

<1>“Crey’s Folly” (Hazard Zone)

The Hazard Zone now called Crey’s Folly was once one of the busiest industrial centers in America. Named for the myriad streams and waterways tamed by Paragon City’s engineers, Venice stood proudly as a symbol for the Industrial Revolution. From the early 1900s, when its first factories were built, Venice produced everything from children’s toys to military hardware. Though originally an ecological disaster shrouded in a perpetual fog of pollutants, a massive cleanup effort during the post World War Two years transformed the neighborhood of Venice into a beacon for the environmental movement.

This all changed with the Rikti War. The invaders targeted a secret Crey facility in the area in their initial assault; the resulting explosion not only devastated the Crey labs, but suffused the air and water with a strange and poisonous substance that defies analysis to this day. The clean waters that made Venice famous are filled with brackish muck; the air a poisonous green mist. The area was quickly abandoned after the accident.

<2>History

<3>Welcome to <i>The Jungle</i>

During the earliest years of the 20th century, Venice’s once wild waterways were tamed by a massive investment of manpower and cold, hard cash. The second neighborhood built by a cabal of robber barons and businessmen, Venice became the machine that drove the Industrial Revolution in Paragon City. With Venetia to the east and fair Verona to the west, a system was established — the docks of Independence Port fed immigrants into the company town of Venetia and from there, into the factories of Venice. From Venice, money flowed into the pockets of the wealthy living in Verona. The scheme was a roaring success for the barons of industry, and a disaster for the workers of Venice.

Conditions in the factories were brutal — labor unions were ruthlessly crushed, workers forced into double and triple shifts and paid pennies on the dollar for their labor. Many factories operated under constant threat of their machinery breaking down, often with disastrous and even fatal results. The poor whose labor drove Venice were mere replaceable cogs in a great clockwork, parts that existed solely to produce profits for their ‘betters’. Aside from the hazards of working in the factories themselves, choking pollution ruined the health of many strong young laborers, sending them to their homes in Venetia with racking coughs, their bodies ruined by exposure to industrial wastes, their minds scarred by the hellish working conditions.

In all likelihood, those same workers would have eventually rebelled against the industrialists who held them in virtual slavery, were it not for the flu pandemic that swept through Venetia in 1918. Without workers to drive the factories, the great moloch machinery fell silent, and the pollutants settled like a funeral shroud over empty smokestacks. In the wake of the Great Fire and Great Depression, factory owners faced with bankruptcy couldn’t afford to hire workers anyway.

<3>Doing Our Part! — Venice's contribution to the war effort

The war economy of the 1940s finally empowered the workers of Venice. If the factory owners wished to profit from the war contracts, they needed workers, and the war itself shrank the available labor pool. Brickstown's workers organized, and forced the industrialists to negotiate: no more would the elite smash union strikes, no longer would the workers allow the factories of Venice to ruin their health. Given little choice, the industrialist cabal responsible for Venice's founding relented. . . and found, much to their surprise, that safer working conditions could still produce a tidy profit. Spurred on by patriotic zeal, the workers of Venice worked double and triple shifts once again, willingly this time, to battle the forces of fascism abroad.

The Venice factories worked day and night, feeding, clothing and equipping Allied forces for the war in Europe and the Pacific. At the height of the war, Venice produced more ships, weapons and support equipment than any other industrial park on the East Coast. Such productivity was not without its price — heroes were reassigned from duty overseas and teamed with G-men to keep the saboteurs and Bundist sympathizers of the 5th Column from shutting down Venice's factories. For the most part, their valiant efforts were successful, due in no small part to spies and other evildoers often finding themselves on the business end of whatever tools Venice factory workers had handy.

<3>Cleaning Up and Pitching In — Crey's Folly in the 1950s through the 1990s

As American GIs returned to the labor force, the industrialists made an attempt to regain the upper hand. Only concerted effort by government profiteer-busters, union organizers and a few environmentally-minded heroes convinced the owners of the Venice factories to maintain proper working conditions.

In the boom of the postwar years, the sons and daughters of the original cabal of industrialists, the working men and women of Venice and the United States government began to address the decades of pollution and environmental damage wrought on the waters and air of Venice. Slowly but surely, those efforts began to bear fruit.

Throughout the 1950s and well into the social revolution of the 1960s, cleanup efforts were given as much money and effort as the products that Venice factories produced. Heavy tax incentives were given for companies willing to adhere to the strict environmental laws that the Rhode Island government imposed, and equally stiff penalties were levied against violators. With increasing speed, companies chose to relocate their heavy industries to Venice, finding that profit, in the form of increased efficiency, could go hand in hand with virtue. In 1962, the United States relocated its oil reserves to Venice. The venture was short-lived — the reserves became a target for a virtual army of villains, and the US government soon decided to relocate to safer climes.

