His implants and attachments include several different types of weapons (an ionic blaster, a high-powered laser, and energy beams which stun, weaken, and blind his foes), various sensory enhancements, servos and micro-motors which grant him prodigious strength and enhanced reflexes, and an onboard computer that serves a variety of functions.

Early in his career, Halfjack suffered from the fact that armor protected only half of his body. Superheroes and cops quickly learned to target the left half of his body, often laying him low before a battle had barely begun. Several years ago, the Supreme Serpent ordered VIPER’s technicians to install a force field generator in Halfjack’s cyborg frame. Now protected all over (though still weaker on his left side), Halfjack has become a much more formidable opponent.

In combat, Halfjack prefers to rely on his cybernetic weapons, keeping his opponents at range until his attacks weaken or injure them. If his ionic blaster and laser won’t do the trick, or if he wants to take an enemy alive, he switches to the more exotic weapons

like the stun ray and paralysis ray. After blasting an enemy a few times, he often likes to close in to use his strength to beat them into unconsciousness. If goaded into losing his temper, he may eschew his blasters for hand-to-hand combat.

Halfjack’s powers are not bought as Foci because they’re so thoroughly integrated into his body that they’re effectively the same as innate superpowers. Removing his cybernetic and robotic parts would require hours of complicated surgery using highly specialized tools.

Campaign Use: Compared to most members of the Dragon Branch, Halfjack is mentally unstable. Sometimes filled with self-loathing, sometimes an overly prideful showoff, he takes out his anger through violence and murder. He might be the “weak link” a group of heroes looking to take down Dragon Branch needs.

To make Halfjack more powerful, increase a few of his Characteristics and/or give him more built-in weapons and abilities. If you want, he could become a veritable walking arsenal, with any of the blasters in Chapter Five as a cybernetic weapon. To weaken him, reduce his physical Characteristics and get rid of some of his weapons (or drastically reduce the number of Charges on most of them), and/or reduce or remove his Force Field.

Halfjack does not Hunt heroes on his own. He only does so when VIPER orders him to, how it orders him to.

Appearance: Halfjack’s bizarre appearance has turned the stomach of more than one policeman or television viewer. The right half of his body no longer consists of flesh; instead, cybernetic and robotic parts have replaced what was once there with machines. The left half of his body retains a regular appearance. The result is a hideous caricature of a human being that subtly disturbs even those who have known Jack a long time. Halfjack covers the left side of his body with a red or green half-bodysuit that attaches to clips on his cybernetic body. He does not wear a mask.

OCULON PLOT SEEDS

The Warlord sees a picture of Oculon and realizes he's got Blueboy eyes. Deciding Oculon might also have some Blueboy technology, the Warlord decides to kidnap him, taking as many of his personal possessions in the process as he can, and then dissect him. Naturally, VIPER's not going to let Oculon go without a fight, and innocent people might get caught in the crossfire....

When VIPER recovers another Hzeel body, Dr. Moreau wants to transplant parts of it into Oculon's body, but Oculon refuses to cooperate. The evil doctor decides to trick the PCs into capturing Oculon so he can then arrange to "rescue" him without VIPER's knowledge and perform his experiments. He's certain Oculon will thank him when after he wakes up.

Oculon begins to develop blindingly painful headaches emanating from his eyes. Fearing that he may be dying, or that the eyes have somehow begun to "transform" him, he turns to VIPER's doctors for help, but they can do nothing. He decides to seek the PCs' help — but VIPER's not exactly going to let him go over to the enemy quietly.

OCULON

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 [1]
20	DEX	30	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
23	CON	26	14-	
11	BODY	2	11-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll 13-
12	EGO	4	11-	ECV: 4
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
10	COM	0	11-	
8	PD	5		Total: 17 PD (9 rPD)
12	ED	7		Total: 21 ED (9 rED)
5	SPD	20		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
10	REC	4		
66	END	10		
35	STUN	4		Total Characteristics Cost: 135

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Cost	Powers	END		
100	<i>Eyebeams:</i> Multipower, 100-point reserve			
7u	1) <i>Power Blast:</i> Energy Blast 20d6; Increased Endurance Cost (x2 END; -½)	20		
9u	2) <i>Standard Blast:</i> Energy Blast 12d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0		
9u	3) <i>Concentrated Blast:</i> Energy Blast 12d6, Armor Piercing (+½)	9		
9u	4) <i>Wide Blast:</i> Energy Blast 12d6, Area Of Effect (One Hex; +½)	9		
7u	5) <i>Cone Blast:</i> Energy Blast 10d6, Area Of Effect (21" Cone; +1); No Range (-½)	10		
7u	6) <i>Focused Blast:</i> RKA 3d6, Armor Piercing (+½)	7		
9u	7) <i>Blinding Blast:</i> Sight Group Flash 12d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0		
	<i>Martial Arts: VIPER Brawling</i>			
	Maneuver	OCV		
		DCV		
		Notes		
4	Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort
4	Dodge	—	+5	Dodge, Affects All Attacks, Abort
4	Punch	+0	+2	5d6 Strike
3	Throw	+0	+1	3d6 + v/5; Target Falls
18	<i>Armored Costume:</i> Armor (9 PD/9 ED); OIF (-½)			0
20	<i>Alien Eyes:</i> Sight Group Flash Defense (20 points)			0
5	<i>Alien Eyes:</i> Infrared Perception (Sight Group)			0
5	<i>Alien Eyes:</i> Ultraviolet Perception (Sight Group)			0
10	<i>Alien Eyes:</i> N-Ray Perception (Sight Group; cannot see through force fields, lead, or gold)			0
12	<i>Alien Eyes:</i> +8 versus Range Modifier for Sight Group			0
	Perk			
5	Fringe Benefit: Membership (Dragon Branch)			
	Skills			
15	+5 with Eyebeams Multipower			
2	Animal Handler (Snakes) 13-			
3	Bugging 13-			
3	Computer Programming 13-			

3	Electronics 13-
2	KS: The Superhuman World 11-
2	KS: VIPER 11-
2	PS: VIPER Agent 11-
3	SS: Astronomy 13-
2	SS: Physics 11-
3	Stealth 13-
3	Streetwise 13-
3	Tactics 13-
3	Teamwork 13-
3	WF: Small Arms, Blades

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 299

Total Cost: 434

200+ Disadvantages

5	Distinctive Feature: Alien Eyes (Easily Concealed; Noticed And Recognizable)
20	Hunted: UNTIL 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
20	Hunted: Champions 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
10	Hunted: VIPER 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
15	Psychological Limitation: Arrogant Showoff (Common, Strong)
15	Psychological Limitation: Fear Of Losing His Sight In Any Way (Common, Strong)
10	Psychological Limitation: Claustrophobia (Uncommon, Strong)
15	Reputation: VIPER supercriminal, 11- (Extreme)
20	Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)
15	Social Limitation: Secret Identity (Kevin Calhoun) (Frequently, Major)
89	Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 434

Background/History: From the journals of Dr. Philippe Moreau:

The serendipitous coincidences of life never cease to amaze me.

Shortly after being liberated by my now-colleagues at VIPER, I was brought to the United States and stationed at one of their "Nests" so that I might continue my work uninterrupted by the prudish and ignorant "authorities." But when one works for VIPER, sometimes interruptions of a far more interesting nature occur.

One evening two agents arrived in my laboratory well past midnight. One of them was carrying-dragging the other, who had suffered a facial injury of some sort.

"Ya gotta help him, Doc!" the conscious one said. "An acetylene torch blew up in his face, I think it hurt his eyes." As he talked, we hoisted him onto the table, and I began an examination. The explosion, if that's really what hurt him, had done extensive damage to the face, lacerating the cheeks and jaw — and, most significantly, destroying the man's eyes. There was nothing left there, just gaping, bloody pits.

"All right, I'll take care of him. Leave me to my work."

"But doc, I wanna wait here and see if he pulls...."

"Out!" I said forcefully. I dislike having others

watch me work. He scurried away.

For a moment I stood silent, unable to believe my good fortune. Then I went into the back, to the “cold room,” and opened drawer number two.

The corpse looking up at me from the tray was clearly not human. The skin tone, shape of the head and frame, and four fingers on each hand proved that. But what drew me to it now were its eyes — large, red orbs, dimmed by death but perhaps not wholly dead themselves. What would happen, I wondered, were I to graft these eyes into poor Agent Calhoun’s ravaged sockets?

Removing the alien’s eyes was tricky work. Even on humans, eye surgery requires a delicate touch, such as only I and a few other men in the world possess, and alien physiology only made the job more difficult. But of course I accomplished the task. Then began the even more strenuous work of transplanting the eyes into Calhoun. Many hours of work later, I was finished.

I kept Calhoun in my makeshift “clinic” for several weeks as he healed, monitoring his progress closely and administering massive doses of anti-rejection drugs. At last the day came when, with exquisite care, I removed the bandages from his face. The alien eyes, now filled with the strange fire of hybrid life, had given Kevin Calhoun back his sight, and much more. We soon discovered he could see spectra beyond what human eyes could perceive. Even more amazing was the revelation of his ability to emit destructive eyebeams! I had succeeded beyond my wildest dreams.

VIPER brought me that alien body thinking I might use it to develop biological weapons for them. I believe that I have, though not of the sort they had in mind....

Personality/Motivation: Kevin Calhoun, once nothing but a Basic Agent in VIPER, was transformed in more than physical ways when Dr. Moreau gave him the eyes of a member of the alien Hzeel race to replace his own ruined ones. The alien orbs interacted strangely with his human physiology, apparently vastly increasing his intelligence. Although a high school dropout, he began studying science, eventually becoming as accomplished in that field as many with far more formal education than he.

But with greater intellect also came greater pride, greater arrogance, and a greater tendency to show off. Oculon has power, and he knows it; he wants everyone else to know it, too. He never wearies of bragging about it, particularly the time his eyebeams rocked Dr. Destroyer. In combat he frequently soliloquizes and exults in his triumphs. But if things start to go against him too much, he’s likely to withdraw and regroup. If the unthinkable happens — he loses his ability to see, even temporarily — he may panic and flee.

Quote: “My eyebeams can stop Destroyer himself. You’ll be no problem....”

Powers/Tactics: Oculon’s powers derive entirely from his alien eyes, which due to the mingling of human and Hzeel biosubstances have the ability

to project powerful energy beams. Oculon can vary the width and intensity of his eyebeams, giving him offensive versatility beyond that of many energy projectors. His eyes also provide him with various vision-related powers.

In combat Oculon usually opens with his Standard Blast or Blinding Blast, or perhaps his Cone Blast if multiple targets group together appropriately. If his enemies can withstand his lower-powered attacks, he’ll shift to his Concentrated, Focused, and Power Blasts. Although he’s got great offensive power, he also has quite a few weaknesses. His defenses are low, making it easy to take him out of the fight. He lacks Movement Powers, so he may have trouble keeping up with a fast-moving battle. If necessary, he can equip himself with VIPER gadgets to overcome these deficiencies, such as force field belts and jumpboots.

Campaign Use: As one of the leaders of the Dragon Branch, Oculon has consider-



able influence within VIPER. He enjoys using his power and prestige and living the high life; it's not likely he'd betray the organization casually. But ultimately he's loyal to himself, not VIPER, and might jump ship for a better deal if he thought he could get away with it. VIPER would undoubtedly want revenge....

To make Oculon more powerful, give him some gadgets to overcome his weaknesses (see above), add some slots to his Multipower (a No Range Modifier or Penetrating slot, for example), or give him some other abilities so he's less of a one-trick pony. To decrease his power, reduce his Multipower reserve and perhaps get rid of a slot or three.

Oculon does not Hunt heroes on his own. He only does so when VIPER orders him to, how it orders him to.

Appearance: Oculon is a white male 5'10" tall. He wears a royal blue bodysuit with gold gloves, boots, belt, chest design, and highlights. The suit covers his head (his hair fell out after he got the Hzeel eyes) but leaves his face open. His alien eyes are large and red-gold, and strange lights seem to play within them when he becomes angry, upset, or passionate.



RIPPER

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
70	STR	60	23-	Lift 400 tons; 14d6 [7]
18	DEX	24	13-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
35	CON	50	16-	
25	BODY	30	14-	
8	INT	-2	11-	PER Roll 11-
10	EGO	0	11-	ECV: 3
28	PRE	18	15-	PRE Attack: 5d6
2	COM	-4	9-	
20	PD	6		Total: 40 PD (20 rPD)
20	ED	13		Total: 40 ED (20 rED)
5	SPD	22		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
25	REC	8		
70	END	0		
80	STUN	2		Total Characteristics Cost: 227

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Leaping: 24"/48"

Cost	Powers	END
15	<i>Omicron Chemistry:</i> +30 STR; No Figured Characteristics (-½), 4 Charges lasting 1 Turn each (stopped by any Drain of any Characteristic; -½) [4 x 1 Turn]	
45	<i>Rip 'Em In Two:</i> HKA 3d6 (6d6 with STR), Penetrating (+½); Must Follow A Grab Made With Both Hands (-½)	4
14	<i>Omicron Healing:</i> Healing BODY 2d6 (Regeneration; 2 BODY per Turn), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Persistent (+½); Extra Time (1 Turn; -1¼), Self Only (-½)	0
50	<i>Omicron Armor Plating:</i> Armor (20 PD/20 ED), Hardened (+¼); Activation Roll 14- (-½)	0
120	<i>Tough Body:</i> Physical and Energy Damage Reduction, Resistant, 75%	0
10	<i>Internal Oxygen Supply:</i> Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing)	0
5	<i>Super-Physiology:</i> Life Support (Safe Environments: Low Pressure/Vacuum, High Pressure, High Radiation)	0
10	<i>Super-Strong Legs:</i> Leaping +10" (24" forward, 12" upward)	1

Perk
5 Fringe Benefit: Membership (Dragon Branch)

Skills
25 +5 HTH

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 299
Total Cost: 526

200+	Disadvantages
25	Distinctive Features: purplish flesh, grafted armor, ten feet tall, etc. (Not Concealable; Causes Horror)
35	Enraged: Berserk in combat or when using Omicron Chemistry power (Very Common), go 11-, recover 11-
25	Hunted: UNTIL 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
25	Hunted: Champions 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
15	Hunted: VIPER 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
5	Physical Limitation: always 2.98 meters tall, always weighs 1,600 kg (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)

- 20 Psychological Limitation: Loves To Fight (Very Common, Strong)
- 15 Reputation: incredibly destructive super-criminal, 11- (extreme)
- 20 Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)
- 15 Social Limitation: Public Identity (James Allison)
- 126 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 526

Background/History: From the journals of Dr. Philippe Moreau:

I so dislike being awakened in the middle of the night. But I suppose that it's inevitable given the line of work the jealousy and narrow-mindedness of others has forced me to adopt.

Five nights ago the Nest Leader banged on my door well past midnight. He took me to see one of his men, lying in the infirmary horribly injured. He babbled something about a botched robbery and the explosion of some type of equipment. Whatever it was, it showered the man with an acidic compound, eating away most of his skin and features despite his BCU and helmet. The only way to save his life was by grafting armor plating onto his body in place of the lost skin, installing a special exoskeleton to replace his lost muscles, and subjecting him to extensive drug treatments with special sera I recently developed. He lived through all the operations and injections, though I fear he will never again know complete freedom from pain.

After Dr. Moreau finished "rebuilding" the man who would become known as Ripper, VIPER gave Ripper a place in Dragon Branch and a reason to go on living — superhuman combat. Over time, they replaced the basic armor and exoskeleton Moreau implanted in and on his body with experimental devices developed by VIPER labs: Omicron technology. His biochemistry stabilized, and sometimes enhanced, by the Omicron chemicals injected into him through his Omicron harness, and his earlier armor replaced with far stronger Omicron Armor, he has become a nearly unstoppable force on the battlefield — one of VIPER's most powerful, and uncontrollable, superhuman assets.

Personality/Motivation: Ripper does not have a highly complicated personality. In a constant state of pain, he's normally surly, aggressive, and easily angered. The only time he truly enjoys himself is when he's fighting (particularly other "bricks" or anyone who can challenge him). He often gets so wrapped up in combat that he completely loses control of himself, attacking anyone and anything around him. Few agents, or even other members of Dragon Branch, like to work with him.

Quote: "Arrgh! I'll hurt you!"

Powers/Tactics: Ripper's powers all relate to his incredible strength and resilience, which come to him compliments of VIPER's Omicron Chemistry technology by way of Dr. Moreau's original surgical

grafts. Ordinarily capable of lifting an astonishing 400 tons and shrugging off the effects of the most powerful weapons and superhuman attacks known, he becomes even stronger when he activates his Omicron Chemistry harness and injects his body with an extra dose of Omicron fluids. When that happens — he can only do it a few times a day for brief periods — everyone, even his allies, had better watch out. Then he's capable of savagely pummeling anyone, even Grond or Dr. Destroyer, and often loses control of his temper so that he cannot tell friend from foe.

Even after years of playing the "supervillain game," Ripper doesn't have a lot of tactical sense. His approach to combat consists of little more than "punch it 'til it stops moving, then attack the next guy." He particularly enjoys Grabbing his opponents (especially small, fast-moving ones like martial artists) and literally tearing them limb from limb — hence his *nom du crime*. Sometimes he shows flashes of greater tactical awareness, such as picking up large objects and using them to hit groups of enemies, but usually he sticks to his tried and true "beat them into unconsciousness" method.

Ripper's Omicron technology-based powers do not take a *Focus* Limitation because they're so thoroughly grafted to his body that they're effectively the same as innate superpowers. Removing his Omicron harness and armor plating would require hours of complicated surgery using highly specialized tools — and even then he'd retain his high Characteristics and other abilities (assuming he survived the process).

Campaign Use: Ripper is muscle for VIPER, pure and simple. He's not capable of complex thinking or scheming; he just goes where he's told and bashes anyone who gets in his way. VIPER has developed special tranquilizer darts for use against him when he becomes Berserk, but these are in short supply and only work about half the time.

Thanks to his high defenses and Damage Reduction, Ripper is very difficult to put down. Heroes will have to learn to team up on him, or wait until he goes Berserk and attacks his teammates... or you can hold him in reserve as a "weapon of last resort," like Viperia

To make Ripper more powerful, give him more "brick tricks" like Rip 'Em In Half — he doesn't need any more STR, but creative ways to use what he's got could really expand his repertoire. To make him weaker, reduce his STR and other Characteristics, and the effects of his various Omicron powers.

Appearance: Of all of VIPER's superhumans, Ripper probably has the most revolting appearance. The accident which led Dr. Moreau to give him superhuman powers in the first place ate away most of his skin, including all external features (such as nose, ears, and genitalia), and colored the exposed flesh a bilious purple. Moreau's surgery, plus years of Omicron treatments, have made his body even uglier, and the armor and Omicron harness grafted to it haven't exactly done anything to prettify him. Ripper's appearance alone has caused more than one person to become sick to his stomach.

RIPPER PLOT SEEDS

The classic Ripper plot: Ripper goes Berserk in combat, forgets his commander's orders, and goes on a rampage through the city. The heroes and VIPER have to simultaneously fight each other while trying to capture him/get him back.

When VIPER doctors use a sample of Ripper's Omicron chemistry-infused blood to save an injured female agent, she becomes the almost as powerful Ripperette! Ripper falls head over heels in love... but she wants nothing to do with the hideous supervillain. Can the city withstand his violent attempts to court her, find gifts to win her over, and make her his bride?

After an UNTIL encounter with Ripper goes horribly awry, a crippled UNTIL agent develops an obsession with stopping the hideous strongman. What lengths will he go to — and how many lives will he be ready to sacrifice — to kill Ripper?

SIDEWINDER PLOT SEEDS

Sidewinder becomes infatuated with a female PC (or prominent NPC) and begins “wooing” her. When she turns him down repeatedly, his attentions become more sinister... and violent.

After Sidewinder botches a job, the VIPER leadership punishes him. Believing the screw-up wasn't his fault (it was Oculon's), Sidewinder angrily decides to take revenge. To keep from exposing himself, he begins secretly tipping off the PCs to certain VIPER activities.

Sidewinder trains hard, saves up his Experience Points, and buys some speedster tricks. With VIPER's permission, he wants to test them out... on the PCs.

SIDEWINDER

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
40	STR	30	17-	Lift 6,400 kg; 8d6 [2]
30	DEX	60	15-	OCV: 10/DCV: 10
20	CON	20	13-	
13	BODY	6	12-	
15	INT	5	12-	PER Roll 12-
15	EGO	10	12-	ECV: 5
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
10	COM	0	11-	
10	PD	2		Total: 28 PD (18 rPD)
10	ED	6		Total: 28 ED (18 rED)
8	SPD	40		Phases: 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12
12	REC	0		
40	END	0		
43	STUN	0		Total Characteristics Cost: 189

Movement:	Running:	26"/208"
	Leaping:	8"/16"
	Swimming:	20"/160"

Cost Powers END

67	<i>Gauntlet Blaster:</i> Energy Blast 10d6, Autofire (5 shots; +½), 64 Charges (+½); OIF (-½)	[64]
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Speedster Martial Arts

Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
5 Flying Dodge	—	+4	Dodge All Attacks, Abort; FMove
5 Passing Disarm	-1	-1	Disarm, 50 STR to Disarm roll; FMove
5 Passing Strike	+1	+0	8d6 +v/5; FMove
5 Passing Throw	+0	+0	8d6 +v/5; Target Falls; FMove
5 Rapid Punch	+1	-2	12d6 Strike
75 <i>Super-Running:</i> Running +20" (26" total), x8 Noncombat Multiple, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)			0
42 <i>Super-Swimming:</i> Swimming +18" (20" total), x8 Noncombat Multiple, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)			0
10 <i>Diminished Fatigue:</i> Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼) for 40 STR			0
36 <i>Friction Resistance:</i> Armor (12 PD/12ED)			0
12 <i>Armored Costume:</i> Armor (6 PD/6 ED); OIF (-½)			0
8 <i>Impact Plating:</i> Physical Damage Reduction, Normal, 50%; OIF (-½), Only To Protect Against Damage Sustained When Performing Move Throughs/Move Bys (-1)			0

Perk

5	Fringe Benefit: Membership (Dragon Branch)
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Skills

30	+6 HTH
4	+2 OCV with Gauntlet Blaster
3	Combat Driving 15-
3	Concealment 12-
3	Conversation 13-
3	Lockpicking 15-
2	KS: The Superhuman World 11-
2	KS: VIPER 11-

3	Persuasion 13-
3	Power: Speedster Tricks 15-
2	PS: VIPER Agent 11-
3	Security Systems 12-
3	Shadowing 12-
3	Stealth 15-
3	Streetwise 13-
3	Tactics 12-
3	Teamwork 12-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 356

Total Cost: 545

200+ Disadvantages

20	Hunted: UNTIL 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
20	Hunted: Champions 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
10	Hunted: VIPER 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
15	Psychological Limitation: Cautious (Common, Strong)
10	Psychological Limitation: Fear Of Being Restrained (Uncommon, Strong)
15	Reputation: VIPER supercriminal, 11- (Extreme)
20	Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)
15	Social Limitation: Secret Identity (Michael Ramirez) (Frequently, Major)
220	Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 545

Background/History: Michael Ramirez was a low-ranking VIPER agent who wanted more. When tests revealed he might prove susceptible to genetic alteration, he jumped at the chance and volunteered for the experiments. Doctor Blank and his assistants exposed Ramirez to special radiations to strengthen his muscles and skin, injected him with drugs to inhibit his body's ability to generate fatigue poisons, and used chemicals to send his metabolism into hyperdrive. After eight tedious and painful months, he gained superhuman strength and swiftness, though fortunately without developing serpentine physical features like so many of the other guinea pigs. Since then he's served VIPER as Sidewinder, taking a break from the organization only during occasional periods of incarceration in Stronghold.

