

<1>Brickstown

Two words sum up Brickstown: Zigursky Penitentiary, not-so-affectionately nicknamed the Zig by the neighborhood's residents. Despite the prison in the backyard and the thugs in the streets, Brickstown can be a great place to live. . . just don't wander down the wrong alley.

<2>History

<3>Sixteen Tons. . .

Brickstown began as Venetia, a company town where the poor who worked the Venice factories lived, slept, and returned their hard-won gains to the captains of industry. Immigrants and money funneled in from the rough and tumble docks of Independence Port to the slums, taverns and bordellos of "Little Venice". The immigrants ended up in Venice and Venetia; the money didn't.

Workers needing escape from the hellish Venice sweatshops could usually spare time and money for whatever vice they desired: easy company, gambling, drink or drugs. The entertainments served a dual purpose: they kept the masses content, and they provided an easy means to recoup the workers' salaries. Although each neighborhood held its sordid secrets, one in particular was infamous for its excesses. Named for the streets leading to a Civil War fortress converted to a massive house of pleasure, the Seven Gates, one for each mortal sin, were said by some to lead to Heaven. . . by others, to Hell.

The masters of Venice were unmoved by the human misery rampant in Venetia. All that mattered was the money – flowing in from Independence Port, from the squalor of Venetia, from the labors of the disenfranchised. By the early 21st century, Venetia could be compared to New York's Hell's Kitchen, and come off the worse for it.

<3>--in Fire. . .

In the fall of 1918, the First World War was stuttering to a halt; the United States had joined the fight against the Kaiser and a German surrender seemed inevitable. Despite the imminent Allied victory, the world was tired – tired of war, tired of death, and struggling with an enemy more deadly than the Prussian menace.

All around the globe, a terrible, invisible killer struck down men, women and children alike – a killer with no face, but a name: La Grippe, the “Spanish Flu”. Within mere months, this lethal disease killed more people than the Great War. It respected no class, no gender, no age. In the tight confines of Venetia's slums, there was no escape. The wealthy retreated to Verona, hoping that the now-abandoned factories of Venice would shield them. For the unfortunate inhabitants of Venetia, dying in their own squalor, it seemed the world would end not with a bang, but a snuffle.

Venetia was saved from becoming a charnel house not through the miracle of medicine, but the antiquated gas lines rumbling beneath the streets and buildings. Today, historians are still unsure of what began the Great Fire of 1918 — some hypothesize that the dying workers of Venetia deliberately (and vindictively) ignited the blaze, while others opine that it was but a simple accident. Some occult scholars note that Venetia contains a confluence of several minor ley lines, and that perhaps talk of the gates of Hell was more than allegorical.

Whatever the cause, the Great Fire detonated a series of gas mains beneath what is now the Mashu Bridge, setting the cheap clapboard buildings around it ablaze. With no one capable of fighting the fire, it raged out of control, consuming flophouses, bordellos, the gambling and opium dens, and ultimately the House of Ease in the center of Venetia. The fires at the heart of the inferno burned so hotly that the stone beneath them ran like blood, fusing the earth into a caldera that would puzzle experts and resist the efforts of rebuilding for most of the 20th century. By some miracle, only a few hundred people, mostly those already dying of flu, lost their lives in the conflagration – but the slums, and all they encompassed, were utterly consumed.

<3>In the Shadow of the Zig

Over the next two decades, the neighborhood was rebuilt in brick and steel, and christened Brickstown. Despite the new face, the spirit of Venetia was alive and well. . . until the Second World War. As the war voraciously consumed men and materiel, and industry found itself hard-pressed to meet the needs of the military effort, the people of Brickstown found themselves strangely empowered. They organized; they made demands of their own. They would work, women and old men taking the place of the young men siphoned into the military. . . but at a price. No longer would the factories pour forth black smoke; no longer would production lines turn men into cripples. As Venetia had been rebuilt, so would Venice and Verona. Caught between the Scylla of the newly unionized workers and the Charybdis of looming contractual penalties, the company men had no choice but to relent. For the remainder of the war, Venice factories produced everything from lighters to battleship armor, and for the first time, Brickstown prospered..