By the 1970s, Venice was the standard to which all other environmentally-friendly industries were held. The Environmental Protection Agency produced several films for distribution to overseas investors, including Crey Biotech, encouraging them to relocate

to Paragon City's premiere industrial zone. "Profitability and responsibility" became the slogan for Venice; for the most part, the businesses operating there adhered to it.

Venice's industries suffered somewhat during the economic recession of the late 1970s and 1980s. Many of the early "clean" technologies proved too costly for all but the largest companies to maintain profitability. During the Superadine Wars, the empty factories and waterways of Venice became virtual battlegrounds, and it was only in the early 1990s that an economic upturn made Venice a center of industry once again.

The Rikti War changed all of that.

<3>The Fall and the Folly — The Rikti Attack and the Rise of the Mist

On the evening of May 23, 2002, Venice's hum of industry and profit was shattered. An army of Rikti invaders ravaged the factories and waterworks in their efforts to cripple the city. Special attention was paid to a Crey Biotech laboratory operating under the guise of a front company in Venice. The battle for the facility was brief but intense, with massive casualties on both sides. Crey was reported at the time to have fielded their first private heroes during the conflict, but such reports have never been substantiated. Though hard-fought, the Crey forces soon began to fall back under a seemingly endless stream of Rikti soldiers and mentalists.

No one is entirely sure what happened during the final minutes of the raid on the Crey laboratory — most claim that the ensuing explosion that leveled the lab and surrounding area were a desperate final effort by the Rikti to destroy the buildings and their contents. A quiet few voice the darker possibility that Crey executives issued an order to self-destruct the lab. Whatever the reason, the series of explosions that leveled the lab and the area surrounding it released a compound into the air and waters of Venice that rendered them poisonous and unusable within days. Though Rikti operations continued in the area, even the alien invaders were reluctant to remain in what was now called Crey's Folly for longer than necessary. The Rikti stationed a small but powerful occupation force in Crey's Folly, which could not be dislodged until Omega Team collapsed the portal to the Rikti dimension.

In the wake of the Crey disaster, factory after factory was abandoned as the area became a poison-shrouded warzone reminiscent of the worst days of World War I. Heroes and villains alike strove against the Rikti beachhead, attempting to evict the occupying forces. There, also, is the site of the last meeting of Statesman and Hero 1. "We only had a minute to say goodbye," Statesman said later, "So we didn't say anything."

<3>The Modern Urban Jungle – After the War

After the conclusion of the Rikti War, Crey's Folly became a haven for many of the new groups of villains taking advantage of the devastation. First among these new threats was the Freakshow, who quickly established a base of operations in the westernmost portion of the zone. The Freakshow forces scavenged machinery and metal from the abandoned

factories, forging them into a veritable fortress. With only the devastated neighborhood of Verona at their backs, the Freakshow quickly achieved dominance in Crey's Folly, challenging all comers.

But other villains were not to be denied — soon, Nemesis insinuated his forces into the area. Countess Crey, against the wishes of the City Council, has sent teams into Crey's Folly, claiming right of salvage over any Crey facilities there. Naturally, since no one living is sure where the Crey labs once stood, there is little to stop the Countess' forces from roving where they will, often engaging in fierce street fighting with villain groups. More disturbing are the appearances of an increasing number of Rikti in the zone, perhaps seeking the very same technologies that originally prompted their attack on Crey. But worst by far is the appearance of the Devouring Earth monster called Jurassik and the hordes of lesser creatures that swarm and multiply like bacteria in the polluted air and waters of Crey's Folly.

<2>Neighborhoods

<3>Crey Factories

Once Crey Industries' primary manufacturing facilities, these rusting hulks are the epitome of the zone that now bears the Countess' name. Villains of all stripes can be found lurking here — hordes of vicious Rikti Monkeys and their alien masters, the war machines of Nemesis, Freakshow soldiers looking to scavenge metal or parts, and teams of Crey operatives, most of whom operate on a 'shoot first, ask questions never' policy when it comes to rivals and heroes.

Of particular note in this neighborhood are the now empty storage tanks that once held the United States' oil reserves, and the wreckage of what *might* be the Crey laboratory that unleashed the ecological disaster upon the Folly.