Personality/Motivation: Because his powers depend so much on movement, and because he enjoys open spaces so much (they give him room to run), Sidewinder has a powerful fear of being captured, restrained, or confined (including a mild touch of claustrophobia). He particularly fears going to prison, and will do whatever he has to (including running away from the battlefield) to avoid it. He shies away from opponents who can Entangle or Grab him, preferring to leave them for his comrades. However, sometimes he tries to take such enemies out right away with a quick Move Through attack.

His fear of capture makes Sidewinder unusually cautious. He likes to plan missions extensively, taking into account all possible details and complications, and having back-up plans for all reasonable (and many unreasonable) contingencies. But since he thinks showing his fear this way isn't very

“macho” or “cool,” he hides it behind a facade of bravado and confidence. He does as much of his planning in secret as he can, and in combat utters wisecracks and snide remarks to make himself look bold and daring. He can’t fool anyone who’s known him for long, though.

Quote: “If you blink, you’ll miss me. But I won’t miss you!”

Powers/Tactics: Sidewinder’s powers are those of the classic superhuman “speedster”: he can run (and swim) with incredible speed, has amazing reaction time, and so forth. Though not as fast or flexible as some speedsters, he’s more than quick enough to run rings around his average opponent. (If you want him to perform a low-powered “speedster stunt,” such as some of the abilities in the *Speedster Powers* section of *The UNTIL Superpowers Database*, use his *Speedster Tricks Skill*.)

But there’s a lot more to Sidewinder than just speed. Unlike most speedsters, who are comparatively fragile, Sidewinder is strong and tough. He can’t pick up as much as a typical “brick” or punch as hard, but he’s found ways to combine his speed and strength into a lethal package. First, he developed a series of special maneuvers which rely on his speed. He can run by someone at top velocity and strike them (doing extra damage thanks to his momentum) or disarm them, punch an opponent a dozen times in the space of an eye-blink, or quickly get out of the way of incoming attacks. Even better, he can simply run into someone as fast as he can, counting on his strength and toughness to keep from knocking himself out. To improve his chances of that, he had VIPER laboratories create special “impact plating” for his costume to protect his shoulders, arms, and other parts of the body which hit targets he collides with. Between the plating, his natural friction-resistant skin, and his armored costume, he’s pretty well protected.

If Sidewinder’s speed, strength, and maneuvers can’t do the trick, or he can’t reach his opponent, he can fall back on his Gauntlet Blasters. Using standard VIPER technology, engineers created these devices for him on the Council Of Thirty’s orders after Sidewinder lost a fight due to his lack of ranged attacks. VIPER technicians have upgraded them several times since then, and could conceivably install other weapons in his costume if necessary.

Campaign Use: For the most part, Sidewinder’s a typical VIPER supervillain, encountered primarily in combat. However, since he retains his human form and interests, the PCs might run into him in social situations without knowing who he is. They could also encounter him while he performs the elaborate preparatory work he puts into missions, then have to try to chase him down when he flees.

To make Sidewinder more powerful, give him some “speedster tricks” such as supersonic finger-snaps, high-speed phasing, or the like. You could also add more gadgets to his arsenal. To

weaken him, slow him down and get rid of his gauntlet blaster.

Sidewinder does not Hunt heroes on his own. He only does so when VIPER orders him to, how it orders him to.

Appearance: Michael Ramirez is a more or less average looking man of Hispanic descent, though some women find his cocky, confident attitude attractive. His eyes, moustache, and hair are as dark as his heart. As Sidewinder, he wears a black bodysuit costume with dark red boots, knee-pads, belt, gauntlets, and impact plating along his shoulders and arms. His half-face mask, also dark red, leaves his hair free. A stylized logo of a sidewinder curves sinuously across his chest in dark red.



VIPERIA PLOT SEEDS

In a city that's recently been victimized by Viperia, a woman shows up who claims she's Viperia's mother. She says that for a small price she can perform a mystic ritual that will turn her daughter away from VIPER. Is she a crackpot, a desperate woman who's gone insane from the loss of her child, or the reincarnation of Queen Ackee?

Viperia appears to be unstoppable, but Dark Seraph says he's discovered a mystical way of defeating her, which he'll share — provided the heroes perform a "small favor" for him. Who is the lesser of these two evils?

UNTIL intelligence has tracked Viperia's home base to some place within a 20 kilometer radius in the Ghanian wilderness. Your mission is to locate its exact position and (if possible) capture her alive.

Viperia doesn't particularly get along with other supervillains, with one notable exception — Gravitar! By coincidence, they recently worked together and hit it off, so Gravitar tracks down Viperia and persuades the super-strong villainess to accompany her on a shop-and-rob expedition in the swankiest commercial districts of the world. Why settle for an Yves St. Laurent original when you can have Yves St. Laurent himself? Can you stop the two most powerful women on the planet from going on the world's deadliest shopping spree?

VIPERIA

Daughter Of The Serpent

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
70	STR	60	23-	Lift 400 tons; 14d6 [7]
28	DEX	54	15-	OCV: 9/DCV: 9
45	CON	70	18-	
23	BODY	26	14-	
23	INT	13	14-	PER Roll 14-
20	EGO	20	13-	ECV: 7
40	PRE	30	17-	PRE Attack: 8d6
20	COM	5	13-	
32	PD	18		Total: 32 PD (32 rPD)
32	ED	23		Total: 32 ED (32 rED)
8	SPD	42		Phases: 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12
23	REC	0		
90	END	0		
90	STUN	9		Total Characteristics Cost: 370
Movement:		Running:	36"/144"	
		Flight:	30"/240"	
		Swimming:	22"/44"	
Cost	Powers	END		
175	<i>The Inheritance Of The Snake:</i> Multipower, 175-point reserve			
10u	1) <i>Eyes Of Fire:</i> RKA 4d6, Penetrating (+½), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)	4		
10u	2) <i>Breath Of The Hurricane:</i> Energy Blast 14d6, Double Knockback (+¾), Explosion (Cone; +½), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); No Range (-½), Does Not Work Underwater Or In A Vacuum (-¼)	8		
11u	3) <i>Breath Of Ice:</i> Dispel Fire Powers 15d6, all Fire Powers simultaneously (+2), Explosion (Cone; +½), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); No Range (-½)	8		
9u	4) <i>Shockwave:</i> Energy Blast 10d6, Double Knockback (+¾), Explosion (-1 DC/3"; +1), Hole In The Middle (1" in the middle; +¼), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); No Range (-½), Only Affects Targets On The Ground (-¼)	7		
9u	5) <i>Thunder-Clap:</i> Sound Group Flash 10d6, Area Of Effect (10" Radius; +¼), Personal Immunity (+¼), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); No Range (-½) plus Energy Blast 4d6, NND (defense is Hearing Group Flash Defense; +1), Area Of Effect (10" Radius; +¼), Personal Immunity (+¼), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); Linked (-½), No Range (-½)	6		
2u	6) <i>The Big Wrap-Up:</i> Entangle 6d6, up to 6 DEF; OIF (appropriate materials of opportunity; -½), No Range (-½), Extra Time (at least a Full Phase, and often longer, depending on how long it takes to get the materials; -½), Defense Depends On Materials Used (-½), Side Effect (may cause considerable damage to the environment; -0)	6		
40	<i>Daughter Of The Sun:</i> Absorption 8d6 (energy; half to BODY, half to END), Delayed Fade Rate (points fade at the rate of 5 per Minute, +¼); Limited Phenomena (fire, heat, and radiation attacks; -¼)	0		

52	<i>Her Wrath Falls Like The Storm:</i> Autofire (5 shots; +½) for 70 STR, Reduced Endurance (½ END; +½)	1
44	<i>Nothing Is Beyond Her Reach:</i> Area Of Effect (One Hex; +½) for 70 STR, Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)	1
44	<i>No Spirit Can Hide From Her:</i> Affects Desolidified (+½) for 70 STR, Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)	1
90	<i>Her Body Is As Solid As Stone:</i> Energy Blast 9d6, Damage Shield (+½), Continuous (+1), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Only Affects Those Who Strike Her, Not Casual Contact Or Grabs (-½)	0
32	<i>No Weapon Can Make Her Bleed:</i> Damage Resistance (32 PD/32 ED)	0
50	<i>She Is Greater Than The Elements, Greater Than The Ages:</i> Life Support: Total, including Longevity (Immortality)	0
10	<i>Her Senses May Not Be Diminished:</i> Sight Group Flash Defense (10 points)	0
10	<i>Her Senses May Not Be Diminished:</i> Hearing Group Flash Defense (10 points)	0
20	<i>She May Not Be Toppled:</i> Knockback Resistance (-10")	0
20	<i>Her Will May Not Be Contravened:</i> Mental Defense (24 points total)	0
20	<i>Her Spirit And Body Are As Indomitable As The Snake:</i> Power Defense (20 points)	0
22	<i>She Will Not Die:</i> Healing 1d6 (Regeneration; 1 BODY per Turn), Resurrection (unless killed by her father or some future son), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Persistent (+½); Self Only (-½), Extra Time (1 Turn; -1¼)	0
140	<i>She Moves Like The Lightning:</i> Multipower, 140-point reserve	
14u	1) <i>She Flies Like The Wind:</i> Flight 30", x8 Noncombat, Combat Acceleration (+¼), Rapid Noncombat Movement (+¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
11u	2) <i>She Runs Like A Cheetah:</i> Running +30" (36" total), Combat Acceleration (+¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
4u	3) <i>She Swims Like A Fish:</i> Swimming +20" (22" total). Combat Acceleration (+¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
10	<i>Nothing May Hide From Her:</i> N-Ray Perception (Sight Group) (not through lead, gold, or force fields)	0
20	<i>She Sees With The Wind:</i> Targeting for Hearing Group	0
5	<i>She Sees The Hidden Fires:</i> Infrared Perception (Sight Group)	0
5	<i>She Sees In The Moonlight:</i> Ultraviolet Perception (Sight Group)	0
3	<i>Her Hearing Is Keener Than Man:</i> Ultrasonic Perception (Hearing Group)	0
12	<i>She Hears Hidden Voices:</i> High Range Radio Perception (Radio Group)	0
5	<i>She Knows The Workings Of The Mind:</i> Mental Awareness	0
9	<i>Her Gaze Is As Keen As Dragons:</i> +6 versus Range Modifier for Sight Group	0

Perks

- 5 Fringe Benefit: Membership (Dragon Branch)

Talents

- 16 *Words Cannot Be Hidden From Her:* Universal Translator 14-; Only To Translate African Languages (-¼) 0

Skills

- 30 +3 Overall Levels
- 3 Acrobatics 15-
3 Breakfall 15-
1 CuK: Ancient African Cultures 8-
3 KS: Snakes 14-
1 KS: VIPER 8-
3 Language: English (fluent; Bantu is native)
3 Deduction 14-
3 Persuasion 17-

Total Powers and Skills

Cost: 989

Total Character Cost: 1,359

200+ Disadvantages

- 20 Hunted: UNTIL 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
- 20 Hunted: Champions 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
- 10 Hunted: VIPER and the Serpent Nama 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
- 10 Physical Limitation: Cannot Take a Recovery If Brought to Below 0 END Without A Week's Hibernation (Infrequently, Greatly)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Curious About The World (Very Common, Strong)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Anxious To Please Her Father (Common, Moderate)
- 20 Reputation: VIPER supercriminal, 14- (Extreme)
- 20 Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)
- 10 Unluck 2d6
- 10 Vulnerability: 1½ x Effect from Magic Adjustment Powers (Common)
- 10 Vulnerability: 1½ x STUN from Magic Attacks (Common)
- 10 Vulnerability: 1½ x BODY from Magic Attacks (Common)
- 989 Experience Points

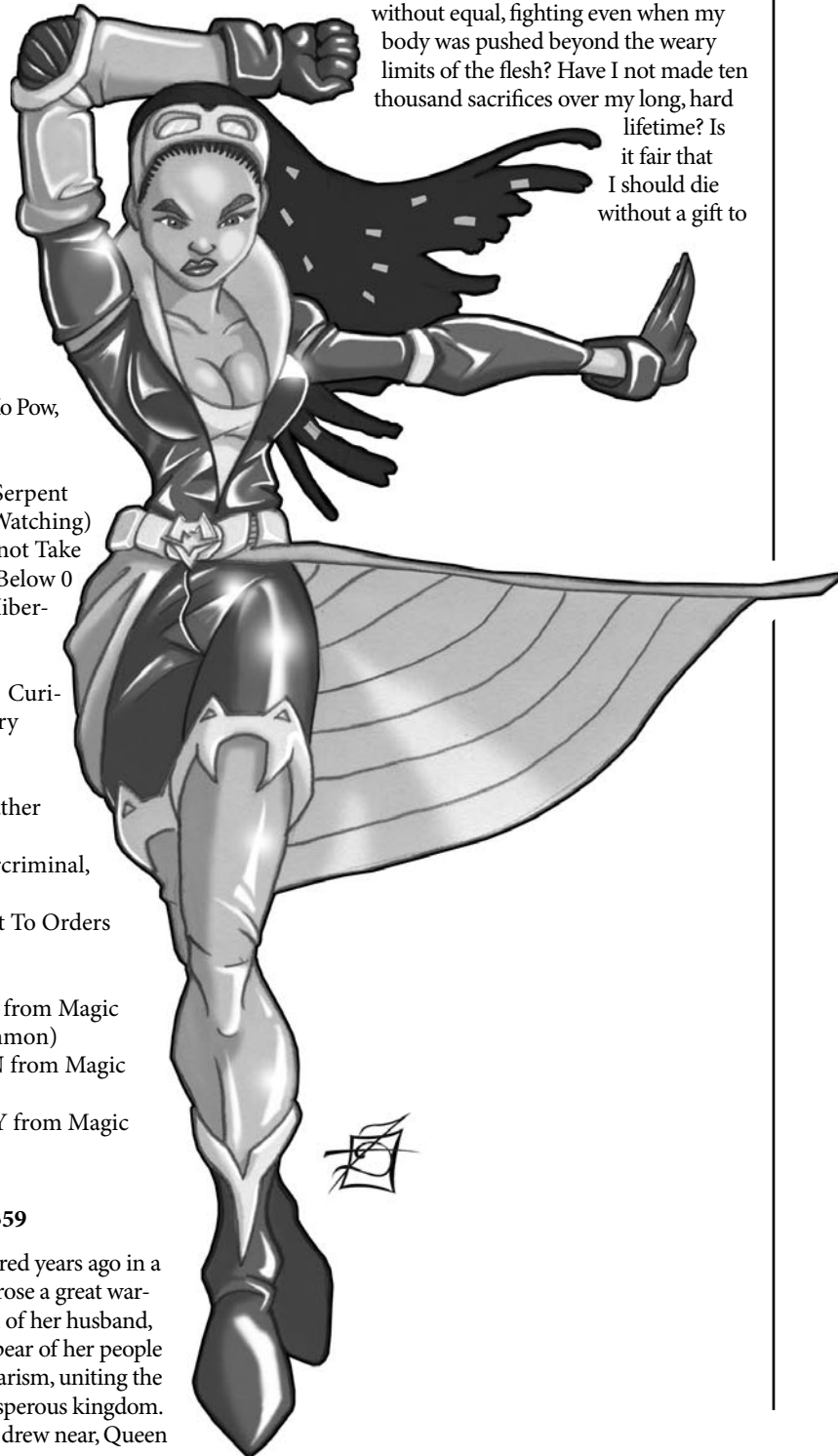
Total Disadvantage Points: 1,359

Background/History: Eleven hundred years ago in a distant land now forgotten, there rose a great warrior-queen, Ackee. After the death of her husband, she took in her hand the sacred spear of her people and drove back the forces of barbarism, uniting the nearby tribes into a small but prosperous kingdom. But as the years passed and death drew near, Queen

Ackee became increasingly aware that not only her body would die; it was unlikely that her kingdom would survive her death. This troubled her aged mind, so she embarked on a great journey to visit the cave of the Great Serpent Nama, to seek his wisdom and find a way to ensure that her kingdom would be preserved.

"No kingdom lasts forever," Nama told her what she already knew, but wasn't willing to face. "But few kingdoms fade into the dust without leaving some influence, great or small, on those that follow them. Take comfort in that."

"But I must have more!" Ackee declared, not hiding the bitterness in her voice. "Have I not been a brave and just ruler? Have I not been a battle queen without equal, fighting even when my body was pushed beyond the weary limits of the flesh? Have I not made ten thousand sacrifices over my long, hard lifetime? Is it fair that I should die without a gift to



hold onto when the breath leaves my body?"

Then the serpent smiled, and Nama became a Man, young, tall, and glorious beyond all others, as befits the serpent god. Lovingly he took the aged queen Ackee into his arms, and behold! — she was young again, and under the moonlight her skin was unweathered, and her beauty had become that of the goddesses of ages past. Then Nama shared the holiest of his arts with the great queen, and she became heavy with child. Seeing that his work was done, Nama dismissed her, telling her in a voice full of majesty (and perhaps regret):

"Farewell Ackee, greatest queen of Africa. You have a wild thing in your belly, and that is my gift to you, for she will endure the uncounted years and bespeak your memory, though not as a queen, for no kingdom will ever contain her!"

Ackee returned to her people, who marveled that one as aged as she could still bear a child. But the child was a storm in the womb, and the months were difficult, and when the time came for the Serpent's daughter to enter the world Ackee did not survive, though with her last breath she looked upon her daughter with a smile on her face.

The elders named Ackee's daughter "Tuwi-shande," for that was the name they gave to the greatest of the late summer storms that came from the ocean and left the land in ruins. And the name was apt, for none could control Tuwi-shande. As an infant, she tore apart huts; as a child, she devastated villages; as an adolescent, she laid waste to whole countrysides. No spear could pierce her flesh and none dared lay a hand upon her. In her youth, she was easily bored, and had no use for words, for the ones she heard were mostly used to curse her.

For sport Tuwi-shande searched the lands for signs of battle; when she found them, she dared both sides to kill her, and she laughed when they tried, for against her the mightiest warriors in the world were as harmless as a baby monkey. Finally, every warrior in West Africa felt so humiliated and ashamed by his inability to stop her that no man dared lift his spear, and war vanished from the land. This was a crime against the order of things, so the bravest warriors in Africa set aside their differences and made the long journey to Nama's cave. They begged the Serpent God to do something about his wild daughter. Nama laughed at their complaints, but finally he agreed to put his daughter to sleep until an age of the world arrived that had heroes able to handle someone of her nigh-matchless power.

Nama called his daughter, and she came to his call, and he ensorcelled her. The spell he wove was imperfect — three times throughout the ages, Tuwi-shande awoke for a few weeks, wreaked havoc upon the land, then returned to her slumber for centuries — but it was enough to spare the world from her full wrath. Finally in 1992, when Nama anointed the Supreme Serpent, he realized the time had come to awaken Tuwi-shande. VIPER agents were directed by a dreaming vision to visit the cave where Tuwi-shande lay asleep. It took years of experiments to awaken her, but they did so, and when the Serpent's Daughter was exposed to the wonders of the modern era, she marveled at them. The agents told her of a great

war that was taking place between the Snake and the lesser race of men, and Tuwi-shande agreed to help the Snakes without question. The agents clad her in a beautiful green dress which was emblazoned with the symbol of the Snake, and they gave her the name Viperia, which they told her was a sacred name. She was very proud of it.

Ever since, whenever VIPER has met a foe who has humiliated it or been too much for it to handle, the Council Of Thirty unleashes Viperia, and she flies into the fray, laughing at the enemy. And wherever she goes, all hell breaks loose.

Personality/Motivation: Viperia has a rather child-like personality. She really enjoys using her powers, destroying things, and making people look useless and stupid in the face of her nearly almighty strength. For this alone, most heroes despise her. But she's not especially vicious; she has more of a childish callousness stemming from self-centeredness and a satisfaction in winning than true ruthlessness or cruelty. She really doesn't understand much beyond fighting, winning, and her fanatical loyalty to the Snake. In short, she's a kid with the power of a god who's being encouraged to indulge her mean streak.

Since her awakening, Viperia has met people who have fought her with far more power and resistance than in the old days. She's very puzzled by them, but doesn't really take any of them seriously until they defeat her in single combat. (VIPER is quite worried about what might happen on the day she and Dr. Destroyer finally meet; whenever possible, it carefully monitors the area where she's active to make sure there's no chance of such an encounter.) She's also developed a strong curiosity about the modern world; she may divert from a battle to investigate something new and unusual.

Viperia has a child's ambivalence toward romance, and doesn't understand human sexuality or other "adult" matters. Handsome heroes may receive a few compliments, but she has no compulsion to take a husband or mate... yet.

Quote: "You have committed numerous transgressions against Mother VIPER. For that, you must face the wrath of Viperia!"

Powers/Tactics: Viperia is a child of some of the oldest and most powerful magics on earth. She is the embodiment of the most potent of archetypes: the Sun; the Storm; the Snake. And while the spell that created her has given her the wisdom of the Snake as well as its powers, she's apparently got some way to go before that part of her power becomes active (her PRE represents the fact that her powers of awe are *beginning* to awaken).

Viperia is a one-woman wrecking crew. If unleashed in combat, she flies into the heart of the enemy force, engaging as many of the foe at once as she can. While her punches alone can devastate even the strongest heroes, she enjoys using her "breath of the hurricane" to knock the enemy around the battlefield, smashing structures and objects into the piles of rubble that inevitably mark her appearance in a fight. She has developed enough battle-sense to know a big gun hurts more than a small one, and that weapons

mounted on vehicles are dangerous, but otherwise she doesn't worry too much about tactics.

One of the things that makes Viperia such a dangerous combatant are the various naked Advantages that apply to her 70 STR. You should only let her use one at a time, but even in that case they give her far more flexibility and power than the average super-strong villain.

Viperia has a few weaknesses. She's more vulnerable to magic than to other attack forms (a way for her father to control her, if necessary). Also, she's still not completely recovered from the sleeping-spell Nama used to remove her from the world; when she's exhausted, she finds it hard to recover. If brought down to 0 END or lower, she abandons the battle, flies back to her cave in Africa, and sleeps for a week before re-emerging. If she's ever reduced to -30 STUN or below, it takes substantially longer for her to awaken than a normal character (add an extra six months to the recovery time).

Campaign Use: Viperia is VIPER's weapon of last resort. Even in relatively high-powered campaigns, she shouldn't show up frequently; she's an "in case of emergency, break glass" sort of weapon, unleashed only when VIPER has no other way to deal with a situation. After all, the Supreme Serpent is never sure just how much control he, or VIPER as a whole, can exert over her....

In some ways, Viperia is a thematic variation on the epic of Gilgamesh. At the beginning of that epic, the hero was a justly-despised tyrant who cared nothing for the welfare of the people until he was redeemed by friendship. Viperia also has the potential to grow and develop as a human being, if a hero is willing and able to break through the layers of programming VIPER has used on her. However, no force in the universe is likely to make her turn against her father (unless the evil of your campaign's version of Nama is much more obvious).

