



Rikti Crash Site

Cryptic Studios, Inc.

Authors

Sean Fish

Jane Kalmes

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Verona was once a prosperous financial district that profited from the labor of the factories of Venice. Home to Paragon City's wealthy elite, Verona became a Mecca for industrialists, visionaries and venture capitalists throughout the 20th century.

Now, a grim war is waged between the military, the Rikti and other villains for control of the massive alien craft that dominates the center of the zone. The soldiers stationed here maintain a readied super-weapon aimed at the craft, in case it is repaired by the desperate Rikti. If the super-weapon fails, there are the guns of the Bulge and DMZ. Should even those weapons fail, heroes may once again be Paragon City's final line of defense.

History

In Fair Verona — Pride, Prejudice and Profit

Before the Rikti War, Verona was one of the major financial centers of the East Coast, eclipsing Wall Street in terms of monies made and traded. Built in conjunction with the neighborhoods of Venetia and Venice, Verona was the hub from which a select cabal of robber barons, businessmen and profiteers controlled the wealth flowing from Independence Port through Venetia and into the factories of Venice. Such men cared little for those in their employ, making working conditions in those neighborhoods a 'glimpse of Hell itself,' as Upton Sinclair wrote.

The cabal's stranglehold over the lives of the working men and women of Paragon City came to an apocalyptic end in 1918, with the Great Fire that ended an epidemic of Spanish Flu in Venetia. Over the next several years, the citizens of Venetia, now renamed Brickstown, gave their "masters" an ultimatum — improve the working conditions and end the virtual slavery that the factory workers labored beneath, or lose money in idle factories. For the first time, the working class forced the hands of their employers.

Despite the stock market crash of 1929 and the Depression that followed, Verona and Paragon City remained a profitable, if dangerous, venue for economic pioneers both legal and illegal.

During World War II, Verona produced one of Paragon City's finest heroes — Mustang. Steven Buchanan had always been a free spirit; despite his desire to serve his country, that spirit was difficult to suppress. Endowed with superhuman resilience and amazing powers of flight, Mustang was one of the Allies' first recruits for the 1st Hero Brigade. Often partnered with M-1 and Stalwart, Buchanan was known for his rebellious nature as much as his courage and raw power. His comrade Stalwart objected to his attitude, and their heated arguments became the stuff of newsreels worldwide. A statue commemorating Mustang still stands in the zone, a testament to courage and sacrifice.

After World War II, Verona's syndicate of wheelers and dealers turned their hands towards the emerging technologies brought forth by the war and the heroes and villains it brought forth. Throughout the 20th century, Verona turned ideas into gold.

The savings and loan scandals of the 1990s hit Verona hard, and in the market crash that followed, even the wealthy of the zone were forced to tighten their belts. Though the recession left Verona somewhat the worse for wear, it seemed that the area would recover, as it always had.

Fall from Grace — Devastation Without End

Though Verona was spared in the initial hours of the invasion, its citizens were forced to flee the zone when Statesman downed one of the Rikti invasion craft single-handedly, sending the massive vessel plunging into the skyscrapers and carefully-planned streets. The crash unleashed devastation on a scale unseen since the Blitz of London. Entire corporations vanished in clouds of fire and vapor, though the saucer's shields protected the vessel's hull from the worst of the impact. Pure force became heat, and waves of plasma rolled through the avenues and parkways like a tidal wave. Only the very edge of Verona was spared; from there, many of the grimmest battles of the Rikti War would be fought.

With the aid of the Vanguard and Freedom Phalanx, the United States military established a perimeter around Verona, heroes spending their lives to protect the Army Corps of Engineers while they desperately erected War Walls to contain the alien menace.

Today, the zone is simply known as the Crash Site, nearly every trace of Verona eradicated by the Rikti and other villains that prowl its shadows. The height and folly of civilization on two worlds can be found here, in the Rikti saucer that dominates the zone, the gun emplacements of the DMZ and the Bulge, and the dark deeds taking place in the remaining alleys and buildings. The military personnel here must be cautious, for the Rikti that haunt the Crash Site are forever seeking to escape, either by recapturing their downed saucer, or by adopting the guise of a human being. As one sign declares: "They could be anyone."

Neighborhoods

The DMZ

Closest to the Hazard Gate sealing the Crash Site off from the rest of Paragon City, the DMZ contains the Hammond Medical Center and the headquarters of the Vanguard Initiative, the multi-branch division of the military responsible for containing and destroying alien threats. Major Richard Flagg is in command here, and isn't afraid to let everyone know it. Flagg often calls for aid from heroes entering the zone, and the rewards for assisting the Vanguard can be tremendous, as are the perils of doing so; some heroes find their powers entirely altered due to the energies they are exposed to during Vanguard missions.