Brickstown was transformed again after the war by the vision of one man — Anton Zigursky. A second-generation native of Brickstown, Zigursky had worked the factories and built a small fortune through architecture. Zigursky recognized the dark side of postwar progress – as heroes returned from overseas, so came villains. While the heroes could defeat their foes, the jails of the city were ill-equipped to contain the rising criminal tide.

Zigursky proposed a bold solution — from the ruins of the fortress in the middle of Brickstown would rise the greatest prison the world had ever seen. The Ziggurat, he called it, after ancient Babylonian architecture. It would be a new fortress, concrete and

steel, barbed wire and searchlights — a fortress to contain evil within its walls, to keep the city safe.

Construction on Zigursky Penitentiary began in 1956, a mere three years after the Freedom Phalanx was officially christened as Paragon City's first supergroup. Zigursky utilized the most advanced construction methods available — pre-stressed and formed concrete panels, primitive power-suppression systems, and titanium steel — to construct what he privately called "a temple to the justice system". Within five years, the prison opened its steel gates to its first inmates. Today, Zigursky Prison still stands, holding the worst of the worst superhuman and normal criminals of Paragon City. Today, all of Brickstown stands in the shadow of the Zig.

<2>Neighborhoods

<3>The Mashu Bridge

Nearly as famous as the Zig is the small marvel of architectural science known as the Mashu Bridge. Named after a caldera in the Japanese archipelago, the Mashu Bridge was designed by Brickstown native Shiro Kurokawa. Kurokawa's design bypassed the crater born of the Fire, allowing traffic to once again flow freely. In the Underneath, as Brickstown residents call the streets below the Mashu Bridge, the Council and Freaks wage an all-out gang war, a war held barely in check by brutal squads of Crey security personnel. Escaped prisoners from the Zig can be found here as well, waylaying foot and motor traffic in their efforts to avoid the police.

<3>The Crescent

One of the shining examples of post-Fire rebuilding, the Crescent was designed to balance greenspace and housing. The high-rise apartment buildings offer security and comfort to their inhabitants, with numerous parks and courts for the good folk of Brickstown to enjoy themselves in. These days, security at the Crescent buildings has been increased as escaped prisoners from the Zig battle Crey operatives and the Freakshow in the once-peaceful plazas.

<3>Seven Gates

Once called the Seven Gates to Hell, these six streets now channel commerce from the rest of Paragon City into Brickstown's factories. The streets also feed into the Seventh Gate — that of Zigursky Prison. In this neighborhood, Doctor Brian Webb first pierced the barriers between dimensions; perhaps not coincidentally, the southern end of Seven Gates also houses a confluence of mystic ley lines, nearly undetectable to all save those who possess the second sight.

Also in the Seven Gates area is the entrance into Crey's Folly. Brickstown Infirmary, located next to the Hazard Zone entrance, contains the top burn center on the East Coast, and boasts several advances in treating heat and chemical burns.

<3>The Abyss Towers

Looming above the fertile Crescent are the twin Abyss Towers. Constructed in the late 1970s as part of a city initiative to bring more businesses into Brickstown, the Towers' intimidating architecture seems designed in defiance of the nearby Zig. Behind their dark countenance, the Abyss Towers house one of Crey Biotech's major offices in the city, as well as several other businesses associated with various villain groups. Few know what goes on behind the glass barricade of the Abyss Towers, and fewer still would *want* to know. The isolation of the Towers is only reinforced by the battling Freakshow, Council and escaped prisoners outside its walls, walls kept safe by crack teams of Crey operatives testing the latest 'pacification technology'.

<3>The Chasm

Home to a burgeoning industrial quarter in Brickstown, the Chasm lies in one of the areas undermined by the fires of 1918. The maze of pipes, smokestacks, warehouses and shipping containers also conceals a sizeable contingent of Council soldiers and Freakshow gang members. Prisoners are often encountered here, as in other neighborhoods, either committing crimes or being recruited by one of the villain groups. Crey maintains a presence in the Chasm as well, dispatching riot control operatives and Tanks to suppress villain activity and make way for Crey's own shadowy plans.