Viperia is meant to be a tough opponent for any campaign. If she's too tough for your heroes, do the following: get rid of her Multipower of "Strength tricks," at least a few of her naked Advantages for STR, her Absorption, and her Damage Shield; reduce her Characteristics as necessary to bring her closer to average campaign DCs and defenses; and slow down all her modes of movement. On the other hand, if you need to increase her power, boost her STR to 75 (or more!), give her some MegaMovement powers, and add more Strength tricks.

Viperia does not Hunt heroes on her own. She only does so when VIPER orders her to, how it orders her to.

Appearance: Viperia appears to be a beautiful African woman in her early 20s, 5'10" tall with slightly curly dark hair, worn long, and big brown eyes. She wears a green leotard with a gold "V" on her chest, a short skirt, green stockings, boots, and a short gold cape.

VIPER-X

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
40	STR	30	21-	Lift 6,400 kg; 8d6 [2]
26	DEX	48	14-	OCV: 9/DCV: 9
33	CON	46	16-	
15	BODY	10	12-	
23	INT	13	14-	PER Roll 14-
18	EGO	16	13-	ECV: 6
25	PRE	15	14-	PRE Attack: 5d6
18	COM	4	13-	
16	PD	8		Total: 24 PD (8 rPD)
16	ED	9		Total: 24 ED (8 rED)
6	SPD	24		Phases: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
15	REC	0		
66	END	0		
52	STUN	0		Total Characteristics Cost: 223

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Leaping: 12"/24"
Swimming: 4"/8"

Cost	Power	END		
67	VSX-A1 "Shriek" Sonic Rifle: Multipower, 90-point reserve, 2 clips of 32 Charges for entire Multipower (+½); all OAF (-1)	[32]		
4u	1) <i>Standard Setting:</i> Energy Blast 12d6, Armor Piercing (+½); OAF (-1)			
4u	2) <i>Lethal Setting:</i> RKA 4d6, Armor Piercing (+½); OAF (-1)			
4u	3) <i>"Scrambler" Setting:</i> Energy Blast 9d6, NND (defense is solid ear coverings, Hearing Group Flash Defense, target covers his ears, or target is deaf; +1); OAF (-1)			
6	<i>Gun Butt/Club:</i> HA +3d6; OAF (-1), Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½)	1		
36	VPDX-A1 "Coral" Neural Interference Pistol: Drain DEX and INT 4d6, two Characteristics simultaneously (+½), Ranged (+½), Delayed Return Rate (points return at the rate of 5 per Minute; +¼); OAF (-1), 8 Charges (-½)	[8]		
13	<i>Enhanced VIPER Fang:</i> HKA 1d6 (2d6 with STR), Armor Piercing (+½), Range Based On STR (+¼); OAF (-1)	1		
	<i>Martial Arts: Boxing/Commando Training</i>			
	Maneuver OCV DCV Notes			
4	Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort
4	Disarm	-1	+1	50 STR Disarm
4	Dodge	—	+5	Dodge, Abort
3	Hold	-1	-1	Grab, 50 STR to Hold
5	Hook	-2	+1	12d6 Strike
5	Jab	+1	+3	8d6 Strike
4	Killing Strike	-2	+0	1d6 HKA
3	Throw	+0	+1	8d6 + v/5; Target Falls
17	<i>Enhanced VIPER BCU:</i> Armor (8 PD/8 ED), Hardened (+¼); OIF (-½), Activation Roll 15- (-¼)			0
3	<i>VIPER Helmet (Elite) Protection:</i> Armor (4 PD/4 ED); OIF (-½), Activation Roll 8- (only protects Hit Locations 3-5; -2)			0
6	<i>VIPER Helmet (Elite) Communications System:</i> HRRP (Radio Group); OIF (-½), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group As			

VIPER-X PLOT SEEDS

A box belonging to the original VIPER-X comes up at an auction in London; rumor claims it contains information about some of VIPER's deepest and darkest secrets. The owner, an unidentified person, refuses to reveal more, or even the box's location until after he receives payment. VIPER-X wants that box, and so do the PCs... who's going to get it, and how?

The PCs hear that VIPER-X is having another affair with Scorpia — something that would undoubtedly get them both killed, due to the enmity between their respective organizations. An informant tips them off to the location of a hotel room where an alleged liaison is taking place. Is the information legit, or the bait for a trap?

The PCs encounter a homeless man in a major metropolitan city who's the exact double of Kevin Armstrong. He claims VIPER-X is actually a clone, made by VIPER scientists years ago in an effort to discredit PRIMUS. However, this man turns out to be a surgically altered Armstrong lookalike, planted by Krait, who hopes the imposter will draw Kevin out. Even after the PCs discover the truth, someone at PRIMUS wants to present the imposter as "the real thing" to erase the embarrassment of one of PRIMUS's most humiliating episodes, and he wants the PCs to go along with the lie. Do they?

	Well As Radio Group (-½)	0
3	<i>VIPER Helmet (Elite) Nightvision System:</i> Nightvision; OIF (-½)	0
5	<i>VIPER Helmet (Elite) Acoustic Shielding:</i> Hearing Group Flash Defense (8 points); OIF (-½)	0
5	<i>VIPER Helmet (Elite) Flare Shielding:</i> Sight Group Flash Defense (8 points); OIF (-½)	0
7	<i>VIPER Helmet (Elite) Oxygen Supply:</i> Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing); OIF (-½), 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (1 Hour; -0) [1cc]	
12	<i>Iron Will:</i> Mental Defense (16 points total)	0
10	<i>Augmented Physiology:</i> Power Defense (10 points)	0
8	<i>VIPER BEST:</i> Multipower, 12-point reserve; OIF (belt/collection of OAFs; -½)	
1u	1) <i>Microexplosives:</i> RKA ½d6; OAF (-1), 2 Charges (-1½), No Range (-½) [2]	
1u	2) <i>Pick Gun:</i> Lockpicking 11- (or +1 to Lockpicking if agent already has that Skill); OAF (-1)	
1u	3) <i>Miniaturized Laser Torch:</i> RKA 1 point, Penetrating (+½); OAF (-1), 10 Charges (-¼) [10]	
1u	4) <i>Pepper Packet:</i> Images to Smell/Taste Group, 1" radius, Uncontrolled (+½), Usable As Attack ("sticks" to person who breathes it in; +1); OAF (-1), Only Affects Victims Who Inhale It (-¼), 1 Charge lasting 1 Hour (victim can cancel effect by smelling something else equally strong, wind or rain may remove the pepper; -¼) [1cc]	
33	<i>Special VFL-4 Jetpack:</i> Flight 20", Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); OIF (-½)	2
6	<i>Marathon Training:</i> Running +3" (9" total)	1
2	<i>Triathlon Training:</i> Swimming +2" (4" total)	1
4	<i>Strong Leaper:</i> Leaping +4" (8" forward, 4" upward)	1
6	<i>Perceptive:</i> +2 PER with all Sense Groups	0
4	<i>VIPER Helmet (Elite) Hearing Enhancers:</i> +4 versus Range Modifier for Hearing Group; OIF (-½)	0
4	<i>VIPER Helmet (Elite) Telescopic Faceplate:</i> +4 versus Range Modifier for Sight Group; OIF (-½)	0
10	<i>Efficient Physiology:</i> Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼) for 40 STR	0

Perks

5	Fringe Benefit: Membership (Dragon Branch)
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Talents

8	<i>VIPER Wrist Computer:</i> Absolute Time Sense, Bump of Direction, Eidetic Memory (Audio Only; -1), and Lightning Calculator; OIF (-½)	0
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Skills

16	+2 with AI Combat
10	+2 HTH
3	Acrobatics 14-
3	Breakfall 14-
3	Computer Programming 14-
3	Combat Driving 14-
3	Conversation 14-

3	Disguise 14-
3	Fast Draw (Small Arms) 14-
3	Interrogation 14-
3	AK: Millennium City 14-
2	AK: Washington D.C. 11-
2	KS: Criminal Law 11-
3	KS: PRIMUS 14-
3	KS: The Military/Mercenary/Terrorist World 14-
3	KS: The Superhuman World 14-
3	KS: VIPER 14-
3	Language: Arabic (fluent conversation; English is native)
3	Language: Bantu (fluent conversation)
3	Language: Greek (fluent conversation)
3	Language: Spanish (fluent conversation)
3	Persuasion 14-
3	Stealth 14-
3	Streetwise 14-
8	Survival (Desert, Marine, Temperate/Subtropical, Tropical) 14-
3	Tactics 14-
3	Teamwork 14-
3	TF: Common Two-Wheeled Motorized Ground Vehicles, Small Wind-Powered Boats, VFL-4 Jetpack
3	WF: Small Arms, Blades

Total Powers and Skills Cost: 438**Total Character Cost: 661****200+ Disadvantages**

25	Hunted: PRIMUS 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
25	Hunted: Champions 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
15	Hunted: VIPER 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
15	Psychological Limitation: Overly Protective of Friends And Associates (Common, Strong)
10	Psychological Limitation: Hatred Of PRIMUS (Common, Moderate)
15	Reputation: VIPER supercriminal and traitor to PRIMUS, 11- (Extreme)
20	Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)
15	Social Limitation: Public Identity (Kevin Armstrong) (Frequently, Major)
5	Vulnerability: 1½ x Effect from Poisons/Toxins (Uncommon)
316	Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 661

Background/History: Kevin Armstrong grew up as one Detroit's golden boys: boxer, triathlete, scholar, and all-around Renaissance kid. Upon graduating from college, he became one of the elite: a Silver Avenger in PRIMUS. He was the perfect citizen, the All-American Boy.

But PRIMUS didn't turn out to be all Kevin expected. There was too much petty jealousy, too many rivalries and feuds between the Silver Avengers, too little cooperation between the organization and other government agencies. It was a snake pit, and Kevin couldn't adapt to all the games and internal politics. He became extremely disenchanted, but the more he complained, the less people seemed to listen to him.

Then Dr. Destroyer obliterated his hometown of Detroit. His family — including his wife, infant son, parents, and most of the people that he grew up with — were dead.

Kevin blamed the government for the destruction — a government too weak to oppose the enemies of this country, too busy with partisan bickering to deal with the... Kevin had a list of grievances as long as a Congressional report. PRIMUS considered Kevin a little high-strung at the best of times (the official word was that he'd never fully coped with the initial Cyberline treatments) and like many people, he had problems dealing with what Destroyer had done to Detroit. He was ordered to take an extended leave of absence. While on leave, he went boating on Lake Michigan... and in a freak boating accident, he drowned.

Except Kevin didn't die. His "death" was merely a ruse that allowed him to join VIPER. If he was going to work in a snake pit, he'd do so by choice. VIPER didn't lie or deceive people about what it was. It wanted to impose its will directly on the people, instead of lying to them and letting them destroy their country through self-deception and lack of self-responsibility. VIPER would force the people to make the sacrifices necessary to save the country in the long term — sacrifices that would prevent a maniac like Destroyer from ever doing again what he had done to Detroit. People wonder how a Silver Avenger could join VIPER — Kevin's never had a problem telling them why.

VIPER was more than pleased to accept Armstrong into its ranks, and his fortunes sky-rocketed. Before long he was appointed to command an elite squad, VMS-Alpha, and he soon achieved fame in the organization as the agent who killed the supervillainess Bora during VIPER's initial attack on Eurostar in 1996. But the good times didn't last for long. A rival in VMS-Alpha, codenamed Krait, leaked Kevin's true identity to the media, along with "evidence" that made it seem he was a PRIMUS infiltrator of VIPER, not a true traitor to America. Faced with imminent execution by VIPER, and hunted by the authorities, Kevin fled VIPER for more pleasant climes.

Kevin spent the next few years as a mercenary, earning a great deal of respect in the merc community for his skills, tactical genius, and loyalty to his men. He even had a brief affair with the Irish supervillainess Scorpia.

In 2002, Kevin's mercenary ventures took him to West Africa. During the middle of a bloody civil war in Sierra Leone, he was ambushed, shot repeatedly, and left for dead. But he didn't die. He felt the call of the Great Serpent Nama, and he overcame his wounds and went to him. All the Serpent said to him was: "Tell Essec I say you have a destiny." He then directed Armstrong to the door that led to VIPER World Headquarters. When Armstrong delivered this message to the Supreme Serpent, Essec recognized it as a clear instruction from Nama to give the discredited agent his blessing, so he pardoned him and reinstated him with honor into VIPER's ranks. He restored Kevin to command of VMS-Alpha (Krait immediately fled to Southeast



Asia and vanished).

The Supreme Serpent gave Kevin a new code-name, VIPER-X, after the famed VIPER operative of the 1960s (see page 10). Soon VIPER's leadership was portraying him to the rest of the organization as the perfect agent: tough, charismatic, loyal to his friends and VIPER, and ruthless to his enemies. Today, VIPER-X serves as VIPER's "Poster Snake" as well as one hell of an ongoing embarrassment to PRIMUS. Daniel Johnson, the current Golden Avenger, has put Armstrong's capture at the top of his "to do" list.

Personality/Motivation: Kevin has "leader" stamped all over him. He has enough idealism to get along with people, coupled with enough cynicism to make him join VIPER and serve it loyally. He believes in friendship, self-discipline, and responsibility, and tends to give people the benefit of the doubt. When he gets into combat against superheroes and agents, he tries to be as dispassionate towards them as possible, seeing them as obstacles to overcome. He's done a lot of nasty things for VIPER, but so far has rationalized them without experiencing too many pangs of conscience.

Kevin thirsts for vengeance on both PRIMUS (which betrayed and used him, in his view) and Dr. Destroyer (who wrecked his hometown and killed his family). Perpetually serious, and often moody, he's as loyal and protective of the people he loves as he is merciless toward his enemies.

Quote: "Okay, gang, these guys look tough, so stay on your toes. If we lose our heads, we lose the fight. If you

get in trouble, you got my number, don't hesitate to yell. If we stay alert, they're toast. Let's go get 'em."

Powers/Tactics: VIPER-X was always tough — he came from a long line of athletes, scholars, and soldiers... and the Cyberline program made him even tougher. Kevin has the same weakness other Cyberline recipients do: he's especially vulnerable to poisons and toxins (including alcohol). He's tried numerous times to get rid of this handicap, but always fails.

VIPER-X carries enhanced or experimental versions of several VIPER weapons. His "Shriek" sonic rifle has standard, lethal, and stunning modes, and anyone who can resist it probably can't withstand his neural interference pistol. As a last resort, he's got his Fang dagger. Of course, he has full access to VIPER's arsenal, so he could always show up to a fight with more equipment, different equipment, or improved equipment.

VIPER-X's likes to find cover and wait for an opponent to come to him. He often Holds his Action so he can help out teammates in need. He prefers to command the troops and snipe at opponents than to charge recklessly into the fray. Unlike most other members of Dragon Branch, he enjoys working with agents (VMS-Alpha or otherwise) instead of super-humans.

Campaign Use: VIPER-X is meant to be an Opponent That Heroes Respect, someone who seems so capable and reasonable the PCs almost forget he's the enemy — until his ruthless streak comes into play, and the

heroes end up being even more appalled than they'd be against someone predictable like Black Harlequin.

If you want to weaken VIPER-X, his Cyberline treatments have worn off since he left PRIMUS. Reduce his STR, DEX, CON, and other Characteristics to more reasonable "highly-trained human" levels. You should also replace his advanced weapons with more typical VIPER gear. If you want to make him tougher, increase his DEX and defenses, give him some Extra DCs with his Martial Arts, and add some more weapons and gear to his kit.

VIPER-X does not Hunt heroes on his own. He only does so when VIPER orders him to, how it orders him to. As a Hunter, he strikes soft targets the character cares about (parents, children, DNPCs); he won't kill these persons (unless they're acknowledged enemies of VIPER) but will try to get the hero upset and mentally "off-balance." He also sets traps and ambushes and employs hit and run tactics, often with the end goal of herding his quarry into a kill zone dedicated to neutralizing the hero's powers.

Appearance: Kevin Armstrong is 6'1" tall, 215 pounds, with long sandy brown hair, dark blue eyes and a handsome, clean-shaven face. He typically wears T-shirts and jeans, and has an athletic build. His costume is a modified VIPER uniform, blue and white instead of green and yellow, with heavier armor, white shoulder pads, elbow pads, and belt, and a white serpent insignia. His helmet has an X-motif over the eyepieces and forehead. VIPER-X has a deep voice, with a bit of gravelly edge, and is normally soft-spoken.

VMS-ALPHA AND KRAIT

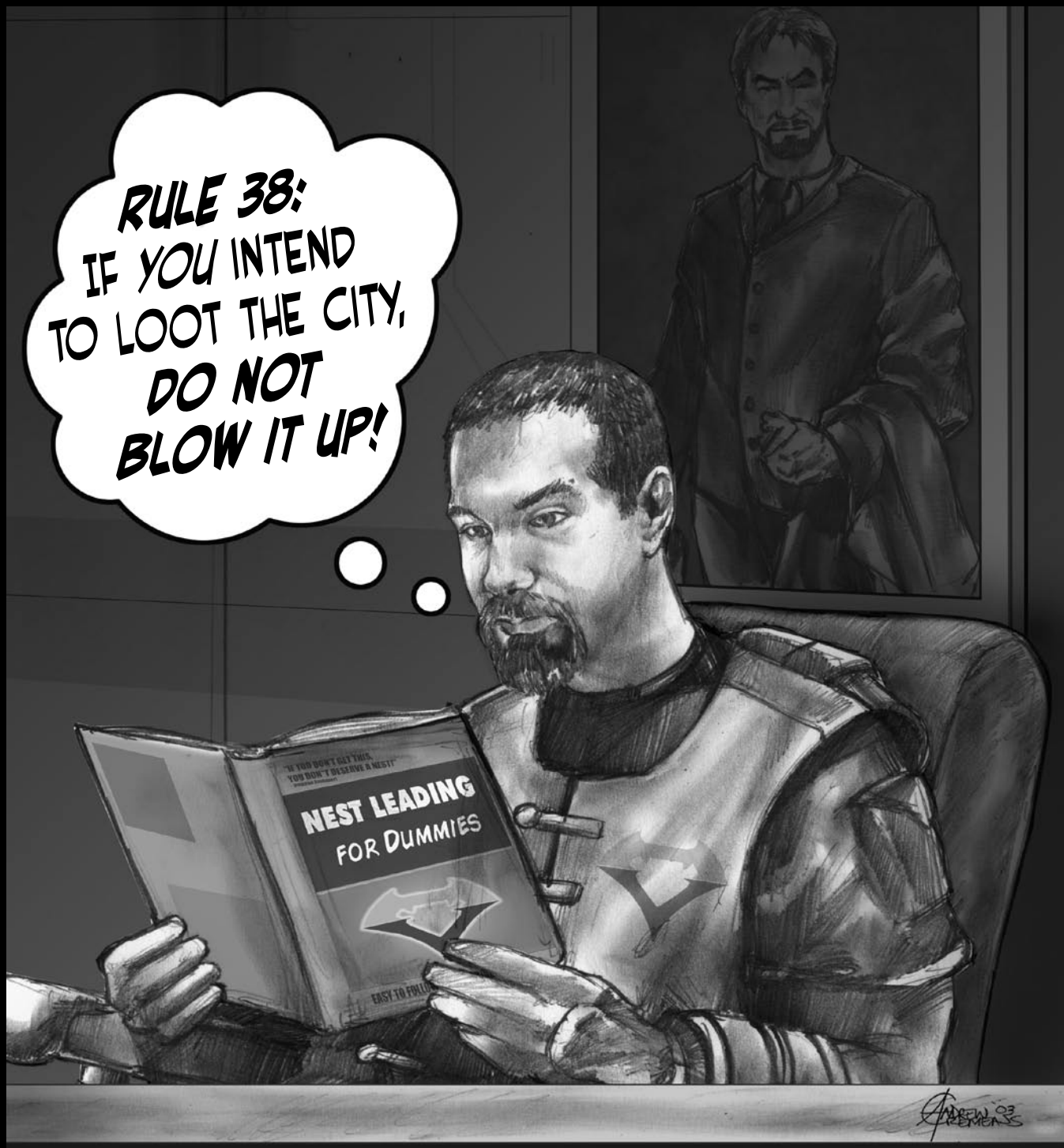
VIPER Mobile Squadron-Alpha is a trained group of specialists, VIPER's best of the best, conceived as a highly mobile, jetpack-equipped strike force able to match the toughest, most powerful troops an opponent could throw at them. Hand-picked by VIPER-X, the VMS-Alpha agents drill constantly to make themselves the most effective team possible. Over the years they've developed strong bonds of friendship and loyalty; they work together well and support each other fully.

The current crew is actually the fourth incarnation of VMS-Alpha. The team was founded in 1990, and its first two incarnations died disastrous deaths in 1990 and 1992. In 1996, a new team was founded to be led by Kevin Armstrong; it achieved organizational fame by conducting a successful attack on Eurostar that launched the VIPER-Eurostar War. In 1997 a jealous Dragon Branch member named Krait sabotaged Armstrong's career, leading to VMS-Alpha's disgrace as well. The team stumbled along, accomplishing almost nothing, until Armstrong returned to the organization as VIPER-X and was allowed to re-activate it.

Heroes can distinguish VMS-Alpha by its members' insignia (a snake shaped like the Greek letter "alpha") and copper-colored helmets. Their primary missions include assassination, kidnapping, extraction/rescue, and reconnaissance. They're well-known to the authorities, and major agencies make a special effort to capture them; it's rumored there's a private wager between UNTIL and PRIMUS commanders on which organization will bring them to justice first.

Krait

Former Dragon Branch member Krait, now a refugee from VIPER and eagerly sought by the organization, is a wild card the GM could throw into just about any VIPER-oriented scenario (particularly one featuring VIPER-X or VMS-Alpha). Krait was trained as a Vehicle Combat Specialist and Scarlet Serpent, but later developed low-level speedster and psionic powers.



VIPER: chapter seven

VIPER CAMPAIGNING

VIPER SCENARIOS



“They say nothing good was ever achieved through violence. If that’s so, “good” is highly overrated.”

—Serpent-General Warren Cliffe

An agency is only as good as its operations, and an operation is only as good as the people who run it. VIPER lives or dies by its ability to acquire goods and put fear in the hearts of its enemies. VIPER’s choice of targets, and its capacity to get the job done, make the difference between an effective fighting force your PCs fear and respect, and a joke.

On the other hand, no good *Champions* campaign tells the story of how the villains keep winning and humiliating the heroes. You should create VIPER plots so the bad guys account for themselves well, but ultimately *lose*. VIPER Nests should have significant weaknesses PCs can exploit when the time is right. Traitorous agents, discarded matchbooks, vehicle part serial numbers, the grieving sister of a brainwashed VIPER dupe — these are the tools by which you can make sure the PCs have a chance to crush the serpent. Finding the proper balance that makes VIPER an organization the PCs fear but doesn’t turn it into an invincible, campaign-killing juggernaut is one of the toughest challenges you’ll ever face as a *Champions* GM.

