VIRUS

CHRIS BRADFORD

With illustrations by

ANDERS FRANG

Barrington Stoke

To Russell, a true friend

For more information on Chris and his books visit: www.chrisbradford.co.uk

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Virtual Kombat is the most realistic fighting game ever. Choose your avatar and enter the VK battle arenas – where every enemy has a mind of its own. Feel the thrill ... *and* the pain of every fight!

THE ULTIMATE PRIZE!

Win the VK Crown and get ten million credits and your name in the Warrior Hall of Fame!

Are You An Elite Gamer?

KOMBAT

SO REAL IT HURTS

Watch out for the VK Selector Truck in *your* zone.

Jump into a PlayPod, play the game and prove your skills to win your place at Vince Power's Home for Elite Gamers!

WATCH VK LIVE

THE NO. 1 ENTERTAINMENT SHOW ON THE PLANET!

GAMER

UPDATE v1.1

This update provides key data for new and returning gamers:

- In the year 2030, a killer virus wiped out millions of adults and left a generation of orphans on the streets.

- Law and order collapsed and the military took over.

- Travel was restricted and curfews implemented.

- Adult survivors stayed indoors and escaped into a life on the internet.

- Virtual Kombat was invented by businessman Vince Power and became an instant hit when it went live in August 2031.

- VK was credited with cutting violent crime and restoring law and order in mega-cities around the world.

- Vince Power became a multi-billionaire and set up his City Orphans' Home for Elite Gamers in 2032.

- The VK Selector Truck began testing thousands of children and choosing Elite Gamers – saving them from starvation on the streets.

- Scott was one of the lucky kids chosen and trained as an Elite Gamer.

- But when his friend Kate died in the battle arena, Scott found out VK was *more* than just a game.

- Scott's discovery meant he was targeted for termination – his only choice was to go on the run …

For a full update … read GAMER, #1 in the Virtual Kombat series.


LOADING



I sprint down the neon-lit street. My shoes pound on the cracked tarmac as hard as my heart beats. Running for my life, I splash in puddles of acid rain. But I don't care since I'm already soaked from jumping into the river to escape Vince Power.

The *buzz* of a Wasp chases me. The attack drone – a yellow and black machine of rotors and weapons – is a relentless hunter.

I bolt down an alley to my left. A bag of garbage almost trips me up. But I keep going. I ignore the stares of two street kids who are under a plastic sheet, sheltering from the rain.

The Wasp zooms past them too. Its Stinger is trained on just one target.

Me – Scott.

"*Stop or be stung!*" The Wasp's metallic voice echoes off the alley walls around me.

I glance back, feeling panicked. The Wasp's Stinger is locked and loaded, its red camera eye focused on me. I exit the alley into a street clogged with traffic and leap over the bonnet of an Auto-Taxi. The man inside glares at me, then spots the Wasp and dives behind his seat.



The Wasp fires its Stinger. I duck down. The electro-dart zips past my ear and hits a 3D Street Screen behind me. Sparks flare out of the screen like lightning bolts and the huge display explodes. The flash is blinding and cuts short an

advert for Virtual Kombat: “SO REAL IT HURTS. THE ULTIM—”

I cover my head as glass rains down like razor-sharp hail. Then I dash into the alley opposite. I turn left. Then right. But the *whirr* of the Wasp’s rotors is closing in on me.

I have to find somewhere to hide. And fast. It was pure luck that I wasn’t hit by the first Stinger. Wasps *never* normally miss. Next time I might not be so lucky.

But my luck runs out sooner than I expect. I turn a corner and meet a dead end. A crumbling brick wall faces me and it’s too high to climb. There are buildings on both sides but their doors are locked and the windows barred. My only way out is a metal fire escape that clings to one building like a rusty dead spider. I jump for the lower rung of the ladder … but it’s beyond my reach.

I think of my VK avatar's super strength and wish I had it in the real world!

The Wasp turns the corner and hovers in front of me.

"*Surrender!*" the drone orders, and targets its Stinger on my chest.

I can't let myself be caught. People need to know the truth about VK. It's down to me and me alone. I'm the only hope for those Elite Gamers still trapped in the game.

I pick up a loose brick from the ground and hurl it at the Wasp. The drone dodges it, so I throw another brick. This time it sails high and the Wasp doesn't even bother to move. I swear I can almost hear the Wasp's operator laughing at my poor aim. But I'm determined to have the last laugh!

I launch a third brick. This one hits the metal fire escape and knocks the ladder's catch.

The ladder drops down and smashes into the Wasp. It spirals to the ground, its *buzz* dies and its red camera eye blinks out.

"Swatted!" I shout, and punch the air in victory.

But the grin falls from my face as three more Wasps swarm into the alley.