

Sharper Than A Serpent's Tooth

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The Review:

Reviewed By Gordon Feiner

The Upside:

Shaper Than A Serpent's tooth is the third adventure book Hero published for the Champions line under fifth edition. It's also the longest single adventure. As a whole and if run strait it can take from 3-6 sessions to complete. The book itself is divided into three chapters, the three parts of the adventure and a final chapter on the villains themselves.

So who are the villains? Just like in Champions Battleground the workings of the book center around the workings of one mastermind. In this case King Cobra. The book makes use of the VIPER organization, so having the VIPER sourcebook on hand is helpful.

I'm going to go into as much detail as possible and give as little away as possible as there's a bit of mystery in this adventure.

Chapter 1 - Showdown At Snake Gulch. The first part of the adventure shows the heaviest use of the VIPER organization. Our heroes start out investigating and eventually attacking a VIPER nest. This part is the only part that can be taken out and used as a stand alone adventure - it's a good investigate and shutdown the evil organization scenario. It can take from 1-2 sessions depending on how much investigating you want to involve in the game. The book assumes about one session as part of the overall story arc, but every group has a different approach to things. The seeds for the rest of the book at planted here, as this particualr facility is where King Cobra got his start.

Chapter 2 - The Ophidian Plague. Part two starts out with the cleanup of part one. The heroes have a number of possible leads to investigate, but not a lot of time as only a few days of in game time pass before the world wakes up to The Ophidian Plague, a virus that mutates people into berserkers with snake like features. The heroes have to race against time to contain the plague and figure out a cure. The section is divided into three major plot arcs: Investigation from part one, the outbreak of the plague, the lead on the cure. And even within those sections there are several sub-sections that can be used or skipped as the GM sees fit. First is containing the plague, rescuing uninfected people, fighting infected supervillains, ambushes, and finally tracking the criminal that has a link to King Cobra: Cybermind - where the PCs have to find him and get a handful in the bargain. All that action leads right into part three in a non-stop action fest. All told, this chapter can take 1-3 sessions depending on how much the GM wants to involve.

Chapter 3 - The Coils Of The Cobra. Without so much as stopping to check their watches the heroes are plunged headlong from the last part of Chapter Two into Chapter Three, with a chase scene

through the sewers (how Superhero is that!), As they chase down their quarry they encounter an underground jungle to fight their way through, and finally the evil mastermind's base itself! This non-stop pace can be done in one session, but would most likely take two full sessions. After all this the heroes should have the cure. The adventure doesn't include administering the cure in any detail, but it does touch on how you could hand that, as a handwave or even a further adventure. The conclusion also provides a number of plot twists at the end you can use in the aftermath of all the events.

Chapter 4 - King Cobra And COIL. This chapter is simply the character write-ups for the master villain, his henchmen and some notes on his organization and motivations. We get seven total write-ups: King Cobra, his inner circle and a COIL Agent. Also at the back of this chapter are the maps from the adventure reprinted for easier copying. And Combat Records sheets for each encounter are included to help track and expediate combat.

So, how does this adventure stack up? Really well as a matter of fact. There are investigations, mysteries, plot twists, combat, chase scenes, and enough options, side notes and extra information to really make this a scenario your PCs won't soon forget. The setting is generic, though there is a short section starting in Chapter Two on how to use Millenium City (the Champions Setting default home city).

The adventure is so good, as a matter of fact, that it would take very little work to adapt it to a completely different genre! Tweak a few things here and there and you have the makings of a Modern (Dark Champions), Pulp, or Cyberpunk adventure. Things to change are the organization (unless you have VIPER in your other genres; the VIPER sourcebook provides notes on how to incorporate them), making King Cobra and his inner circle non-supers, and some minor details of technology. That's how well written this adventure is.

If you need a good long adventure for a group of PCs, I'd pick this up and see what you can do with it in your own campaign.

The Downside:

To get the full effect of this adventure book you will need the VIPER Sourcebook, as it really does work best involving VIPER. Doubly so if VIPER is an ongoing threat in your game. If you don't use VIPER it will take some, not a lot, work to remove the references. That's it, that's the downside. Not much here that's actually detrimental to the adventure itself, I found it pretty engaging just reading it.

The Otherside:

Can this be used by non-Hero gamers? Absolutely, in fact most of the adventure itself it generically written, you can take it and plot it into any Super (or non-super) setting with some work. A bit of adaption on the part of the main villains would be required if you're using them.

So, final word on this adventure? It's good, I like it a lot. It could make an exciting series of game sessions even if you never reuse the villains here again. Cleanly organized and layed out, the timeline of events makes sense and comes with options to speed it up or slow it down a bit if needed. The challenges are deisgned to be tough or easy depending on where your PCs strengths are.

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