Anatomy Of A Master Plan

When you’re planning to run a VIPER scenario, approach it from VIPER’s perspective. Determine the target and allocate the necessary number and types of agents to maximize the chances of success. Then list the forces sent to secure each objective, the forces used to cover and support them, and how they all plan to escape. If necessary, create a schedule or a timeline for the crime. And don’t forget: VIPER commits numerous types of crimes, from robberies to kidnappings to extortion to counterfeiting to setting up a death trap for superheroes who really get under its skin. VIPER doesn’t just go out and attack people that bother it; it plans, it schemes, it builds up its resources until the time is right to strike.

Other tips:

Employ multiple targets. Not everyone on the field is a combatant. Add VIPER personnel to the fight who run around the battlefield and try to do things while the grunts cover them. Have agents set demolition charges as distractions, fiddle with the security systems (possibly setting booby traps), or steal information from computers. VIPER trains its technical experts to operate in the middle of a fire-fight. Their activities, even when they’re doing some-

thing minor, can serve as an excellent distraction.

Employ secondary objectives to advance the plot. Make the primary goal of the VIPER mission something the PCs can smash with pride, but let VIPER succeed in some minor objective it can exploit later. (“We smashed the Serpent Cannon on Bay Mountain and saved the city. But what was it they stole from that warehouse?”)

VIPER Nests like to toy with their prey. A Nest may send expendable agents into a no-win situation knowing the heroes will capture them, and feed the agents misinformation (or telepathically brainwash them) prior to the mission in the hope they’ll set up the PCs.

Scenario Problems And How To Fix Them

When you use VIPER in your *Champions* campaign, some of the scenarios that look like comic book genre staples become a real pain to try to translate into game terms. Not everything that works in a comic book works in a game; the two differ in significant ways (not the least of which is the fact that the “author” [the GM] has no significant control over the actions of the main characters [the PCs]). Here are some problem scenarios you may encounter when using with VIPER and how to handle them.

BREAKING NEWS: VIPER HOSTAGE CRISIS (AGAIN)

Hostage-taking deserves a special word of caution. The hostage trick is often used as a turning point — agents grab a hostage and threaten to kill him unless the PCs surrender. It’s certainly a common motif in the comics, and definitely reinforces the villainy of VIPER, but (much like the habit of capturing PCs and taking away their gear) produces a sense of powerlessness and frustration that can be problematic. *Champions* PCs often don’t act like fictional protagonists in hostage situations. They know a hostage situation (except at an obvious climax) is shorthand for “the bad guy gets away and the heroes don’t have a chance.” Players can’t stand that; they’ll have their character take the risk of trying to rescue the hostage. Whether the heroes succeed or fail, they ruin the rest of the scenario.

Even when a capable GM leaves a hostage-taking scenario more open-ended, they’re still exercises in frustration. Hostage situations often try to force the PCs to take a step back, but contrary-minded PCs (particularly those without stealth capabilities) get *more* aggressive in situations where

their normal tactics don't work. This may lead to tragedies that destroy not just a scenario, but a campaign. Or it may force the GM to ignore the logical consequences of a hostage-killing, which can also break the game. A *Champions* campaign, like any fiction, weakens when it ignores the consequences of its characters' actions.

To minimize these potential problems and make hostage scenarios work out the way you want them to, try these techniques:

- Make the correct approach obvious. If the best way for the PCs to win is to quietly take out the four lookouts before launching an attack on the room where VIPER keeps the hostages, make sure it's *easy* to *know* that's the winning strategy.
- If you use hostages as a way to give your bad guys an escape route, remember the following rule: minor villains and agents who need to escape take hostages; major villains do not. To make it possible for the heroes to resolve hostage situations in successful and dramatic ways, they have to be able to intimidate the enemy into letting the hostage go, or knock him out in one shot so he can't hurt the victim. Since they can't do this to major villains, find other ways for the Big Bad Guys to escape.
- Use the hostage-taking as a way to engage in roleplaying. Show a few of the hostage-takers *fearing* the PCs. Let the PCs play on their fear and have a chance to be intimidating bad-asses. Most players love that sort of thing, and it provides a way to resolve the crisis without the hostage getting killed.
- Reinforce positive consequences for positive actions. If the PCs rescue the hostages, at least some of the hostages should be grateful. Have them offer free lube jobs for the team van, or name their next kid after the PC.
- Conversely, reinforce negative consequences for negative actions. If the PCs play fast and loose with hostages' lives, the media will trumpet their callousness and people will become far less likely to respect or help them.
- Evaluate your players beforehand. Are they sufficiently mature, and sufficiently cognizant of the way the genre works, to back off from a hostage situation and attempt a rescue later when the odds are better? If not, it may be best not to use hostages in your scenario at all unless you're willing to set it up so they can win right then and there.

HA! YOU SPILLED THE LOCATION OF YOUR NEST AGAIN! I LOVE MY TELEPATHY!

Telepathy, Mind Control, and Mind Scan are the bane of anyone who plays in genre, because even the dumbest psionic PC is more systematic (and less plot-friendly) in the use of his telepathic abilities than any fictional hero. A good mentalist can find a VIPER Nest every damn time. And what's the fun of that? Anyone can be a "hero" if things are easy; *Champions* is only fun if you chal-

lenge the PCs.

You can minimize the campaign problems posed by captured agents in general, and the use of psionic powers against VIPER specifically, in several ways. First, have VIPER compartmentalize. The Nest Leader doesn't inform the agents about every bit of Nest business; they just follow orders, they don't know *why* they were told to do something. If necessary, you can use a disassociated Nest structure so the agents don't live and work in the same place as the Nest Leader, thus preserving his security. (On the downside, this requires you to sacrifice the "every agent gathers at the main Nest and is part of a community" motif that's an essential part of the genre.)

Second, have the Nest prepare its agents for capture. If the Nest has access to a telepath of its own, it may have that operative plant mental blocks (lots of Mental Defense, Usable Simultaneously) in the minds of agents sent on a mission. Alternately, he could put false memories in the agent's mind to fool telepaths (Major Transform, or perhaps Images to the Mental Sense Group). Nests without that option, or with more ruthless leaders, could simply inject agents with a psionically-activated poison that kills the agent when someone uses Telepathy or Mind Control on him (RKA, NND, Does BODY, Triggered by hostile mental contact).

Third, if you have a PC with powers like Mind Scan, the Nest probably knows about that (or it will eventually...) and takes appropriate measures. It's not beyond the scope of VIPER technology

THE IMPLICATIONS OF IMPROVEMENT

If you improve or enhance VIPER agents to give them more ability to oppose your PCs, you should consider the potential story implications. Is there an in-game reason for this development from which you can spin plot hooks? Did VIPER develop new, more effective technology? Perhaps the agents are using weapon prototypes (and the PCs can stop the development cycle of the weapon). Has VIPER hired a tactics expert to train its agents with new tricks to use against superheroes?





to create a “psionic curtain” (Invisibility to the Mental Sense Group) device for a base so that the telepathic PC cannot “see” the minds of the people inside it. Similarly, if the PCs consistently use Mental Powers (or other abilities) to foil a Nest’s plans, the Nest isn’t just going to sit there and take it — it will develop defenses, or perhaps capture the annoying PCs and put poisons or cortical bombs in them that activate if they keep using those powers.

Other Advice

It’s not important for VIPER to succeed with its plans. But it’s very important for the players (and player characters) to *think* VIPER’s plans have the potential to succeed. It’s even more important to emotionally involve the players and challenge their characters. When the players see that what their characters do has an effect, they’re much more likely to get involved in the game and the storyline.

Forge as many personal connections between VIPER and the PCs as you can. Don’t treat everyone in the organization as a faceless entity. Show them the personality traits of leaders (and even some rank-and-file agents), including weaknesses they can exploit (such as rivalries with other VIPER leaders). Try to create at least one adversary, like VIPER-X, who can become a respected (if not liked) nemesis for the PCs.

Similarly, if the PCs attach importance to a minor figure (perhaps an agent who keeps dodging their attacks against all odds), elevate him. Whenever the players care about an NPC, use that to your advantage.

VIPER should react to the PCs’ actions, not just stand there as a punching bag for the PCs to hit time and time again. Unless you’re playing VIPER for laughs, its leaders are smart and clever; they’ll find ways to correct weaknesses and strike back at the heroes. In short, all actions should have consequences.

AGENTS IN COMBAT



Battles — both in general, and against VIPER in particular — need to work on two levels in terms of their function and place in a roleplaying game session or campaign:

- They should be enjoyable tactical combat exercises. Fights should challenge the players' and PCs' tactical skills and provide exciting combat moments.
- They need to be part of an exciting story. They should advance the plot. Plot developments can (and should) occur in the middle of fights.

VIPER is a fighting force. It trains many of its agents for just one thing — combat. In all other aspects of their lives, they're pawns — and they know it — but once battle is joined, their conditioning kicks in and they come to life. When twenty to thirty well-armed VIPER agents hit the field, they should pose a threat to any similar force, or to superheroes, and they should know they're that dangerous.

But it's one thing to feel superior, another thing to transfer that attitude into interesting stories and tactical battles. No tactical situation in *Champions* is easier to mess up than an agent battle. Four things usually happen to make an agent battle go bad:

1. Agents are too ineffectual (they're too slow, they can't hit the heroes, or their attacks don't have the penetrating power).
2. Agent battles last too long.
3. Agents get *too* lucky, and the heroes lose unexpectedly.
4. Agent battles get too repetitive and predictable — they become boring.

MAKING AGENTS EFFECTIVE

The first problem — ineffectual agents — may not actually be the problem you think it is. Players sometimes enjoy carving through agents like a hot knife through butter. The occasional easy opponent can do worlds of good for the PCs' self-esteem, especially if they've had long run of really tough fights and opposition.

But some threats aren't meant to be trivial, and VIPER in the *Champions* Universe setting is intended as a serious adversary. So if VIPER's the

butt of your players' jokes, and you don't want it to be, here's what you can do.

When superheroes laugh at agents, it's usually due to one or more of three reasons:

THE AGENTS CAN'T HIT THE HEROES

If your PCs can avoid VIPER agents' attacks without much difficulty, you need to improve the agents' accuracy. The simplest, but crudest, way to do this is just to give them lots of laser sights and combat computers that provide big OCV bonuses (similarly, you can add Area Of Effect (One Hex) to weapons to make it easier to hit any target). But there are subtler, cleverer ways that also enhance VIPER's image as a competent fighting force:

- Upgrade the agents' tactics. Have them try to obtain Surprised bonuses, or Multiple Attacker bonuses; give them Teamwork and have them Coordinate their attacks. Agents with disabling attacks (such as Flashes, Entangles, Drains, and the like) can concentrate their fire on a single hero until they hit, and then other agents take advantage of the hero's momentary weakness to hit and hurt him. Once the agents Stun a hero, have several of them turn their guns on him to take advantage of his reduced DCV.
- Have agents work in tandem. Instead of all the SPD 3 agents taking their Phases in Segments 4, 8, and 12, stagger their actions. Some attack on those Segments, others Hold their Actions and attack in later Segments when the heroes are vulnerable. If you have a large enough group of agents, you can have a few of them firing at the PCs on every Segment, giving the heroes no time to rest, prepare for Haymakers, or the like.
- Employ distractions and diversions. Perhaps the easiest way to make agents more effective in a fight is to provide a big, obvious target for the PCs to attack so they leave the agents alone to do their jobs. Mercenary supervillains, of course, are a major diversion; big weapon platforms set up on the edge of the battlefield make great targets and can absorb a few attacks that might otherwise take out an agent.

THE AGENTS CAN'T HURT THE HEROES

If your agents are hitting the target, but they're not making a dent, chances are you need to increase the DCs of their attacks (or add Advantages like *Armor Piercing* or *Penetrating*) or have them Coordinate more often. Agents aren't supposed to take heroes out with a single shot (or even a couple of

shots, in most cases), but they should inflict *some* damage in most cases. Even a point or three adds up when the heroes take it again and again.

THE AGENTS ARE TOO SLOW

Inferior agent mobility is a subtler problem. To some extent it's not a problem you need to worry about: agents, as more-or-less normal humans, *should* act and move more slowly than superheroes. But it can cause difficulties in the campaign if the heroes use their superior movement capacity to bypass or minimize encounters with agents.

The first way to solve this problem is not to use agents as "speed bumps" on the way to the "really important" encounter. If that's what's happening, it makes sense for the heroes to try to avoid the agents — why weaken themselves for the real battle, or waste time fighting cannon fodder while the real bad guys escape? Furthermore, if you use agents this way, it's hard for the PCs to have any respect for the threat they pose as enemies. In most scenarios involving VIPER, try to give agents a crucial role; don't use them as trivial opposition the PCs can ignore without consequences.

Second, you can solve the problem directly by providing the agents with mobility technology: jet-packs; jumpboots; vehicles; and the like. Equipping agents with weapons that have the *Improved Maximum Range* and *No Range Modifier* Advantages also gives them the means to "keep up with" the PCs even if they don't move as quickly. Technology isn't as good as personal movement powers, but it definitely diminishes the mobility problem.

AND AS WE BEGIN HOUR FIVE, THREE AGENTS GET POST-SEGMENT 12 RECOVERIES....

Nothing destroys the fun of a *Champions* game like a battle dragging on too long. *Champions* battles prioritize tactical richness, but this can become a problem when the GM has to keep track of lots and lots of agents. Fortunately, there are some easy ways to handle this.

First and foremost, analyze why your battles take too long. If you're bogging down the game choosing agent tactics, push yourself to be more decisive, prepare tactics in advance, or let someone else help you during the fight. If you spend too much time figuring out which miniature represents which agent, perhaps you should stop using minis; conversely, if everyone has trouble visualizing the battle, maybe introducing miniatures into the game will speed things up.

MINIMIZING BOOKKEEPING

Second, if the paperwork of tracking agents' Charges, STUN, and so on slows you down, you should minimize or abandon it. For example, the Minion Control Sheet from the *HERO System Resource Kit* lets you keep track of 15 agents on a single piece of paper, which really streamlines the

process. An even more radical solution is to ignore the bookkeeping altogether. Instead, declare agents as one-, two-, or three-hit opponents. Any successful attack Knocks Out a one-hit agent; two hits, or one hit with an Attack Roll made by 1, Knocks Out a two-hit agent; three hits, or one hit with an Attack Roll made by 2, Knocks Out a three-hit agent. If a PC uses a Killing Attack, you can substitute "Dead" or "Maimed" for "Knocked Out" if it suits you. Of course, you should treat any supervillain or really important agent as a normal NPC, not someone the PCs can so easily take out of the battle.

Another way to save time is to treat a squad as a character. Pick the best CV in the squad, add +1 OCV for every additional member of the squad, and treat the squad's attack like an Autofire attack directed against one or more targets (if some or all agents have Autofire weapons, you can either roll those attacks separately, or just increase the overall number of "Autofire shots"). You select which targets the squad hits (usually by random roll). If this becomes too effective because you roll well, you can limit the number of successful shots: no more than two hits for a squad of General Combat Specialists; no more than four hits for a squad of Elite Agents.

TIME LIMITS

Third, if necessary impose a strict time limit on the battle — say, two or three Turns. If, at the end of that time, the PCs have the upper hand, then the agents lose (you can assume any still fighting were actually Knocked Out during the battle). If the PCs are losing, either they must retreat, or they all get Knocked Out and taken prisoner, or overwhelming reinforcements arrive and help the agents capture them. Be wary of using this method; players *hate* to have this sort of *deus ex machina* defeat imposed on them, and you can't always count on the heroes being the winners.

LUCKY AGENTS

Bad things sometimes happen to good characters in combat. Combat is random and unpredictable, and that's often a good thing, but if the PCs frequently lose due to dumb luck, the players can get discouraged and the campaign suffers.

Fortunately, there are a few steps you can take to minimize the randomness factor. First, when things go wrong, don't just attribute it dumb luck and move on — look for reasons and patterns. You probably don't need to conduct a full statistical analysis of the battle (after all, games are supposed to be fun), but if you take a close look at what happened and try to learn from any mistakes that occurred, you can keep those mistakes from cropping up repeatedly.

Second, examine your use of Killing Attacks. The STUN Multiplier makes them more random than Normal Damage — and in a fight with a lot of agents using RKAs, the odds of a high STUN Multiplier roll or two are good. Consider using the universal x3 STUN Multiplier rule for agents' weapons, or replacing some KAs with equivalent Normal Damage weapons.

Third, when you using weapons that take advantage of a character's Disadvantages (such as Vulnerabilities), forewarn the PCs whenever possible. If the lycanthrope PC recognizes the glint of silver ammunition being loaded into a gun, or the magnetic PC notices an agent setting up a machine to generate a counteracting magnetic field, he not only has a chance to react, it gives him a moment of fear that helps sustain his interest.

Fourth, fudge dice rolls if necessary. If the VIPER agents get lucky and roll high damage numbers, shave off enough points of damage to prevent the agents from ending the battle too quickly. Keep the PCs' CON and STUN totals in mind so you know how much it takes to Stun them or Knock them Out.

ENNUI, THE ENEMY

The basic structure of any *Champions* adventure (or even individual scenes within adventures) is: set up; fight; resolution. This is the classic comic book pattern, and it works well for games. But it may become boring and predictable after awhile. Ask yourself what you can do, tactically, that the players haven't seen before.

SET UP

VIPER conducts three major types of offensive operations: *raids*, *invasions*, and *ambushes*. The "set up" phase of an adventure covers how the bad guys arrive on the battlefield and prepare to accomplish their objective(s), which usually relates to the type of operation.

Raid

In a *raid*, the objective is to get in quickly, achieve a goal, and then get out with minimal losses. VIPER scouts the location beforehand, perhaps setting a few booby traps as diversions in the event the PCs crash the party.

During a raid, VIPER doesn't want to engage the PCs, unless it must to get what it came for. It favors stealth, speed, trickery, and evasiveness on these missions; it's not on the battlefield to "make a statement" or get rid of its enemies. Whenever possible, have agents use surprise entrances (VIPER agents crawl through sewer lines, come in disguised as maintenance men, or the like) to get the villains closer to their goal than PCs might expect.

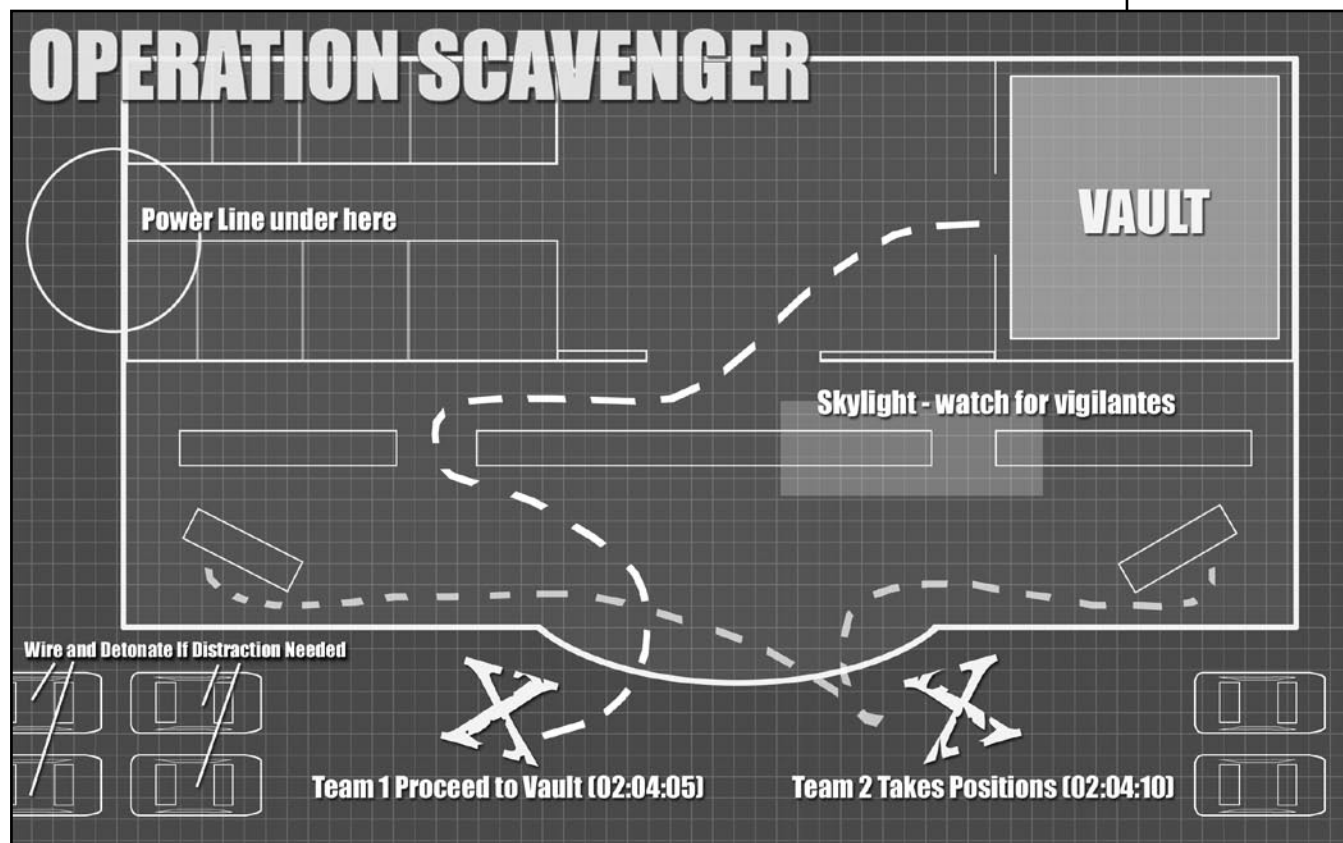
Invasion

In an *invasion*, the objective is to enter, capture, and securely control an area. As with a raid, the set up usually involves scouting the area as much as possible in advance. Additionally, VIPER may try to plant an agent inside in advance, so he can turn off the security systems or otherwise "soften" the area for invasion.

After invading, VIPER doesn't want anyone to leave or enter the controlled area, so it has a lot of secondary objectives: cover all entrances and exits; keep an eye on everyone in the area. When appropriate, it will advertise its presence to scare people into staying put or not trying to enter. If the agents expect a counterattack, they'll try to set up traps and security systems to hinder and harm their enemies.

Ambush

In an *ambush*, the objective is to lure a target to an area and either capture or neutralize him. First,



TRICKS VIPER CAN PULL DURING A FIGHT

Here are a few ideas for sneaky tactics VIPER can use in a battle.