<3>Paragon Water Works

Originally built to process the water flowing from the Overbrook Reservoir, the Waterworks became a primary target during the initial Rikti assault on Paragon City. Unable to muster a serious defense against the marauding alien horde, the workers of the Waterworks fled, leaving the precious machinery keeping Paragon City in clean water to the enemy. The Rikti wasted no time in disabling the Waterworks, and only the devastation unleashed by the destruction of the Crey labs forced them to flee before they could raze the facility entirely. Only quick action by Positron and his teammate Synapse saved Paragon City from a death by dehydration, as the two heroes constructed a massive desalinization plant to filter the waters of Eastgate Bay safely beyond the reach of the Rikti.

Now, villains of all persuasions, but particularly the Devouring Earth, haunt the abandoned Waterworks, battling amidst the ruins for reasons best left unexplored, a sad testament to the terrible cost of war.

<3>The Blight

Nowhere is the ecological devastation unleashed by the explosion at the Crey labs more evident than in the area called the Blight. Here, forests of rusting metal silently corrode amidst pools of toxic sludge, and a perpetual three-way battle is waged between the Crey, Rikti and horrors of the Devouring Earth.

<3>Tangle Town

Only this area's proximity to the former Portal Industries area distinguishes it from any of the other toxic, battle-scarred areas of Crey's Folly. Once again, the Crey maintains a constant vigil and often openly wars against the forces of Nemesis and the alien Rikti, while all three groups defend themselves from attacks by the Devouring Earth. The best that can be said for Tangle Town is that it's not as bad as the Blight. . . but then again, what is?

<3>Portal Industries

Once the center of manufacturing for parallel-world technologies recovered by Portal Corp's field teams, this high-tech complex rusts, abandoned during the Rikti War. Here, the sharp-eyed can still see the fading paint proclaiming that the tools of tomorrow were produced by Portal Corp, today. Given the nature of the factories and laboratories that formerly stood here, it's no surprise that the Freakshow have claimed it for their own, brutally defending it against all comers, be they Rikti, Crey, Nemesis or the Devouring Earth. Each villain group has its own reasons for wanting the complex for their own, but the Freakshow is having none of it.

Carnival Town

The first part of Crey's Folly entirely taken over by the Freakshow, Carnival Town is a post-apocalyptic nightmare — towers of rusting sheet metal and battleship plate rise above a medieval maze of rusting corridors and rude shanties. The towers guarding Carnival Town are manned 24 hours a day by Freaks armed with powerful weaponry. Should a dedicated hero or villain penetrate the outer defenses, tougher resistance awaits them within the walls of Carnival Town — a veritable army of Freaks lives, fights and works here, lorded over by their leader Dreck. Carnival Town is also home to the Freaks' primary cybernetics and Excelsior labs, both locations hidden deep behind the barricades. Sadly, also within the domain of the Freaks is the plaque commemorating Statesman and Hero 1's final parting.

Disturbing rumors persist that the Freakshow continue the tradition of battle that their core membership originally engaged in. . . save that now they fight powerful heroes and villains that they capture unawares. Those who claim to have glimpsed these brutal fights to the death speak of a massive structure beneath the surface of Carnival Town. Constructed bit by bit from a geodesic dome the Freakshow recovered from the Portal

Industries site, the Terrordome is said to be the place there two men enter...and one Freak leaves.

<3>The Circus

South of Carnival Town is the Circus, a deadly maze of barbed wire and rusting metal intended to contain the Rikti menace and keep other villain groups at bay. Like Carnival Town, large gangs of Freaks roam the maze that is the Circus, battling any they come across.

<2>Adventure Seeds

<3>Devoured in the Mist

The time has come to retake Crey's Folly! A growing environmentalist movement is campaigning for heroes to help them clean up Crey's Folly. . . but what is the group's connection to the Devouring Earth? Are their motives as pure as they claim, or simply a cover for something darker?

<3>Welcome to the Terrordome

After a defeat at the hands of the Freakshow, the heroes find themselves captured! To escape, they must face several Freakshow captains in the Terrordome. Two men enter, one man leaves. . . or do they? Alternately, the Terrordome is becoming the latest sport among the underground fighting circuit in Paragon City, and the heroes must infiltrate it to discover the source of new bionics the Freaks are bringing to bear on the streets...

<3>The Things From Another World

The Rikti have recovered some of Crey's lost Revenant Hero technology and are using their master of biomechanics to create Rikti duplicates of heroes, down to creating false personalities to hide the infiltrators from psychics. The heroes find themselves trapped in an abandoned facility with another group. . . any one of whom could be a Rikti in disguise. Can they trust anyone. . . even themselves?