The Bulge

Named after the offensive started by the German Army in 1944, the Bulge is one of the most visible signs of how far Verona has fallen. Studded with bunkers, supply dumps, gun emplacements and detection equipment, the Bulge is a virtual fortress, a labyrinth of concrete, steel and weaponry that stands vigilant against the villains in the zone. The Rikti often raid less well-defended supply dumps for foodstuffs and high-technology that they use to repair their aging equipment. Verona's monument to its hometown hero, Mustang, straddles the edge of the Bulge, and villains can often be found there as well, besmirching the massive sculpture out of little more than malice or boredom.

Pork Chop Hill

Though its official designation is PCTZ-Peck Avenue, Pork Chop Hill is a site remembered with both fondness and fear by the military personnel that guard Paragon City from the Rikti. During the Rikti War, a small unit of Vanguard personnel were sent into the Crash Site to secure the area and

deploy an unmanned listening post to monitor Rikti activity. What followed was three days of some of the bloodiest fighting and heaviest casualties among non-superhuman troops of the entire war. For reasons that remain unknown, the Rikti refused to cede Pork Chop Hill to the humans, enduring massive losses at the hand of the Vanguard unit's mobile artillery and masses of rifle fire. In turn the Vanguard unit suffered horribly at the hands of the invaders — tormented by Rikti illusions and mind-control, seared by plasma weaponry, the soldiers of Unit 255 called repeatedly for reinforcements, only to be denied due to the area being designated as a 'hot' zone. Unit 255 held their ground until relieved by a rapid response strike force dispatched to them by Major Flagg. Today, their bloody private war against the Rikti is memorialized by the name of this neighborhood.

Little Round Top

Like Pork Chop Hill, this neighborhood's name springs from war — this time the American Civil War. During the 2002 Rikti invasion, Little Round Top was one of the many forward defense posts manned by the soldiers of the Vanguard. What distinguishes the post here was the rebellion of its personnel against their commander, and their discovery of the Rikti's ability to pass as human beings. Though only two of the dozen men stationed here survived, their discovery of the Rikti's powers is considered today to be one of the turning points of the war.

Bloody Lane

Named for the intense house-to-house fighting during the Rikti War, Bloody Lane is a grim reminder of the true cost of war. Even in the years following the Rikti assault on Earth, alien soldiers can be seen scavenging among the ruins and dilapidated buildings for food to sustain themselves. Some Rikti have descended into savagery, and consume the bodies of their fallen, or soldiers, or, occasionally, heroes unfortunate enough to have their Medicom patches disabled by a Rikti plasma blast.

Pointe du Hoc

Once, a monument to the First Hero Brigade stood in their neighborhood, commemorating their courage and sacrifices during World War II. Now, Pointe Du Hoc has become a warzone, hotly contested between the human and Rikti forces. During the first days of the war, the Rikti scored a massive propaganda victory when they bombarded the granite monument here with plasma fire. Now, the soldiers of the Vanguard seek to retake the area and place a new marker there, in the name of all humanity, as a symbol of defiance.

Sunken Road

Truly, this is where the world ends. Here, the massive invasion saucer of the Rikti army plowed through shops, homes and embedded itself deep in the wreckage of Verona. Few heroes dare venture into the seething mass of villainy present here — the Rikti defend their sole means of returning home with the viciousness of jungle animals, often attacking even large groups of heroes en masse. The Rikti are allegedly shut away from their vessel, but are always seeking new ways to regain entry. No one knows what secrets might still be hiding within the invasion saucer, but one thing is certain — it still has power, evidenced by the impenetrable force shield that surrounds it day and night.

Adventure Seeds

The Thin Caped Line

As a service to the city, the heroes are asked to penetrate deep into Rikti-held territory and recover a patrol cut off from retreat by the Rikti. Unbeknownst to the military, the patrol may already be dead, replaced by Rikti infiltrators intent on smuggling technology to their brethren on the outside.

The Big Red Hero One

Another group of heroes battling the Rikti return with a terrible story — deep within the bowels of the Rikti mothership, they've seen Hero One! Can their story possibly be true? Has Hero One been held as a prisoner of the Rikti since the war? If so, it would seem the Rikti have a functioning portal device aboard their ship . . . which, if true, is enough to incite a race for the valuable technology by every villain warring in the zone! Even if the story isn't true . . . what did the heroes really see out there?

Kelly's Superheroes

For heroes of a more mercenary bent, there's rumors of a large cache of gold bullion buried in a subbasement deep within the war zone. Of course, the villains have also heard of it, and such a cache would go a long way to financing their operations . . . can the heroes recover the gold, or at least prevent the villains from doing so? And how will they get the bouillon past Major Flagg and through the gate without being caught?