1. One of the agents activates a device on the belt of his costume, which suddenly creates a 3" radius poison gas cloud around him. He starts walking into a nearby crowd of onlookers....
2. During a battle on a city street, the sides of a parked, seemingly empty sanitation truck drop away, revealing — two VIPER heavy weapons mounts and another VIPER squad!
3. A person who looks like one of the heroes appears on the battlefield, points at his counterpart, and shouts: "That man is an imposter!" (It's a GM call whether he is or not.)
4. The police arrive in the middle of the fight and start reviving downed VIPER agents. Instead of taking the agents into custody, the cops let them go. Then they try to arrest the PCs for assault, disturbing the peace, and other bogus charges. (Mind Control is a wonderful thing.)
5. A downed VIPER agent's helmet rolls off when he's knocked unconscious, revealing... the mayor! (VIPER brainwashed him and gave him a drug to enhance his speed and strength for a short period.)
6. An agent hit by a Killing Attack starts sparking — he's actually a robot!
7. The VIPER commander pulls out a detonator and presses it. Explosive charges, set about a kilometer away from the fight, start exploding loudly. The VIPER leader sneers and says, "You'd better start rescuing those poor wounded sheep *now*, hero!"
8. A third party of agents from a rival villain agency suddenly arrives on the battlefield, checks the identity of several unconscious VIPER agents, finds the one they want, and then takes off with him. (You must decide who the rival organization is, and what it wants with this particular VIPER agent.)
9. The first time the PCs attack, their energy blasts and punches go right through the VIPER agents! Either the VIPER agents are holograms (the *real* VIPER attack is on the other side of town) or VIPER's employing experimental holographic technology to artificially inflate the size of its forces.
10. A wino staggers onto the battlefield and starts yelling at the top of his lungs: "I'm Dr. Destroyer! I'm Dr. Destroyer!" Agents get behind the wino and start using him for cover.
11. A police SWAT team and an ambulance arrive, but they're really VIPER agents who attempt to remove downed agents safely from the fight.
12. The object VIPER so desperately wanted explodes after the heroes get their hands on it — it was a booby trap set up to mislead the enemy!
13. An Army plane suddenly flies overhead, and out comes an airdrop of — VIPER agents and heavy weapons!
14. VIPER agents unexpectedly put two weapons together, stick them on a tripod, overload them, and produce a powerful one-charge area-affecting attack.
15. VIPER agents disguised as reporters or innocent bystanders confront and attack the heroes just when the heroes think they've won the battle.

VIPER wants to enter the battlefield before the fight (surreptitiously if necessary), take control of it, and prepare it for the fight. It might establish traps, or at least ways it can cut off the victim's likely escape routes.

Second, VIPER needs a way to lure the target into the ambush zone. This may involve research in advance, to discover what he's interested in or likely to respond to. That may lead VIPER to kidnap a hero's DNPC, play off his Psychological Limitations, or the like. If all else fails, using a small forces of agents to draw the hero into the trap usually works.

The PCs may anticipate VIPER's actions or catch it scouting the location, then turn the ambush against it. Don't discourage this — reward the players for their cleverness, but have VIPER react accordingly in the next encounter.

FIGHT

After the set up concludes, the battle can begin. Most GMs run a straight combat, relying solely on character capabilities and small-unit tactics to provide interest. That approach is a lot of fun, but it can get repetitive after awhile, and tends to reward characters for their power level instead of their cleverness. Cleverness needs props... and so do agents taking on superheroes!

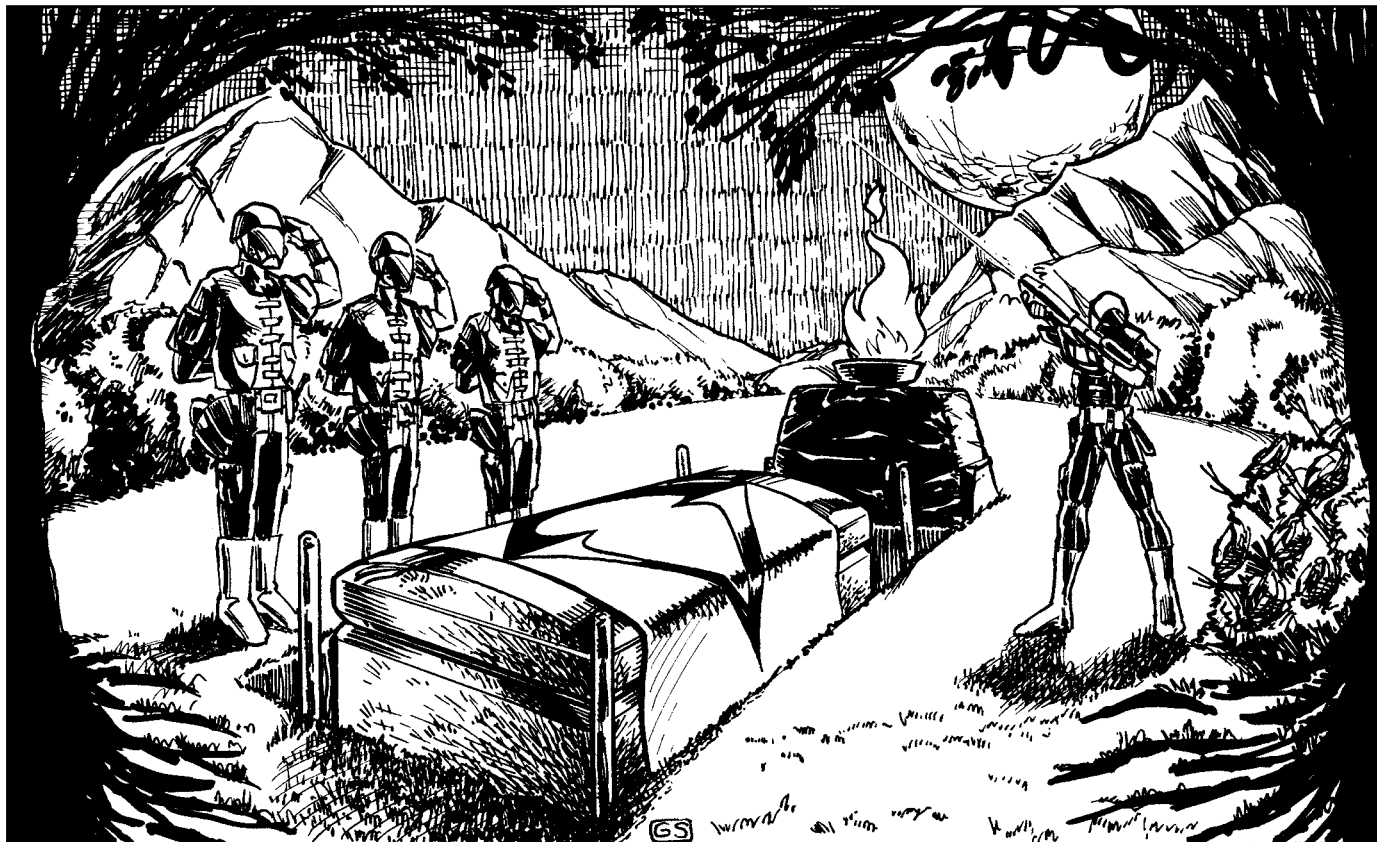
So, when you include a battle in a scenario, stage it in interesting ways. Instead of having the fight occur in a featureless, enclosed space, dress it up. Try to include at least five objects that clever characters — be they PCs, villains, or agents — could use to perform stunts or surprise maneuvers. Think in advance of clever tactics an agent could use during a fight (such as shooting a chandelier's base out so it falls on a passing hero's head, spilling gasoline over the floor and lighting it on fire, and so forth). Strive for as many visual touches as possible, particularly if they enhance tactical play. Embrace Your Inner John Woo.

From the VIPER perspective, agents want every bit of unfair advantage they can obtain. When possible, they choose the battlefield to suit themselves. For example, if a Nest has lots of Air Cavalry agents, it may favor outdoor combat zones, while a squad armed with area-affecting weapons may try to pick a battlefield where the PCs have to bunch up and can't maneuver easily. Given the opportunity, VIPER will rig the battlefield by installing landmines, booby traps, automated weapons, and other devices its forces can use to defeat the heroes.

Most fights end when the enemy loses, but the heroes' triumph doesn't have to be the *only* high point of the battle. Plan combats to have a secondary climax or a turning point. For example, in the middle of the fight, VIPER sends in a big personnel carrier, and several agents start unloading a huge gun. The carrier's arrival and the completion and firing of the gun (if it occurs) are both dramatically significant and give the battle some structure.

RESOLUTION

A combat with VIPER ends one of two ways: the PCs defeat the agents and VIPER loses; or the PCs fail to stop the organization's nefarious scheme and VIPER wins.



When VIPER Loses

The endgame is particularly important for agents; a single captured agent is a security risk for an entire VIPER cell, as discussed on page 78. VIPER has several options:

Early Evac: First, in situations where any capture poses a security risk, VIPER may choose to pull out early (as soon it accomplishes its objectives, or determines it cannot succeed). If necessary, it employs distraction tactics — explosions, false communications (“Mayday... VIPER’s real target is... the mayor... we need assistance, now!”), phony cops, and other ploys to buy some time to escape.

Dead Men Tell No Tales: In some Nests, VIPER agents are fanatical enough to view themselves as martyrs. When heroes or the authorities capture them, they trigger a dead man’s switch, bite down on a poison capsule, or the like.

Evac The Nest: As a precaution, VIPER may have several safe houses and headquarters constructed throughout an area. If the heroes capture and/or telepathically interrogate an agent, VIPER immediately evacuates to a new location and later sends coded transmissions to its agents to direct them to the next base of operations.

When VIPER Wins

VIPER rejoices in and takes advantage of its victories... but don’t go overboard. First, murdering cops or heroes when they’re down is a great way to accrue unnecessary prison time; unless the supers have really gone out of their way to earn the Nest’s hatred, only the most hardened agent would consider it. The smart Nest is more interested in achieving goals and obtaining wealth and power than in racking up a body

count. It’s better for VIPER to spit on the hero, sneer “you’re not worth the ammo,” and let him “live with the humiliation.” Besides, that’s the four-color thing to do.

However, don’t take the “humiliation” angle too far. Permanently tattooing defeated foes, sending videotapes of the defeat to local TV stations, or similar extreme actions can easily escalate the level of conflict between the two sides and ruin the campaign. VIPER can benefit from defeating the heroes without totally ruining their public image.

Of course, humiliation demands payback, and the greater the humiliation, the sooner the payback has to occur. If your players get really upset by something VIPER did to their PCs, *give the heroes a chance to get some measure of payback quickly* — in the same game session, or the next session. Don’t let them steam too long.

VIPER-SPECIFIC TACTICS

The tactics and options described above apply to teams of agents and like characters in general. Here are a few notes on some tactics favored by VIPER specifically.

Eight-Team Tactics

As noted on page 78, in combat situations VIPER typically deploys its forces in squadrons known as *Eight-Teams* because they consist of eight people. A standard Eight-Team includes:

- One Lieutenant as Squadron Commander (typically a Scarlet Serpent or one of the

advanced Combat Specialists)

- One or two Heavy Weapons Specialists
- Three or four General Combat Specialist agents
- One Vehicle Combat Specialist/transport operative
- One Communications Specialist or like agent (used primarily in support)

If VIPER expects to encounter superpowered opposition, it may substitute a Superhuman Combat Specialist for the HWS; for major battles, the Communications Specialist may get replaced by another GCS or HWS. It makes other substitutions as appropriate, and of course has many specialized Eight-Teams (such as ones composed entirely of Air Cavalry agents).

In most combat situations, the Eight-Team gets behind whatever cover is available and fires its blasters at the enemy. Usually at least one member of the team has grenades, which he uses if necessary. When facing similar opposition (such as cops, a SWAT team, or an Army unit), the team members usually fire at will. When engaging superhumans, they tend to split into groups of two or three that concentrate their fire on single targets. The members of each of these groups often stagger their Phases so the superhero obtains less of an advantage due to his comparative swiftness.

If the Eight-Team cannot obtain cover, or it finds itself surrounded, it usually “circles up” into two groups of four, with each agent having his back to the others. That way the squad has two people looking in each direction at all times and can respond to attackers in the most efficient manner. If possible, the team has the Heavy Weapons Specialists lay down Suppression Fire while the others move toward cover or try to break through the enemy cordon.

When possible, an Eight-Team tries to spread itself out a little so superheroes with Area Of Effect/Explosion attacks and police officers with grenades can't affect the whole squadron at once. On the other hand, the team remains alert for “bunching” among the opposition so a hurled grenade or Spread attack can eliminate several enemies at once.

TACTICS INVOLVING VEHICLES

If an Eight-Team has access to a VIPER vehicle, it adapts its tactics to suit. Typically the team's VCS agent stays inside the vehicle, moving it around the battlefield slowly so the other agents can use it for cover; meanwhile, he (or the vehicle's Serpentine Node) fires the vehicle's heavy weapons at the enemy.

If a VIPER vehicle takes heavy damage and is in danger of crashing, exploding, or going out of control, its Serpentine Node broadcasts a short-range warning pulse to the members of the Eight-Team associated with it and any other nearby agents. Those agents then Abort to defensive maneuvers to get as far away from the vehicle as they can, then regroup.

Tactics Of Deception And Misdirection

Not all of VIPER's tactics involve heavy force on the battlefield. Following the logic of Sun Tzu, it likes to trick and deceive its enemies as much as possible. A smart superhero never takes a fight against VIPER for granted, since he can't tell what tricks the snakes might have up their sleeves. Some of VIPER's favorite sneaky tactics include:

Say Cheese!: During the battle (or right before it begins), an agent disguised as a photojournalist gets close to a hero and takes a picture of him with a camera rigged to have an extremely bright flash (Sight Group Flash 6d6). Then the costumed agents open fire on the low-DCV hero.

“Innocent” Bystanders: A favorite VIPER tactic is to station a handful of agents near the battlefield in Armored Clothing instead of VIPER uniforms, so they appear to be ordinary onlookers (they keep their weapons hidden in satchels, under coats, and the like). If necessary, these “undercover” agents can come to their comrades' rescue; if the battle goes VIPER's way, the plainclothes agents report their observations of the fighting agents' performance.

I'm Oculon!: VIPER kidnaps an ordinary citizen, uses mind control drugs to sap his will, and dresses him in a supervillain's costume — usually, but not necessarily, a villain already associated with the organization. It may even equip the hapless victim with devices that mimic some of the supervillain's powers. When turned loose on the battlefield, this faux villain draws off a lot of superhero fire (since heroes tend to fight villains before agents, if given the choice) — and if the heroes hurt the innocent victim, that's a psychological victory for VIPER as well (plus, the heroes will attack more hesitantly next time).

False Doomsday: VIPER loves to use fake mega-weapons — bombs, laser cannons, and so on — to distract superheroes. The heroes can't take the chance that the weapon isn't real and have to spend precious seconds dealing with the fictitious threat... while VIPER agents pepper them with blaster-bolts.

Where The Action Really Is: Committing one crime in location X while the real objective is being achieved at location Y is a time-honored VIPER stratagem. By staging a flashy, combat-heavy crime in, say, the Financial District, VIPER draws all the heroes and cops to that part of town. Meanwhile, a VIPER infiltration team or assault squad is stealing the prototype computer chips the Nest Leader wants from a firm in the Industrial District without any interference from the authorities. The only limit on this tactic is how many personnel the organization is willing to sacrifice on the decoy crime.

THE CHAMPIONS UNIVERSE



VIPER doesn't exist in a vacuum — it's part of the greater Champions Universe, and that means it has to interact with the other organizations and people in that setting on a regular basis. This section describes VIPER's relations with the rest of "bad guys" the Champions Universe for the "official" setting; obviously, you can change any of these to suit your own campaign. (VIPER's relationship with the "good guys" is, of course, one of unmitigated hatred and competition; it reserves a particular loathing for UNTIL and PRIMUS.)

MASTER AND MAJOR VILLAINS

Dr. Destroyer: VIPER despises Destroyer, for two reasons. First, he represents a major threat to VIPER's plans for world domination. His technology is better than VIPER's, and he doesn't have to worry about factional infighting within an organization. Second, the Thirty Founders lost access to the Serpent Lantern because of him, and that means they age normally.

If Destroyer made another serious bid to conquer Earth, or even threatened a major part of it, VIPER would likely ally with the authorities to try to stop him. It has no more desire to live in a world ruled by Zerstoiten than anyone else. Of course, afterwards it would try to leverage its "helpfulness" to obtain pardons for past crimes and other concessions from various world governments.

Gravitar: VIPER has had no significant contact with Gravitar. It regards her as a child dabbling in matters she doesn't really understand, and prefers to avoid her. Someone else will get rid of her eventually, or she'll tire of fighting superheroes and go back to whatever else she was doing.

Holocaust: VIPER eagerly seeks any opportunity to get revenge on Holocaust. Several Nests teamed up with him on various schemes during the late 1980s and early '90s, to their mutual advantage. Then he betrayed a Nest in Chicago to UNTIL and killed its Leader. The Supreme Serpent plans to capture Holocaust and have Project Mendel scientists vivisect him... without anaesthesia... for any useful data they can obtain.



Interface: Interface has worked for VIPER on several occasions in the past half-dozen years, and relations between the two remain cordial for now. VIPER's leadership doesn't really like or dislike him, and they figure that if necessary, they can dispatch him with EMP weapons and other anti-technology attacks.

Istvatha V'han: VIPER helped the world's heroes fight off V'han's attempt to conquer Earth in 1998, and would likely offer its assistance again in the event of another attempted invasion. The Supreme Serpent knows she presents a major obstacle to his eventual hopes for dimensional conquest, and would dearly like to see her dead or otherwise neutralized.

Mechanon: VIPER has a very ambivalent attitude toward Mechnon. On the one hand, it's tantalized by his advanced technology; if it could capture him and take him apart, or gain access to one of his bases, it could improve its own technology enormously. On the other hand, the idea of Mechnon infiltrating the Serpentine Network terrifies the Supreme Serpent and the Council Of Thirty. If someone disposed of the robotic master villain, VIPER wouldn't shed any tears.

Menton: "Untrustworthy and incredibly dangerous," according to VIPER's profile of him. The organization's enmity with Eurostar, to which Menton's sister belongs, makes him a sort of *de facto* enemy, and the thought of him subverting Nest Leaders, Council Of Thirty members, or even the Supreme Serpent himself concerns the organization deeply. If it could, it would kill him.

The Slug: The Slug and VIPER have never had contact or worked together. VIPER regards him as a minor threat — one to deal with if the opportunity arises, but to ignore until he does something against the organization's interest. The Slug, on the other hand, sometimes wonders if he could take advantage of VIPER's rigid, hierarchical structure to turn *all* of its people into Elder Worms....

Takofanes the Undying Lord: VIPER doesn't care much for magic, and thus not for Takofanes either. It has never encountered him or had any dealings with him, and would be happiest if he just faded away for good. If he seriously threatened the Earth, VIPER would probably help fight him... or try to take advantage of the situation while the heroes were otherwise occupied.

Teleios: VIPER has dealt with Teleios on occasion, but it doesn't trust him and therefore minimizes contact. It rarely obtains creatures from him, and never any cloned soldiers, because it surmises (correctly) that Teleios would genetically program any such beings to retain loyalty to *him* before VIPER.

Tyrannon: VIPER has no knowledge of Tyrannon's existence.

The Warlord: VIPER has worked with the Warlord a time or two. It regards him as a potential threat, but a relatively minor one. It sees him as a soldier with

delusions of grandeur, a would-be world conqueror whose obsession with "military glory" and "the joy of battle" will keep him from ever accomplishing anything meaningful. However, the Duchess is intrigued by his technology, and would very much like to obtain some of it.

Dr. Yin Wu: VIPER has never had any contact with Dr. Wu, and probably wouldn't know entirely what to make of him if they did ever meet.

VILLAIN TEAMS AND ORGANIZATIONS

ARGENT: Although the two organizations do compete on some occasions, for the most part they enjoy a productive, positive underworld relationship. VIPER often buys high-tech equipment from ARGENT, or hires its labs to do some quick, high-quality research. ARGENT, for its part, sometimes "subcontracts" with VIPER when it needs muscle.

The Circle Of The Scarlet Moon: VIPER has never encountered or acknowledged the Circle.

The Crowns Of Krim: The Crowns' activities have disrupted VIPER operations or Nests on a few occasions, so VIPER would prefer to see them removed from this mortal coil altogether if possible. However, it recognizes how powerful they (particularly Dark Seraph) are, and prefers to let sleeping dogs lie until an opportunity for a quick, decisive strike against them arises.

DEMON: VIPER bitterly hates DEMON, and has warred with it on occasion ever since the Demon-flame Incident of 1986 (see page 12). Not only does DEMON's agenda of world rulership compete with VIPER's, but Nama believes that if DEMON ever succeeds at invoking its unnamed gods, those gods would eliminate beings such as himself. Therefore he has subtly fanned the flames of hatred between the two. It would take only the tiniest spark to turn this powderkeg into an explosion that could consume the world and take thousands... or millions... of lives.

Eurostar: Despite the current "truce" between the two, hatred runs deep in VIPER for Eurostar. It regards Fiacho and his "lapdogs" as a serious threat to its own European interests, and would like to eliminate them once and for all. One of the Supreme Serpent's biggest regrets is that VIPER wasn't able to mobilize fast enough to kill Eurostar's members after Gravitar casually and thoroughly defeated them in 2001. A second VIPER-Eurostar War could easily break out any day.

GRAB: VIPER has been the victim of GRAB's attentions on a few occasions. Therefore it would very much like to find out more about the group, then have its members killed.

The Institute for Human Advancement: Most people in VIPER think the IHA's anti-mutant, pro-human agenda is stupid (or at least pointless), but if they



can weaken the superheroes of the world, so much the better. The Supreme Serpent is considering a plan to infiltrate an agent into the IHA's ranks to try to better direct the organization in ways that serve VIPER's plans.

PSI: VIPER hates PSI as much as it hates Eurostar. The only reason it hasn't made stronger moves to crush Psimon and his "little band of telepaths" is that PSI hides itself well... and the Council Of Thirty fears the possibility of PSI infiltrating VIPER's upper echelons with the help of psionic powers.

The Ultimates: VIPER has hired the Ultimates a time or two, mostly to provide a distraction while a team of Infiltration Specialists committed a crime elsewhere in town. It regards them as fairly competent, but nowhere near the top of the supervillain heap.

INDIVIDUAL VILLAINS

Brainchild and the Signal Ghost: Despite the many jokes to the contrary in the Superhuman World, very few people betray VIPER, get away with it, and become supervillains at the expense of the organization. These two are exceptions to that statement, and VIPER would like nothing better than to capture them, kill them in as brutal a fashion as possible, then leave the wreckage of their bodies somewhere public so everyone will learn what happens to people who try to take advantage of VIPER.

Cateran: VIPER's never worked with Cateran, but her supposed immortality intrigues the scientists working on Project Ageless... not to mention the

members of the Council Of Thirty. Plans are being developed to kidnap her and find out what makes her "tick"... even if it kills her.

Firewing: VIPER has no desire to attract Firewing's attention and avoids him as much as it can. There's no profit in fighting just for the sake of fighting, after all.

Grond: Grond (and to a lesser extent, Ogre) is a favorite VIPER patsy. He's so easy to turn to VIPER's desired purposes that it's almost not a challenge anymore. When Grond goes rampaging through the streets of Millennium City for no reason, the odds are good that VIPER's behind it... and that VIPER agents are pulling a job somewhere else in the city.

Hornet: Project Mendel wants to capture Hornet and conduct tests to find out more about his unique physiology, in the hopes it would help VIPER develop either its own superhumans, or new bioweapons.

Lady Blue: VIPER finds Lady Blue's sanctimonious attitude offensive, and would like to kill her. However, it's not willing to take the PR hit that would result, so it would have to trick someone else into taking care of the matter.

Masquerade: Dangerous, dangerous, ten thousand times dangerous! Concerned that he/she could infiltrate the highest levels of VIPER undetected, VIPER has instructed all of its agents to kill him/her if given the chance.