<3>Prison Power Station

Designed as an adjunct to the Zig, the power station was installed in the wake of the Rikti War. Given the massive power requirements of the Zig's internal systems, the Paragon City Council deemed it wise to install a backup, should villains render Terra Volta inoperative. The power station is a squat bunker of a building, housing a nuclear battery sunken deep beneath the streets. Both the Freakshow and Crey Industries have taken an unusual and unhealthy interest in the power station.

<3>Dark Waters

Unknown to Anton Zigursky, the former fortress that served as the foundation for the Zig was riddled with hidden tunnels dating to the Civil War. What remains of the tunnels now spill into Brickstown's drainage system. Over the years since the Zig's inauguration, a few intrepid prisoners managed to chip, tunnel and burrow their way into the former

escape tunnels, and now many of them use the twisting pipes to grant themselves an early parole.

<3>The Ziggurat

Considered the greatest achievement of penal architecture, Zigursky Super-Maximum Security Prison stands as a monument to one man's dream for a better tomorrow for Paragon City. . . and a crowning symbol of that dream's failure. The Zig has one of the highest escape rates of any facility on the East Coast, due to the maze of pipes and tunnels beneath it. For every passage that the prison guards block, another takes their place, allowing the most vicious, ruthless criminals locked away behind the walls of the Zig an opportunity to escape into the subterranean area called Dark Waters.

The Zig is not entirely incapable of holding its prisoners, however. Only the most dedicated inmates ever discover the existence of the tunnels beneath the Zig. The vast majority of prisoners wait out their sentences in a 10' by 8' cell. Those with powers strain at the aged, but still powerful power suppression generators, an outgrowth of the same technology used to ensure that powerful heroes employ abilities appropriate to their Stature Level. Still, from time to time the systems fail, and prisoners escape.

Within, the Zig's architecture is surprisingly simple — a central security core extends from the sub-basement area dedicated to prisoner processing to the roof. From the core, four security corridors divide each of the Zig's twenty floors into eight wings. The worst prisoners are kept in isolation within specially-reinforced cells. Unfortunately, Zigursky's visionary architecture possesses a fatal flaw — within the walls themselves, the support systems necessary to maintain the Zig's security also provide an escape route for inmates desperate or foolish enough to climb down hundreds of feet of electrical conduits, steam and hot water pipes, power suppression generators and force field projectors. . . any one of which is powerful enough to seriously injure even a superpowered criminal.

The guards of the Zig are a dedicated lot, employing the latest technology to suppress potential riots and recapture escapees. Hazard pay for a guard in the Zig is three times the national average, and many guards joke that it's still not enough. Guards in the Zig work rotating three hour shifts, and live within the security stations dotting the core of the Zig, or are assigned to the four bunkers located along Zigursky Prison's walls.

The first sight prisoners upon entering the Zig, and that parolees bid a bitter farewell to as they are released, is the massive brass plaque erected by Anton Zigursky at the prison's inauguration: "Fiat justitia, ruat caelum" — "Let Justice be done, though the Heavens fall."

<2>Adventure Seeds

<3>Undertow

Due to a Freakshow attack on the prison power station, the automated systems guarding Zigursky fail. Riots break out, and several prisoners use the distraction to escape, losing the guards in the sewer systems beneath the Zig. The heroes are dispatched to recapture them in some good old-fashioned sewer-crawling fun. Perhaps the prisoners have a super-powered leader, or one may be an important witness being forced to escape by his fellow prisoners. Worse still, evidence seems to point not towards Freak sabotage, but Crey! What are the Countess' motives for sabotaging Zigursky?

<3>March of the Empire

The Council is on the move! Following a successful raid on a Crey facility in Brickstown, the alien fascists are hatching a plan to unleash the prisoners of the Zig on a defenseless Paragon City! But there may be more to their plan than anyone suspects. . . for one of the Zig's prisoners is a high-level Warshade framed for murder by the Crey! Is the Warshade truly an innocent dupe, a victim of converging agendas, or something more sinister?

<3>When Next Our Paths Cross, Hero. . .

The Council must protect an important Arachnos mystic investigating the ley lines crossing Brickstown. Why is the mystic so interested in a relatively minor confluence of energy? And why is the Council stalking Serafina, the genie who aids the mystic heroes of Paragon City?