Wayland Talos: VIPER has hired Wayland Talos to build devices for it, or consult on various projects,

on several occasions, and will probably do so again in the future.

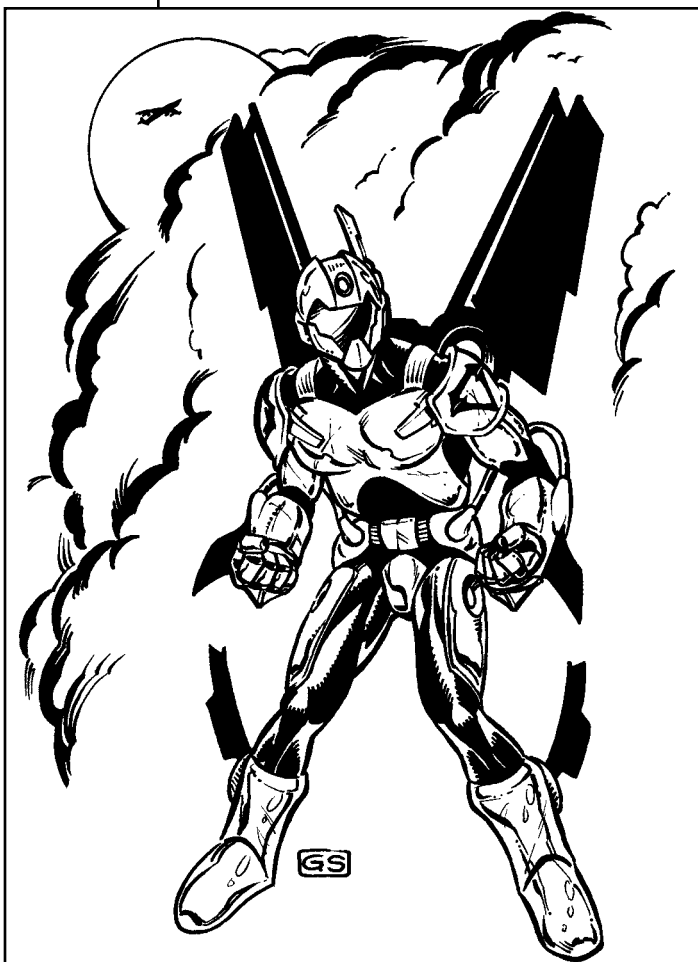
ZigZag: ZigZag has angered more than a few powerful members of VIPER with his wisecracks and jokes about the organization. They want to shut his big mouth... permanently.

VIPER'S TEN MOST WANTED

As of mid-2003, here's who VIPER hates the most (not including the PCs, of course!):

1. Dr. Albert Zerstoiten (VIPER officially refuses to refer to him as "Dr. Destroyer" out of spite): After his recent re-appearance in Millennium City, Destroyer jumped to the top of the charts overnight. The official reason is that "a man with such reckless disregard for the preservation of society imperils VIPER as well as the world." The unofficial reason is that VIPER lost the Serpent Lantern due to his actions, and thus many members of the original Thirty Founders are ten years older than they would otherwise be.

2. Wilhelm Carl Eckhardt, Secretary-Marshal of UNTIL: Eckhardt makes the list more for UNTIL's traditional rivalry with VIPER than for any other reason. VIPER views him as an excellent bureaucrat and politician, but doesn't consider him a particularly outstanding soldier or tactical commander



(a grievous misperception which the organization may soon have cause to regret).

3. Daniel Johnson, the Golden Avenger: PRIMUS is second only to UNTIL as an enemy organization. Additionally, VIPER has a lot of personal hatred for Johnson, who takes every opportunity to belittle VIPER, rub its defeats in its face, and say how much he enjoys kicking VIPER agents over the landscape with a very toothy smile on his face.

4. Brainchild: No one else is a bigger poster boy for "betray VIPER and getting away with it."

5-6. The Justice Squadron and the Sentinels: VIPER can't decide which of these popular, long-standing hero teams has caused it the most grief, but would happily resolve the issue by killing all of their members.

7. Holocaust: Another high profile supervillain who's gotten on VIPER's bad side. Six years ago, Holocaust collaborated with one of the larger Chicago Nests, then sold it out to UNTIL, murdering Nest Leader Andrew "The Conspirator" Metcalf for good measure. VIPER considers him "an odious little man."

8. Quasar, leader of UNITY: Wanted as much for possible intelligence on Dr. Destroyer (whom he formerly served) as for his degradation of VIPER.

9. Fiacho: Despite the relative peace that followed the VIPER-Eurostar War, hatred for the "depraved and twisted" leader of Eurostar remains strong in the Council Of Thirty. Fiacho recently issued an ultimatum telling VIPER to stay out of Eastern Europe, and VIPER's determined to punish him for his insolence.

10. Gyeroy Vedun, Russian mystic superhero: Because turning a VIPER attack squad into a pack of newts is *wrong*.

Of course, VIPER has plenty of other people on its hate list. Depending on its mood and recent events, others who occasionally make it into the Top Ten include Defender (whose "connection" with Harmon Industries, the company owned by the Essec family's ancient enemies the Harmons, attracts the Supreme Serpent's ire), Downshift, Draco, Nighthawk, Psimon (and the rest of PSI), Swift Swallow, and Thunderbird.

VIPER AS A HUNTED

Many superheroes take VIPER as a Hunted, particularly if their origin or pre-campaign activities somehow involve the snakes. VIPER has Non-Combat Influence ("NCI"), a worldwide reach, and plenty of resources, so it's worth a lot of points as a Hunted — a minimum of 20, unless it's only Watching the hero.

How VIPER behaves as a Hunted depends in part on how VIPER functions in your campaign (see pages 174-75), but certain constants apply. First, VIPER prepares for the hunt. It investigates the hero as much as it reasonably can, keeping an

eye out for any information concerning weaknesses, vulnerabilities, behavior patterns it can exploit, and the like. It rarely uncovers a hero's Secret Identity, but when it does, it makes the best use of it possible — either blackmailing the hero into working for VIPER, or revealing it to the public to ruin his life.

Second, when VIPER attacks a Hunted, it attacks *hard*. It comes prepared with all the weaponry it thinks it's going to need, and enough agents (and supervillains, if appropriate) to give it the advantage. If possible, it equips its agents with weapons designed to take advantage of the hero's Susceptibilities and Vulnerabilities (if it knows them). If the hero has powers that allow him to escape easily, VIPER devises ways to compensate for, or even temporarily neutralize, those abilities. A hero who escapes from a VIPER hunter-killer squad should *know* he's been in a tough fight.

Third, VIPER varies its attack pattern. It doesn't keep coming after the hero with squadrons of agents again and again if that's not working. Instead of an assault, it arranges a hostage situation only the hero can respond to, lures him into a trap, reprograms his base's security devices to attack him, or builds a robot to mimic his appearance and powers and then sends it on a crime spree. There are *lots* of ways to go after a hero besides shooting him with a VB-A1 blaster.

Some heroes mock VIPER for its "failure" to successfully Hunt villains, but they aren't really aware of all the facts. In the past decade alone, VIPER has killed nearly a dozen superhumans it was Hunting, and has created significant difficulties in the lives of many, many more. VIPER may not score a kill every time it encounters a hero it Hunts, but it often succeeds in distracting him from his war on crime, and VIPER counts that as a "moral" victory at the least. If a PC hero doesn't take VIPER seriously as a Hunter, you should teach him the error of his ways.

VIPER'S NON-COMBAT INFLUENCE

It's a mistake to think of VIPER as only being the men and women who sit around the Nest, occasionally stirring from it to commit crimes.

VIPER is also the corrupt industrialists who back the organization, the unwitting pawns who follow the industrialists, and the *many* people planted in strategic positions in government, law enforcement, education, big business, the media, and the criminal world. In short, any place where it can affect a person's life, VIPER tries to get someone there to represent its viewpoint, gather information, and further its interests. This is why VIPER usually receives a Non-Combat Influence bonus when it Hunts a character — it has easy access to most government records, people in key places who can hurt the character's non-combat interests if necessary, and lots of money and other resources to use against someone if it wants to.

VIPER has placed agents in the mid-to-upper echelons of every major United States government agency, PRIMUS, UNTIL, and most law enforcement and criminal organizations (PSI, the Circle of the Scarlet Moon, and the Trismegistus Council are noteworthy exceptions). It has similar agents in place in other prominent world governments. These deep cover operatives report to a VIPER handler and receive assignments to keep an eye on designated targets. However, they rarely engage in more overt acts of espionage — they would commit sabotage only as a precursor to a larger attack.

VIPER uses its Non-Combat Influence against its enemies as often as it can. There's more than one way to skin a superhero, and not all heroes are susceptible to direct attacks anyway. Sometimes it's a lot more effective to have the hero audited every year, sic government regulators on him and his team, revoke his driver's license, plant a false criminal record and "Wanted" information in police computers, or the like. VIPER has a talent for finding creative and *incredibly* aggravating ways to screw around with a hero's life without pointing a single blaster at him. This also gives you, as GM, a chance to exercise your own personal fiendishness — and to introduce some elements into your game other than combat, investigation, and basic role-playing. Delve into the characters' lives!... then have VIPER use them for its own sinister purposes.

VIPER GENRE BY GENRE



VIPER can play many roles in *Champions* campaigns — or even be an element in non-superhero games. It all depends on how you envision VIPER in your campaign, and what steps you're willing to take to change it to fit your vision.

CHAMPIONS

VIPER primarily functions as an adversary organization for superhero characters in *Champions*. But VIPER is an extremely flexible entity, and its power level, threat rating, and importance in a campaign can vary widely, depending on how you wish to use and present it. The roles that VIPER can fulfill in a *Champions* campaign include:

Major Menace

As a *major menace*, VIPER is a serious threat — it really can conquer the world, unless the PCs pull out all the stops, and the mere mention of its name should give heroes pause and make them prepare for a tough fight.

In this type of campaign, VIPER is virtually impossible to destroy. It's always present, always hounding heroes when they least expect it, and always pulling one unpleasant surprise after another. The heroes cannot truly defeat VIPER, only hinder and delay it. It learns from its mistakes; when the heroes defeat a Nest, VIPER establishes a stronger, smarter one in its place. It keeps pulling out new weapon prototypes, each more powerful and more accurate than the last. It often achieves frightening successes.

As a major menace, VIPER is a deadly Hunted for nearly a hero. It devotes its considerable resources — not just military, but financial and investigative — to making the hero's life hell. It will uncover his Secret Identity, harass (or kill) his DNPCs, ruin his credit rating, and attack him whenever it can. When VIPER tires of this game, it will have him killed, often using weapons specially designed just for fighting him. For obvious reasons, taking VIPER as a Hunted on an 8- is not recommended (besides which, if the organization shows up *too* often, it loses some of its mystique).

To run VIPER as a major menace, use the organization as it appears in this book, with the following adjustments:

- All VIPER squads include at least one Vehicle Combat Specialist (and his vehicle) or an agent wearing a suit of Dragon armor (or the like)
- No agent should be a Basic Agent; every member of VIPER is an Elite Agent
- No agent carries a main weapon that does less than 10 DCs of damage
- Project Shadow has succeeded; all VIPER installations are cloaked (Invisibility to Sight and Mental Group, at the least)

If you have previously run campaigns in which the heroes did not take VIPER seriously, and you decide to run a tougher and deadlier VIPER in your campaign, let the players know this beforehand (maybe by giving a briefing to the PCs that VIPER's made some unexpected advances). And of course, you can have VIPER occupy multiple threat levels in a campaign. Perhaps the campaign city starts with a particularly competent VIPER Nest Leader, but when the heroes defeat him after a long struggle, the next VIPER's Nest is much less formidable. "They were never the same after Count Von Strongheim fell down the nuclear core shaft" is a common motif in the comics. Certainly VIPER would find it difficult to recover from the death of the Supreme Serpent or some other important figure, and would undoubtedly change in the aftermath.

Average Threat

In most *Champions* campaigns, VIPER functions as an average threat. It *could* take over the world, if everything went right, but on the whole it's no more dangerous than any mid-range master villain or a team of villains. Factionalism, lack of organization, personality problems among agents, and the like all hinder it, keeping it from realizing its potential.

In an average campaign, letting the PCs take VIPER as a Hunted causes few (if any) difficulties. VIPER doesn't Hunt characters in a very competent fashion; every now and then it may do something sinister and clever, but usually it just sends squads of agents or hired assassins to try to dispatch the PC.

For this type of play, use VIPER as presented in this book, but perhaps tone down some of the projects, or introduce more internal conflict. Perhaps the Thirty Founders never had to swear an oath of loyalty, and as a result they struggle against each other as much as they do against UNTIL.

Who Are These Clowns In Green?

In this campaign style, VIPER is a joke. Agents can't hit the broad side of a barn; Nest Leaders are incompetent cowards who hide behind their agents, then run away when the cannon fodder starts to dwindle. The organization's schemes are so grandiose and unlikely to succeed that the PCs start to wonder if dealing with VIPER means taking too much time away from fighting *real* threats. The PCs probably aren't allowed to take VIPER as a Hunted; the organization doesn't present enough of a threat to be worth any points.

In this game, VIPER has no weapons with more than 75 Active Points in their largest attack (and even those weapons have Activation Roll 14- Burnout). There are no Elite Agents, just Basic Agents with different suites of equipment.

"Realistic" Threat

In this campaign variant, VIPER is almost completely divorced from its four-color roots. This is appropriate for *Dark Champions* campaigns and some *Iron Age Champions* campaigns.

In this campaign, VIPER is not so much a paramilitary organization as it is an organized crime group/fanatical cult supported by hackers, mercenaries, and street gangs. There are no Nests, nor a Supreme Serpent — VIPER's leaders live in glass towers, hiding their decadence behind their Forbes 500 standings and recession-proof balance sheets, identifiable only by the serpent tattoos on their backs and the hidden serpent signet on their rings. Their goals: increase their wealth and power, and secondarily to promote the veneration of the Snake (though that itself is really only another road to power for most of them).

For muscle, VIPER has its street gangs, who wear the VIPER colors of yellow and green and practice snake-handling as an initiation rite. Some of them, the Cobra Corps, are expert martial artists. Assisting them are an army of computer hackers, and a few specialist high-tech thieves, whose services VIPER buys. In every case, VIPER communicates with its lackeys remotely, to prevent them from learning the leaders' true identities — "for to come face to face with the Serpent is death!"

VIPER commits street crimes with a high-tech twist: computer-assisted robberies, designer narcotics, selling illegal genetically-engineered guard animals (and holding pit-fights between genetically-enhanced dogs), decrypting communication software to spy on people's private conversations (for blackmail purposes), underground fighting between brawlers who've ODED on designer steroids and other narcotics, smuggling high-tech parts to countries currently under an embargo or a tech restriction, and so on. The monies garnered from these operations go toward lining the pockets of those involved, paying for new research; and throwing parties where innocent dupes are drugged, kidnapped, and ritually executed for the glory of the Snake.

"Realistic" VIPER poses mostly a local or national threat, not a worldwide one, though it's not above raiding a military installation and stealing a top secret weapon prototype or smuggling nuclear materials.

Being Hunted by "realistic" VIPER isn't much better than being Hunted by major menace VIPER, except that the organization lacks the muscle to attack the character repeatedly. Instead, it harms him indirectly, by wrecking his credit rating, repossessing his car, framing him on kiddie porn charges, and so forth.

COMMANDO HERO

A *Commando Hero* campaign is one where the PCs are well-equipped, Heroic-level members of an agency devoted to fighting professional crime and terrorism, including superpowered crime — such as UNTIL or PRIMUS. *Commando Hero* campaigns emphasize action over espionage, assault over stealth; they may investigate the bad guys, but nearly every scenario ends with a daring commando raid against a heavily-armed enemy. Player characters are elite commandos, boldly fighting against evil, often using weapons and gear that's more "futuristic" than real world tech (sometimes *considerably* more so). Any superhumans who exist are relatively low-powered — typically people like mutated agents or high-tech android robots — and almost invariably evil, since *Commando Hero* celebrates the human spirit.

Player characters in *Commando Hero* are Heroic characters, but whether Standard, Powerful, or Very Powerful depends on you. The tone of the campaign is heroic, but unlike in *Champions*, the PCs don't usually have Codes Versus Killing and life is cheap on all sides. Characters typically have code-names, a cross between a superhero costumed identity and an air force pilot's call sign — ones like "Deep Cover," "Tag 'N' Frag," "Cluster Bomb," "Rhythm 'N' Blues," "The Earl," "Ace of Spades," "Big Bad," "Sioux Banshee," "Hide and Go Seek," "Sherman Tank," and whatever else the commander thinks of at the time he's parceling out names.

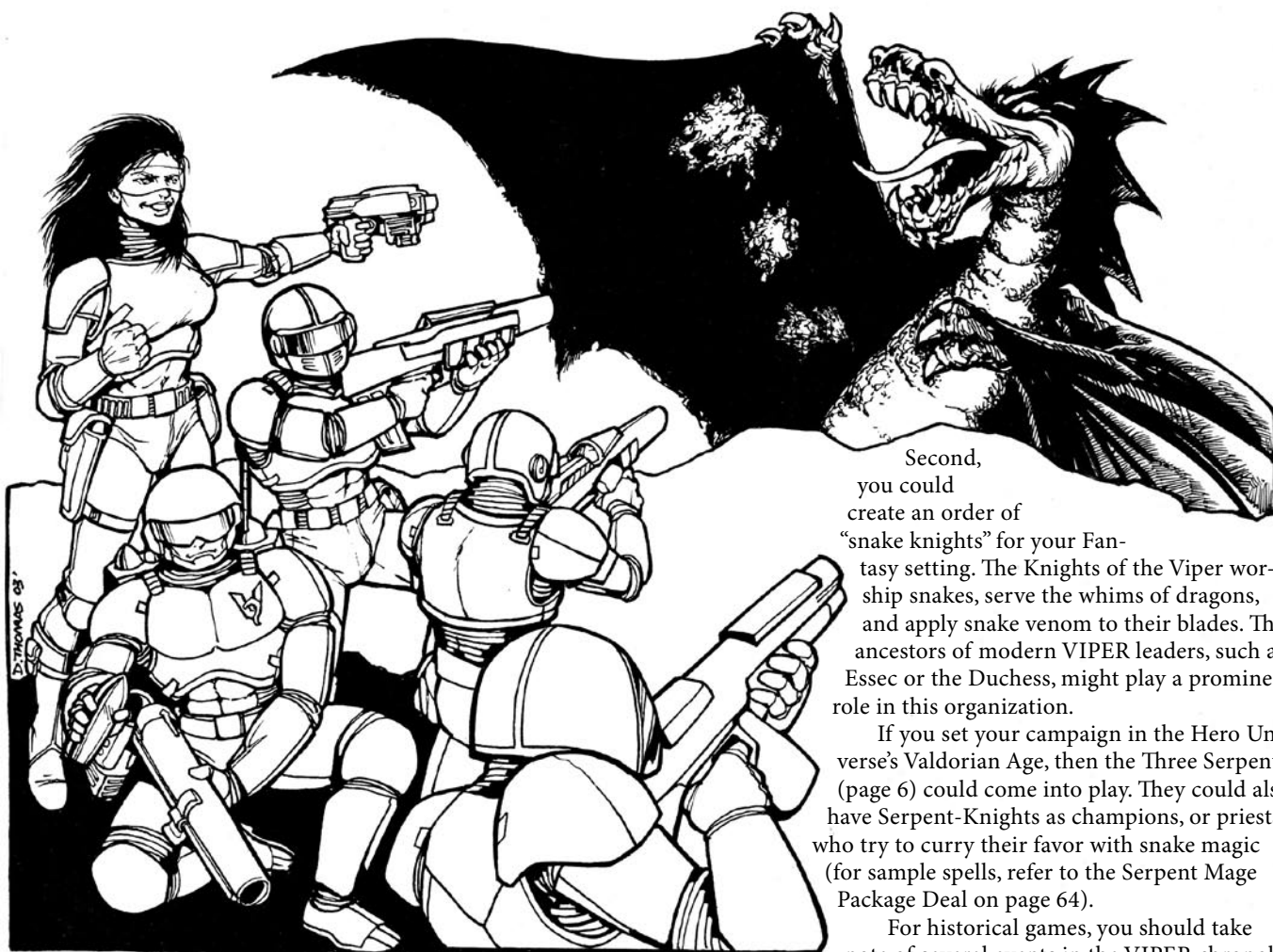
In a *Commando Hero* campaign, VIPER fills the same role it does in *Champions*; it's the Bad Guy. In fact, VIPER may be the most powerful and common Bad Guy in the campaign. It's the exact opposite number of the agency the PCs work for — a ruthless criminal/terrorist organization that launches one evil plot after another, attempting to get a technological edge, grab power, or subvert the order of world authority. There are no shades of grey — VIPER's ruthless and cruel, and makes no bones about it. As in *Champions*, VIPER wears its evil as a sign of strength and honor.

Scenarios in the *Commando Hero* genre are pretty basic:

- protect a person or artifact the enemy wants
- safeguard an experimental weapons system the enemy would like to steal (for some reason the enemy invariably performs its raid during

TEN PLACES TO STAGE CLIMACTIC COMMANDO HERO BATTLES

1. In the middle of a pit filled with poisonous snakes.
2. In the tunnels under a rocket launch — with thirty seconds to go before the rocket ignites.
3. On the deck of a sinking ghost ship, with VIPER aquatic agents positioned in the water as well as aboard the ship.
4. On a frozen lake, with the ice cracking from weapons fire and the spring thaw.
5. In a cathedral carillon, at twelve o'clock.
6. In the middle of a professional football game.
7. In a wrecking yard, around a working car crusher.
8. In the middle of a parade held to honor a local hero.
9. In a collapsed underground cavern, near an unstable nuclear device that could go off at a moment's notice unless it's deactivated.
10. At the wedding of an UNTIL/PRIMUS Commander and his/her long time fiancé/fiancée, a beautiful/handsome agent.



Second, you could create an order of “snake knights” for your Fantasy setting. The Knights of the Viper worship snakes, serve the whims of dragons, and apply snake venom to their blades. The ancestors of modern VIPER leaders, such as Essec or the Duchess, might play a prominent role in this organization.

If you set your campaign in the Hero Universe’s Valdorian Age, then the Three Serpents (page 6) could come into play. They could also have Serpent-Knights as champions, or priests who try to curry their favor with snake magic (for sample spells, refer to the Serpent Mage Package Deal on page 64).

For historical games, you should take note of several events in the VIPER chronology. One, which occurred in the Dark Ages sometime between 600 and 775 AD (the exact date’s been left open to fit the needs of your campaign, but you can use 666 as a default), was the coming of the Six Vipers, the leaders of the barbarian horde sponsored by Nama. Another is the incident of the Vikings and the Golden Serpent during the era of the great Viking voyages to the west (c. 950-1050 AD). You could also use the Serpent’s Wheel in a Renaissance Italy campaign as one of many devious factions seeking power in Machiavellian times.

VIPER in *Fantasy Hero* remains VIPER by taking on those trappings that are so familiar to players: people in green outfits running around performing heinous acts with a serpent motif. They want to rule the world and get rich doing it, but they use force of arms and magical might to accomplish their goals instead of high technology.

the actual weapons test when security’s at its tightest)

- find the place where the enemy is conducting an evil activity (drug trafficking, slave labor operations to get a powerful artifact, intercepting communications with spacecraft) and bust it
- join forces with your worst enemy when you’re both attacked by a more evil foe

The main objective in a *Commando Hero* game is to get into large scale fights against agents. The set piece is everything; players should be battling in different environments during each adventure climax.

FANTASY HERO

You can use VIPER in several ways as part of a *Fantasy Hero* game.

First, you can transport VIPER in its modern incarnation into a Fantasy world via dimensional gate. The *Lost Vipers* campaign outline below describes one idea for such a game. To keep VIPER as a viable threat, you may need to transport an entire Nest so the agents can repair and recharge their weapons, build new vehicles, and so forth.

PULP HERO

While VIPER was not officially born until after the Second World War, its roots in the Victorian and pulp eras are well established. As the Unholy Order of the Grand Reptile, VIPER’s antecedents wreaked havoc in England and Africa (and even in America). Their unyielding hatred of their opponents in the Royal Geographic Society was

matched only by their cruelty and opportunism when it came to exploiting the native populations of Africa, or the obscene lengths they'd go to to satisfy their obsession with the snake god Nama. They employed mystics, cultists, the best assassins of Cairo and Khartoum, and inventors whose bizarre inventions are beyond the understanding of even today's science. Their goals, however, remained the same as those who followed Nama long ago: wealth and power. While the Unholy Order was not as renowned as Professor Moriarty, Al Capone, or the other infamous villains of those eras, it was a pernicious and widespread threat. You could easily import it into your *Pulp Hero* or *Victorian Hero* game as an adversary for your PCs.

Similarly, Edgar Lancelyn Essac, the man destined to become the Supreme Serpent, makes a terrific villain for pulp adventures. At first he seems to be a charming rake and a rival for the affections of any beautiful woman who comes along for the adventure — but he soon turns out to be someone far more sinister. Like many good pulp villains, his arrogant sense of self-worth, condescending stoicism, and need (and ability) to prove himself better than anyone else eventually prompts him to show his evil side.

CYBER HERO

In *Cyber Hero*, you should place the emphasis less on VIPER being an organized crime group, and more on its industrial and economic assets. VIPER isn't a criminal organization or group of green-garbed terrorists in this setting, it's a part of the megacorporate order threatening to suffocate the world. The snake motif comes up in the programs and icons used by their hackers and in the AI that's the secret head of the organization, the Supreme Serpent.

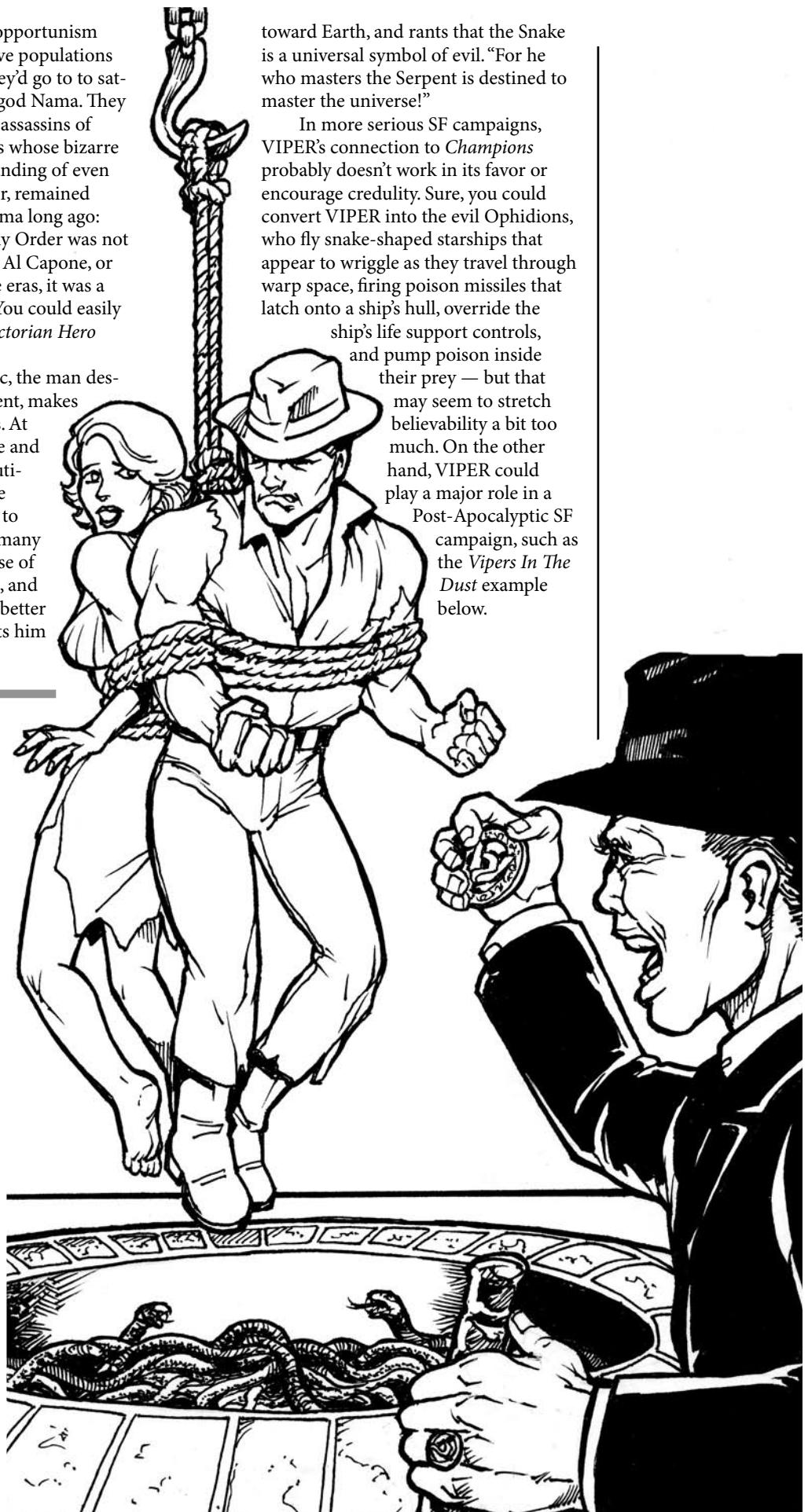
In *Cyber Hero*, VIPER doesn't employ standard agents. But it uses its deep pockets to hire whatever sort of "security consultants" it needs to maintain its lead over the competition.

STAR HERO

You could use VIPER in *Star Hero* in much the same way you would in *Pulp Hero* — it's a secret, high-tech cabal that worships the Snake. This is especially appropriate in Pulp SF, where strong-jawed heroes battle against villains like the evil Emperor Vipereus, who commands the Serpent Asteroid as it speeds on a collision course

toward Earth, and rants that the Snake is a universal symbol of evil. "For he who masters the Serpent is destined to master the universe!"

In more serious SF campaigns, VIPER's connection to *Champions* probably doesn't work in its favor or encourage credulity. Sure, you could convert VIPER into the evil Ophidions, who fly snake-shaped starships that appear to wriggle as they travel through warp space, firing poison missiles that latch onto a ship's hull, override the ship's life support controls, and pump poison inside their prey — but that may seem to stretch believability a bit too much. On the other hand, VIPER could play a major role in a Post-Apocalyptic SF campaign, such as the *Vipers In The Dust* example below.



VIPER AS THE GOOD GUYS

It's possible, without playing the PCs as true bad guys, to run a campaign where the PCs are VIPER agents — though in a VIPER that's not quite the evil, insidious organization depicted in this book. Here are three example VIPER-oriented campaigns.

Green VIPER Liberator

This campaign is an adaptation of a bizarre Japanese cartoon (which is actual VIPER propaganda in the Far East in the Champions Universe). The year is 2022, the city is Mega Angeles II, formerly Los Angeles, and the world is a cold, ruthless, high-tech extrapolation of a Champions world after the heroes fought a war against the common man — and man won. Supers (now known as Pariahs) have been all but wiped out, and the few that remain keep their identities a secret (except when they're driven by fits of grief or plague-inspired madness to go on a murderous rampage).

The world is a contrast of the glittering high-tech paradise run by corporate megalomaniacs whose arrogance could give Dr. Destroyer a run for his money, and the broken-down slums built in the ruins of the final battles between man and those who thought they were above man, where rampant disease (including the Pariah Plague, which targets anyone with a gene likely to produce a common superhero mutation within two generations), unspeakable poverty, and general misery. And there is only one force that might lead the world into something better...

VIPER, of course.

Misunderstood idealists in the days before the Pariah Wars, VIPER wants to bring down the new megalomaniacs, clean up the slums, and grow trees and share the land with natural wildlife (especially snakes). The PCs are agents in the criminal but heroic VIPER organization, fighting evil corporations, gangsters, and corrupt (or incompetent) police, as well as committing crimes of the “rob from the rich, give to the poor” variety. In the tradition of anime, soap opera is as important as the combat — the ability of a character to love, especially when it's angst-ridden tragic love between lovers separated by petty human vices (which frequently prompt the characters to shout long diatribes against the cruelty of the human race), is as important as their ability to fight.

Themes in Green VIPER Liberator tend to be socially liberal and as subtle as a freight train: homelessness, racial prejudice, poverty, environmental terrorism, and people whose souls have been eaten away by a love for violence litter the landscape, waiting for someone to save them. VIPER is guided by the benign Supreme Serpent, who uses violence to advance humanity to “its next stage of universal peace and enlightenment,” and who wishes “to restore the harmony between the worlds of technology and nature.” The Supreme Serpent is really a giant snake named Jinchi Habu

(“Wise Snake”). He's not a mystic, but a telepath who appears in dreams “when one is cleansed of the evils of man.” A person can communicate with the great Jinchi by feeding one's blood to a snake, then letting the snake bite him (in which case he experiences a hallucinogenic dream where the great Jinchi appears). Jinchi protects his followers with creatures called Kagehabu (“shadow snakes”) — intelligent serpents that can become invisible when they're in danger and which carry tiny scroll messages from the great Jinchi in their mouths.

Green VIPER Liberator is a high-powered Heroic anime campaign, with PCs built on at least 75 Base Points plus 75 Disadvantage points, if not more. You should encourage players to have the Skills necessary to operate at least one VIPER vehicle, as vehicular combat is very important in many popular forms of anime.

GREEN VIPER LIBERATOR PLOT SEEDS

A Day Without Oranges: In defiance of the order from the city that no one can grow plants without a permit, a woman named Niwa has an orange grove in a hidden alcove in the heart of the slums. The city, hearing rumors of this place, seeks to destroy it. The VIPER agents, asked to protect the grove, soon discover why the city wants the grove destroyed — not only do the oranges grow at an incredibly rapid rate, but those who eat the oranges share the life-force of the heroes who were murdered in that spot and hear their voices, something the heroes' killers will do anything to prevent.

Love At Last, At Last Love: The Toxicon Corporation is one of the largest and most evil of the corporations of Mega Angeles. It believes that if it can steal VIPER technology and wrest the secrets of the snake from it, it can rule the city. Toxicon develops Omega, a psionic robot who can infiltrate the Serpentine Network — but then Omega sees a file on one of the PCs, falls in love with him, and bolts from Toxicon. Toxicon sends a Dreadnight ship (a giant tracked battle fortress with ten turret cannons and numerous missile launchers) to destroy everything in its path until it finds Omega. The PCs meet with Omega, and must protect her from the Dreadnight.

The Children of Love: The PCs discover some super-human children who are immune to the Pariah virus. Naturally, the corporations want to find them and kill them to prevent other superhumans from discovering an antidote to Pariah. The Supreme Serpent will nurture them personally in his Great Underground Sanctuary, but needs time to send his underground tunneling craft to retrieve them. Until then, the PCs must protect them.

Lost VIPERs

Okay, so you're the member of a VIPER's Nest. You've got some nasty enemies, and you're a hunted man. You can live with that; it's part of the job, and you're tough enough to take it. But you never signed on for this....

VIPER and some local superheroes put aside their differences long enough to battle DEMON as the evil cultists performed some arcane ritual, but something went wrong. You and your entire Nest were transported into another world, where you found yourselves in the middle of a battle between villagers out of a fantasy movie and a fire-breathing dragon! When you and your fellow agents slew the dragon, the villagers proclaimed you heroes. Heroes! They don't know you very well, do they? Or maybe, now that people aren't hunting you for your past deeds and you've got a clean slate, you can set your life on a different path....

Lost Vipers is a VIPER/*Fantasy Hero* crossover in which a VIPER Nest finds itself thrust into a world of High Fantasy and its agents renowned as heroes. The Nest must face the challenge of surviving in a world lacking modern conveniences. It has a huge technological advantage but no way to resupply itself. It's got lots of potential enemies (such as the king, the local lords, and the wizard's guild) wondering who these people are and how to deal with them. Meanwhile the Nest has internal problems — some agents are desperate to go home, while others think this is the perfect place to carve out their own little empire; some want to use the native goodwill as a license to exploit and abuse, others want to be more circumspect or actually

become heroes. And then there's a superhero's teenage sidekick who got pulled in with them, and that one DEMON Morbane who also came along but escaped during the battle with the dragon....

Lost Vipers is a gritty, detail-oriented game. Every spare part and clip of ammo counts, every meal is a struggle, there's no universal translator and people don't speak the native language. The PCs (typically Standard Heroic characters) have to struggle not only with these difficulties, but with learning to live in a new world. Ultimately, however, *Lost Vipers* involves themes of freedom versus familiarity, and redemption versus indulgence.

LOST VIPER PLOT SEEDS

I'm Only A Kid... This Isn't Happening: The teenage superhero sidekick is losing it. He was a naive, junior boy scout momma's boy back in the real world — now, not only does he have to cope with VIPER being acclaimed heroes, he has to help kill animals and make food from them, and deal with the laws and customs of the local world, where it's standard practice to chop off the hands of thieves and pluck out the left eye of ogles. The kid obviously needs help... but do you offer it, or push him into the abyss?



An Example Must Be Set: The Nest's positive relationship with the local village disintegrates when one of the more psychotic (and disliked) VIPER agent brutally attacks and murders a local girl. The villagers want to kill him. The Nest Leader, if he has anything to say about it, keeps silent. The Nest is torn between those who'd like to light the pyre themselves and a bunch of people who feel that if the locals get away with killing one of their own, VIPER will lose control of them. Which side do the PCs join? Does it change things if the soon-to-be-executed agent is the only one in the Nest who possesses skills that might help the Nest get home?

Wizards: Thanks to information provided by a certain escaped DEMON Morbane, the local wizard's guild believes VIPER is too powerful to tolerate. It persuades a flock of summerwyrms dragons to attack the Nest. The agents must defend the Nest, then find some way to neutralize the overall threat.

VIPERS In The Dust

The year is 2044. Thirty years ago, the Great War against the Superpowered left the Earth a radioactive husk. No one's sure what happened to cause the final holocaust. Most of America's major cities are uninhabitable centers of lingering radiation. New York was completely destroyed; it's now the most radioactive area in the solar system between the sun and Jupiter. All magic was destroyed, and all aliens quickly abandoned Earth.

The world is divided into thousands of tiny feudal states, most of which are ruled by the remaining superhumans, almost all of whom are mad. Life is short and then you die... until you find the remains of an ancient VIPER's Nest, all of its vehicles and equipment intact. Perhaps there's a way for someone without superpowers to survive after all. The PCs must choose their destiny in a harsh world, and whatever course of action they may take leads to dangerous threats.

This is post-apocalyptic game — the Worst Case Scenario of a *Champions* campaign, the IHA's nightmare come true. The PCs, not supers but with enough firepower to oppose them, must try to rebuild the world into a better place. They're elements of positive, if violent, change.

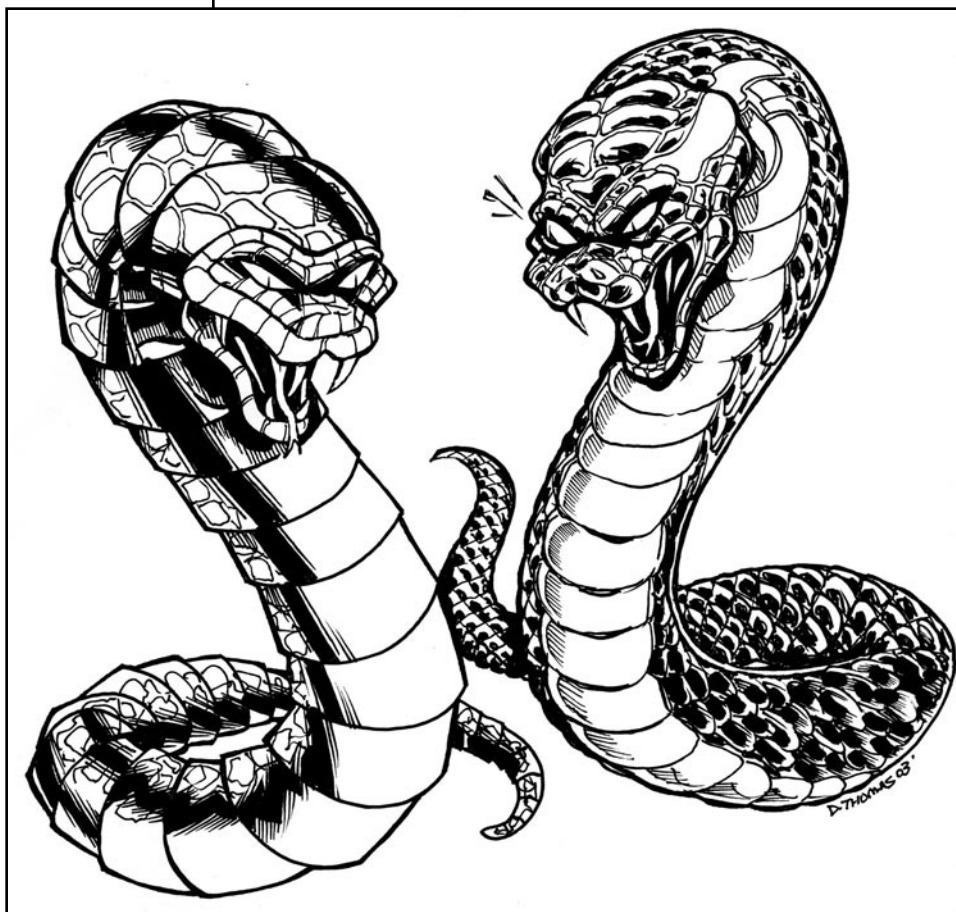
The PCs have to deal with rogue supervillains and their armed lackeys, as well as mutant animals and the Ascension Virus — a mutated retrovirus found in groundwater and stagnant pools near the hot zones. It gives people superhuman abilities, but every time they use them at close to full power, they risk death and insanity. The PCs also have to gather and husband the area's resources, especially gasoline, which (even with grain distillery techniques) is more precious than gold. If they can get their hands on enough fuel for those VIPER vehicles to launch an extended campaign, they'd be a lot more powerful....

VIPERS IN THE DUST PLOT SEEDS

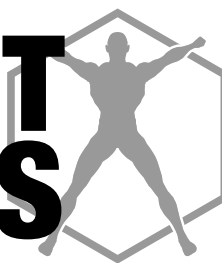
Count The Clock That Counts The Time: You need spare parts for your VIPER gear, and the closest Nest you know about is in St. Louis. While visiting St. Louis, you encounter Captain Chronos, who tells you you have to capture Holocaust and bring him to St. Louis. Of course he doesn't tell you why.

Not My Defender: Defender, Monarch of Des Moines and avowed enemy of VIPER, has researched old VIPER Nests and figured out your approximate location. He's offering a year's supply of water to any settlement that leads him to your Nest. Now you must find a way to discourage the bands of "bounty hunters" searching for you before someone zeroes in on the base and takes it from you.

The Enemy of My Enemy: Freon asks for your help in destroying Blackest Harlequin and his gang, the Merry Fun Circus. Do you trust him?



AGENT TEMPLATES



To make it easier for you to use VIPER in your campaigns, here are some templates for a few agent types superheroes might encounter, built using the Package Deals in Chapter Three. All Skill choices have already been made, but you can easily change the Skill selections if necessary.

GENERAL COMBAT SPECIALIST

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 [1]
14	DEX	12	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
13	CON	6	12-	
12	BODY	4	11-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll 11-
10	EGO	0	11-	ECV: 3
13	PRE	3	12-	PRE Attack: 2½d6
10	COM	0	11-	
4	PD	1		Total: 10 PD (6 rPD)
4	ED	1		Total: 10 ED (6 rED)
3	SPD	6		Phases: 4, 8, 12
6	REC	0		
26	END	0		
30	STUN	3		Total Characteristics Cost: 41

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Cost Powers END

32	VB-A1 "Striker" Blaster Rifle:	Multipower, 52-point reserve, 32 Charges for entire Multipower (+¼); all OAF (-1)	[32]
2u	1) Basic Setting:	Energy Blast 8d6; OAF (-1)	
2u	2) Autofire Setting:	Energy Blast 7d6, Autofire (5 shots, +½); OAF (-1), Limited Range (200"; -¼)	
6	Rifle-butt Club:	HA +3d6; OAF (-1), Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½)	1
15	VB-S1 "Shorty" Blaster Pistol:	Energy Blast 7d6 (35 Active Points); OAF (-1), 12 Charges (-¼)	[12]
12	VIPER Fang:	HKA 1d6 (plus STR), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OAF (-1) plus Range Based On STR (+¼) for the HKA; OAF (-1), 1 Recoverable Charge (-1¼), Lockout (cannot use HKA until Charge is recovered; -½)	0

Martial Arts: VIPER Brawling

Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
4 Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort
4 Dodge	—	+5	Dodge, Affects All Attacks, Abort
4 Punch	+0	+2	5d6 Strike

3	Throw	+0 +1	3d6 + v/5; Target Falls
9	VIPER BCU (Basic):	Armor (6 PD/6 ED); OIF (-½), Activation Roll 14- (does not protect Hit Locations 3-5 or 6-7; -½)	0
2	VIPER Helmet (Basic) Protection:	Armor (2 PD/2 ED); OIF (-½), Activation Roll 8- (only protects Hit Locations 3-5; -2)	0
6	VIPER Helmet (Basic) Communications	System: Radio Perception/Transmission (Radio Group); OIF (-½), Affected As Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-¼)	0

Perks

1	Fringe Benefit: Membership (VIPER)
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Skills

6	+2 with VIPER Blasters
3	Combat Driving 12-
3	Concealment 11-
3	Fast Draw (Small Arms) 12-
3	Interrogation 12-
2	KS: The Local Underworld 11-
1	KS: The Superhuman World 8-
2	KS: VIPER 11-
2	PS: VIPER Agent 11-
3	Paramedics 11-
3	Persuasion 12-
3	Shadowing 11-
3	Stealth 12-
3	Streetwise 12-
3	WF: Small Arms, Blades

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 145

Total Cost: 186

50+ Disadvantages

5	Distinctive Features: VIPER uniform (Easily Concealed; Noticed And Recognizable)
10	Hunted: VIPER 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
15	Psychological Limitation: Amoral And Greedy (Common, Strong)
20	Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)
86	Experience Points or Disadvantages specific to the individual agent

Total Disadvantage Points: 186

GENERAL INTELLIGENCE SPECIALIST

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 [1]
14	DEX	12	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
13	CON	6	12-	
12	BODY	4	11-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll 11-
10	EGO	0	11-	ECV: 3
13	PRE	3	12-	PRE Attack: 2½d6
10	COM	0	11-	
4	PD	1		Total: 10 PD (6 rPD)
4	ED	1		Total: 10 ED (6 rED)
3	SPD	6		Phases: 4, 8, 12
6	REC	0		
26	END	0		
30	STUN	3		Total Characteristics Cost: 41

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Cost Powers **END**

15	VB-S1 "Shorty" Blaster Pistol: Energy Blast 7d6 (35 Active Points); OAF (-1), 12 Charges (-¼) [12]			
12	VIPER Fang: HKA 1d6 (plus STR), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OAF (-1) plus Range Based On STR (+¼) for the HKA; OAF (-1), 1 Recoverable Charge (-1¼), Lockout (cannot use HKA until Charge is recovered; -½) 0			
	Martial Arts: VIPER Brawling			
	Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
4	Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort
4	Dodge	—	+5	Dodge, Affects All Attacks, Abort
4	Punch	+0	+2	5d6 Strike
3	Throw	+0	+1	3d6 + v/5; Target Falls
9	VIPER BCU (Basic): Armor (6 PD/6 ED); OIF (-½), Activation Roll 14- (does not protect Hit Locations 3-5 or 6-7; -½) 0			
7	VIPER Armored Clothing: Armor (4 PD/4 ED); IIF (-¼), Activation Roll 14- (does not protect Hit Locations 3-5 or 6-7; -½), Cannot Be Worn Together With BCU (-0) 0			
2	VIPER Helmet (Basic) Protection: Armor (2 PD/2 ED); OIF (-½), Activation Roll 8- (only protects Hit Locations 3-5; -2) 0			
6	VIPER Helmet (Basic) Communications			

System: Radio Perception/Transmission (Radio Group); OIF (-½), Affected As Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-¼) 0

Perks

1 Fringe Benefit: Membership (VIPER)

Skills

- 3 +1 with VIPER Blasters
- 3 Acting 12-
- 3 Bugging 11-
- 3 Computer Programming 11-
- 3 Concealment 11-
- 3 Conversation 12-
- 3 Deduction 11-
- 3 Disguise 11-
- 3 Interrogation 12-
- 2 KS: The Local Underworld 11-
- 1 KS: The Superhuman World 8-
- 2 KS: VIPER 11-
- 3 Persuasion 12-
- 2 PS: VIPER Agent 11-
- 3 Shadowing 11-
- 3 Stealth 12-
- 3 Streetwise 12-
- 3 WF: Small Arms, Blades

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 116

Total Cost: 157

50+ Disadvantages

- 5 Distinctive Features: VIPER uniform (Easily Concealed; Noticed And Recognizable)
- 10 Hunted: VIPER 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Amoral And Greedy (Common, Strong)
- 20 Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)
- 57 Experience Points or Disadvantages specific to the individual agent

Total Disadvantage Points: 157

GENERAL TECHNICAL SPECIALIST

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 [1]
14	DEX	12	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
13	CON	6	12-	
12	BODY	4	11-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll 11-
10	EGO	0	11-	ECV: 3
13	PRE	3	12-	PRE Attack: 2½d6
10	COM	0	11-	
4	PD	1		Total: 10 PD (6 rPD)
4	ED	1		Total: 10 ED (6 rED)
3	SPD	6		Phases: 4, 8, 12
6	REC	0		
26	END	0		
30	STUN	3		Total Characteristics Cost: 41

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Cost Powers **END**

15	VB-S1 "Shorty" Blaster Pistol: Energy Blast 7d6 (35 Active Points); OAF (-1), 12 Charges (-¼) [12]			
12	VIPER Fang: HKA 1d6 (plus STR), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OAF (-1) plus Range Based On STR (+¼) for the HKA; OAF (-1), 1 Recoverable Charge (-1¼), Lockout (cannot use HKA until Charge is recovered; -½) 0			
	Martial Arts: VIPER Brawling			
	Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
4	Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort
4	Dodge	—	+5	Dodge, Affects All Attacks, Abort
4	Punch	+0	+2	5d6 Strike
3	Throw	+0	+1	3d6 + v/5; Target Falls
9	VIPER BCU (Basic): Armor (6 PD/6 ED); OIF (-½), Activation Roll 14- (does not protect Hit Locations 3-5 or 6-7; -½) 0			
2	VIPER Helmet (Basic) Protection: Armor (2 PD/2 ED); OIF (-½), Activation Roll 8- (only protects Hit Locations 3-5; -2) 0			
6	VIPER Helmet (Basic) Communications System: Radio Perception/Transmission (Radio Group); OIF (-½), Affected As Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-¼) 0			

Perks

1 Fringe Benefit: Membership (VIPER)

Skills

3	+1 with VIPER Blasters
3	Bugging 11-
3	Computer Programming 11-
3	Deduction 11-
3	Electronics 11-
3	Forgery (Money, Credit Cards) 11-
2	KS: The Local Underworld 11-
1	KS: The Superhuman World 8-
2	KS: VIPER 11-
3	Paramedics 11-
3	Persuasion 12-
2	PS: VIPER Agent 11-
3	Security Systems 11-
3	Stealth 12-
3	Streetwise 12-
3	Systems Operation 11-
3	WF: Small Arms, Blades

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 106

Total Cost: 147

50+ Disadvantages

5	Distinctive Features: VIPER uniform (Easily Concealed; Noticed And Recognizable)
10	Hunted: VIPER 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
15	Psychological Limitation: Amoral And Greedy (Common, Strong)
20	Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)
47	Experience Points or Disadvantages specific to the individual agent

Total Disadvantage Points: 147

AIR CAVALRY AGENT

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 [1]
14	DEX	12	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
13	CON	6	12-	
12	BODY	4	11-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll 11-
10	EGO	0	11-	ECV: 3
13	PRE	3	12-	PRE Attack: 2½d6
10	COM	0	11-	
4	PD	1		Total: 12 PD (8 rPD)
4	ED	1		Total: 12 ED (8 rED)
3	SPD	6		Phases: 4, 8, 12
6	REC	0		
26	END	0		
30	STUN	3		Total Characteristics Cost: 41

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Cost	Powers	END	
32	VL-A1 "Redline" Laser Rifle: Multipower, 52-point reserve, 24 Charges for entire Multipower (+¼); all OAF (-1)	[24]	
2u	1) Single-Shot Setting: RKA 3d6; OAF (-1)		
2u	2) Autofire Setting: RKA 2d6+1, Autofire (5 shots; +½); OAF (-1), Limited Range (225"; -¼)		
6	Rifle-butt Club: HA +3d6; OAF (-1), Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½)	1	
5	Aiming Laser: +1 OCV; OAF (-1) plus +2 versus Range Modifier; OAF (-1)	0	
16	VL-S1 "Redeye" Laser Pistol: RKA 2d6; OAF (-1), 10 Charges (-¼) plus +1 OCV; OAF (-1) plus +1 versus Range Modifier; OAF (-1)	[10]	
16	VG-1 Frag Grenade: RKA 2d6+1, Explosion (+½); OAF (-1), 4 Charges (-1), Range Based On Strength (-¼)	[4]	
	Martial Arts: VIPER Brawling		
	Maneuver OCV DCV Notes		
4	Block	+2 +2	Block, Abort
4	Dodge	— +5	Dodge, Affects All Attacks, Abort
4	Punch	+0 +2	5d6 Strike
3	Throw	+0 +1	3d6 + v/5; Target Falls
12	VIPER BCU (Elite): Armor (8 PD/8 ED); OIF (-½), Activation Roll 14- (does not protect Hit Locations 3-5 or 6-7; -½)		0
3	VIPER Helmet (Elite) Protection: Armor (4 PD/4 ED); OIF (-½), Activation Roll 8- (only protects Hit Locations 3-5; -2)		0
6	VIPER Helmet (Elite) Communications System: HRRP (Radio Group); OIF (-½), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-½)		0
3	VIPER Helmet (Elite) Nightvision System: Nightvision (5 Active Points); OIF (-½)		0
8	VIPER Helmet (Elite) Telescopic Faceplate: +4 versus Range Modifier for Sight Group (12 Active Points); OIF (-½)		0
33	VFL-4 Jetpack: Flight 20", Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); OIF (-½)		2

Perks

- 2 Fringe Benefit: Membership (VIPER Elite Agent)

Talents

- 8 VIPER Wrist Computer: Absolute Time Sense, Bump of Direction, Eidetic Memory (Audio Only; -1), and Lightning Calculator; all OIF (-½)

Skills

- 6 +2 with VIPER Blasters
 7 +2 DCV; Only While Using Jetpack (-½)
 3 Breakfall 12-
 3 Combat Piloting 12-
 3 Concealment 11-
 3 Fast Draw (Small Arms) 12-
 3 Interrogation 12-
 2 KS: The Local Underworld 11-
 1 KS: The Pilot World 8-
 1 KS: The Superhuman World 8-
 2 KS: VIPER 11-
 2 Navigation (Air) 11-
 2 PS: VIPER Agent 11-
 3 Paramedics 11-
 3 Persuasion 12-
 3 Shadowing 11-
 3 Stealth 12-
 3 Streetwise 12-
 1 TF: VFL-4 VIPER Jetpack
 3 WF: Small Arms, Blades

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 226

Total Cost: 267

50+ Disadvantages

- 5 Distinctive Features: VIPER uniform (Easily Concealed; Noticed And Recognizable)
 10 Hunted: VIPER 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
 15 Psychological Limitation: Amoral And Greedy (Common, Strong)
 20 Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)
 167 Experience Points or Disadvantages specific to the individual agent

Total Disadvantage Points: 267

HEAVY WEAPONS SPECIALIST

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
18	STR	8	13-	Lift 300 kg; 3½d6 [2]
14	DEX	12	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
13	CON	6	12-	
12	BODY	4	11-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll 11-
10	EGO	0	11-	ECV: 3
13	PRE	3	12-	PRE Attack: 2½d6
10	COM	0	11-	
5	PD	1		Total: 13 PD (8 rPD)
4	ED	1		Total: 12 ED (8 rED)
3	SPD	6		Phases: 4, 8, 12
7	REC	0		
26	END	0		
31	STUN	3		Total Characteristics Cost: 44

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Cost Powers END

47	VB-A4 "Jackhammer" Blaster Rifle: Energy Blast 12d6, Autofire (5 shots; +½), 30 Charges (+¼); OAF (-1), Limited Range (250"; -¼)				[30]
6	Rifle-butt Club: HA +3d6; OAF (-1), Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½)				1
16	VL-S1 "Redeye" Laser Pistol: RKA 2d6; OAF (-1), 10 Charges (-¼) plus +1 OCV; OAF (-1) plus +1 versus Range Modifier; OAF (-1)				[10]
16	VG-1 Frag Grenade: RKA 2d6+1, Explosion (+½); OAF (-1), 4 Charges (-1), Range Based On Strength (-¼)				[4]
12	VIPER Fang: HKA 1d6 (plus STR), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OAF (-1) plus Range Based On STR (+¼) for the HKA; OAF (-1), 1 Recoverable Charge (-¼), Lockout (cannot use HKA until Charge is recovered; -½)				0
Martial Arts: VIPER Brawling					
	Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes	
4	Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort	
4	Dodge	—	+5	Dodge, Affects All Attacks, Abort	
4	Punch	+0	+2	5½d6 Strike	
3	Throw	+0	+1	3½d6 + v/5; Target Falls	
12	VIPER BCU (Elite): Armor (8 PD/8 ED); OIF (-½), Activation Roll 14- (does not protect Hit Locations 3-5 or 6-7; -½)				0
3	VIPER Helmet (Elite) Protection: Armor (4 PD/4 ED); OIF (-½), Activation Roll 8- (only protects Hit Locations 3-5; -2)				0
6	VIPER Helmet (Elite) Communications System: HRRP (Radio Group); OIF (-½), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-½)				0
3	VIPER Helmet (Elite) Nightvision System: Nightvision (5 Active Points); OIF (-½)				0

Perks

- 2 Fringe Benefit: Membership (VIPER Elite Agent)

Skills

- 6 +2 with VIPER Blasters
- 3 Combat Driving 12-
- 3 Concealment 11-
- 3 Fast Draw (Small Arms) 12-
- 3 Interrogation 12-
- 2 KS: The Local Underworld 11-
- 2 KS: Military Technology 11-
- 1 KS: The Superhuman World 8-
- 2 KS: VIPER 11-
- 2 PS: VIPER Agent 11-
- 3 Paramedics 11-
- 3 Persuasion 12-
- 3 Shadowing 11-
- 3 Stealth 12-
- 3 Streetwise 12-
- 3 Tactics 11-
- 3 Teamwork 11-
- 8 WF: Small Arms, Blades, Emplaced Weapons,
Flamethrowers, Grenade Launchers, Heavy
Machine Guns, Shoulder- Fired Weapons

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 194

Total Cost: 238

50+ Disadvantages

- 5 Distinctive Features: VIPER uniform (Easily
Concealed; Noticed And Recognizable)
- 10 Hunted: VIPER 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Amoral And
Greedy (Common, Strong)
- 20 Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very
Frequently, Major)
- 138 Experience Points or Disadvantages specific
to the individual agent

Total Disadvantage Points: 238

SUPERHUMAN COMBAT SPECIALIST

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
18	STR	8	13-	Lift 300 kg; 3½d6 [2]
14	DEX	12	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
13	CON	6	12-	
12	BODY	4	11-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll 12-
14	EGO	8	12-	ECV: 5
18	PRE	8	13-	PRE Attack: 3½d6
10	COM	0	11-	
7	PD	3		Total: 27 PD (20 rPD)
6	ED	3		Total: 26 ED (20 rED)
3	SPD	6		Phases: 4, 8, 12
6	REC	0		
26	END	0		
30	STUN	3		Total Characteristics Cost: 64

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Cost	Powers	END
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62	VB-A5 "Sledgehammer" Blaster Rifle: Energy Blast 14d6, Autofire (5 shots; +½), 40 Charges (+½); OAF (-1), Limited Range (350"; -¼)	[40]
6	Rifle-butt Club: HA +3d6; OAF (-1), Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½)	1
15	VB-S1 "Shorty" Blaster Pistol: Energy Blast 7d6 (35 Active Points); OAF (-1), 12 Charges (-¼)	[12]
16	VG-1 Frag Grenade: RKA 2d6+1, Explosion (+½); OAF (-1), 4 Charges (-1), Range Based On Strength (-¼)	[4]
12	VIPER Fang: HKA 1d6 (plus STR), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OAF (-1) plus Range Based On STR (+¼) for the HKA; OAF (-1), 1 Recoverable Charge (-¼), Lockout (cannot use HKA until Charge is recovered; -½)	0
Martial Arts: VIPER Brawling		
	Maneuver	OCV DCV Notes
4	Block	+2 +2 Block, Abort
4	Dodge	— +5 Dodge, Affects All Attacks, Abort
4	Punch	+0 +2 5½d6 Strike
3	Throw	+0 +1 3½d6 + v/5; Target Falls
12	VIPER BCU (Elite): Armor (8 PD/8 ED); OIF (-½), Activation Roll 14- (does not protect Hit Locations 3-5 or 6-7; -½)	0
24	VFF-1 Force Field Belt: Force Field (12 PD/12 ED), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OIF (-½)	0
3	VIPER Helmet (Elite) Protection: Armor (4 PD/4 ED); OIF (-½), Activation Roll 8- (only protects Hit Locations 3-5; -2)	0
5	VIPER Helmet (Elite) Acoustic Shielding: Hearing Group Flash Defense (8 points); OIF (-½)	0

5	VIPER Helmet (Elite) Flare Shielding: Sight Group Flash Defense (8 points); OIF (-½)	0
7	VIPER Helmet (Elite) Psionic Shielding: Mental Defense (13 points total); OIF (-½)	0
7	VIPER Helmet (Elite) Oxygen Supply: Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing); OIF (-½), 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (1 Hour; -0)	0
6	VIPER Helmet (Elite) Communications System: HRRP (Radio Group); OIF (-½), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-½)	0
3	VIPER Helmet (Elite) Nightvision System: Nightvision (5 Active Points); OIF (-½)	0

Perks

2	Fringe Benefit: Membership (VIPER Elite Agent)
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Skills

16	+2 with All Combat
6	+2 with VIPER Blasters
3	Breakfall 12-
3	Combat Driving 12-
3	Concealment 11-
3	Fast Draw (Small Arms) 12-
3	Interrogation 12-
2	KS: The Local Underworld 11-
2	KS: The Superhuman World 11-
3	KS: VIPER 12-
3	PS: VIPER Agent 12-
3	Paramedics 11-
3	Persuasion 12-
3	Shadowing 11-
3	Stealth 12-
3	Streetwise 12-
3	WF: Small Arms, Blades

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 265

Total Cost: 329

50+ Disadvantages

5	Distinctive Features: VIPER uniform (Easily Concealed; Noticed And Recognizable)
10	Hunted: VIPER 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
15	Psychological Limitation: Amoral And Greedy (Common, Strong)
20	Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)
229	Experience Points or Disadvantages specific to the individual agent

Total Disadvantage Points: 329

ESPIONAGE SPECIALIST

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 [1]
14	DEX	12	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
13	CON	6	12-	
12	BODY	4	11-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll 12-
10	EGO	0	11-	ECV: 3
13	PRE	3	12-	PRE Attack: 2½d6
10	COM	0	11-	
4	PD	1		Total: 10 PD (6 rPD)
4	ED	1		Total: 10 ED (6 rED)
3	SPD	6		Phases: 4, 8, 12
6	REC	0		
26	END	0		
30	STUN	3		Total Characteristics Cost: 44

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Cost	Powers	END		
15	VB-S1 "Shorty" Blaster Pistol: Energy Blast 7d6 (35 Active Points); OAF (-1), 12 Charges (-¼)	[12]		
12	VIPER Fang: HKA 1d6 (plus STR), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OAF (-1) plus Range Based On STR (+¼) for the HKA; OAF (-1), 1 Recoverable Charge (-1¼), Lockout (cannot use HKA until Charge is recovered; -½)	0		
	Martial Arts: VIPER Brawling			
	Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
4	Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort
4	Dodge	—	+5	Dodge, Affects All Attacks, Abort
4	Punch	+0	+2	5d6 Strike
3	Throw	+0	+1	3d6 + v/5; Target Falls
12	VIPER BCU (Elite): Armor (8 PD/8 ED); OIF (-½), Activation Roll 14- (does not protect Hit Locations 3-5 or 6-7; -½)			0
3	VIPER Helmet (Elite) Protection: Armor (4 PD/4 ED); OIF (-½), Activation Roll 8- (only protects Hit Locations 3-5; -2)			0
6	VIPER Helmet (Elite) Communications System: HRRP (Radio Group); OIF (-½), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-½)			0
3	VIPER Helmet (Elite) Nightvision System: Nightvision (5 Active Points); OIF (-½)			0

Perks

- 2 Fringe Benefit: Membership (VIPER Elite Agent)

Skills

- 3 +1 with VIPER Blasters
- 3 Acting 12-
- 3 Bribery 12-
- 3 Bugging 12-
- 3 Combat Driving 12-
- 3 Combat Piloting 12-
- 3 Computer Programming 12-
- 3 Concealment 12-
- 3 Conversation 12-
- 3 Cryptography 12-
- 3 Deduction 12-
- 3 Disguise 12-
- 3 Electronics 12-
- 3 Gambling (Card Games, Craps) 12-
- 3 High Society 12-
- 3 Interrogation 12-
- 2 KS: The Local Underworld 11-
- 1 KS: The Superhuman World 8-
- 3 KS: VIPER 12-
- 3 Lockpicking 12-
- 3 Persuasion 12-
- 3 PS: VIPER Agent 12-
- 3 Security Systems 12-
- 3 Seduction 12-
- 3 Shadowing 12-
- 3 Stealth 12-
- 3 Streetwise 12-
- 3 Systems Operation 12-
- 3 WF: Small Arms, Blades

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 149

Total Cost: 193

50+ Disadvantages

- 5 Distinctive Features: VIPER uniform (Easily Concealed; Noticed And Recognizable)
- 10 Hunted: VIPER 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Amoral And Greedy (Common, Strong)
- 20 Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)
- 93 Experience Points or Disadvantages specific to the individual agent

Total Disadvantage Points: 193

COMPUTER SPECIALIST

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 [1]
14	DEX	12	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
13	CON	6	12-	
12	BODY	4	11-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll 12-
10	EGO	0	11-	ECV: 3
13	PRE	3	12-	PRE Attack: 2½d6
10	COM	0	11-	
4	PD	1		Total: 10 PD (6 rPD)
4	ED	1		Total: 10 ED (6 rED)
3	SPD	6		Phases: 4, 8, 12
6	REC	0		
26	END	0		
30	STUN	3		Total Characteristics Cost: 44

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Cost	Powers	END
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15	VB-S1 "Shorty" Blaster Pistol: Energy Blast 7d6 (35 Active Points); OAF (-1), 12 Charges (-¼)				[12]
12	VIPER Fang: HKA 1d6 (plus STR), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OAF (-1) plus Range Based On STR (+¼) for the HKA; OAF (-1), 1 Recoverable Charge (-1¼), Lockout (cannot use HKA until Charge is recovered; -½)				0
	Martial Arts: VIPER Brawling				
	Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes	
4	Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort	
4	Dodge	—	+5	Dodge, Affects All Attacks, Abort	
4	Punch	+0	+2	5d6 Strike	
3	Throw	+0	+1	3d6 + v/5; Target Falls	
12	VIPER BCU (Elite): Armor (8 PD/8 ED); OIF (-½), Activation Roll 14- (does not protect Hit Locations 3-5 or 6-7; -½)				0
3	VIPER Helmet (Elite) Protection: Armor (4 PD/4 ED); OIF (-½), Activation Roll 8- (only protects Hit Locations 3-5; -2)				0
6	VIPER Helmet (Elite) Communications System: HRRP (Radio Group); OIF (-½), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-½)				0
3	VIPER Helmet (Elite) Nightvision System: Nightvision (5 Active Points); OIF (-½)				0

Perks

40	Computer: Laptop Serpentine Node
2	Fringe Benefit: Membership (VIPER Elite Agent)

Skills

3	+1 with VIPER Blasters
3	Bugging 12-
7	Computer Programming 14-
3	Cryptography 12-
3	Deduction 12-
3	Electronics 12-
3	Forgery (Money, Credit Cards) 12-
3	Inventor 12-
2	KS: The Local Underworld 11-
1	KS: The Superhuman World 8-
3	KS: VIPER 12-
3	Paramedics 12-
3	Persuasion 12-
3	PS: VIPER Agent 12-
3	Security Systems 12-
3	Stealth 12-
3	Streetwise 12-
3	Systems Operation 12-
3	WF: Small Arms, Blades

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 166

Total Cost: 210

50+ Disadvantages

5	Distinctive Features: VIPER uniform (Easily Concealed; Noticed And Recognizable)
10	Hunted: VIPER 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
15	Psychological Limitation: Amoral And Greedy (Common, Strong)
20	Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)
110	Experience Points or Disadvantages specific to the individual agent

Total Disadvantage Points: 210

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