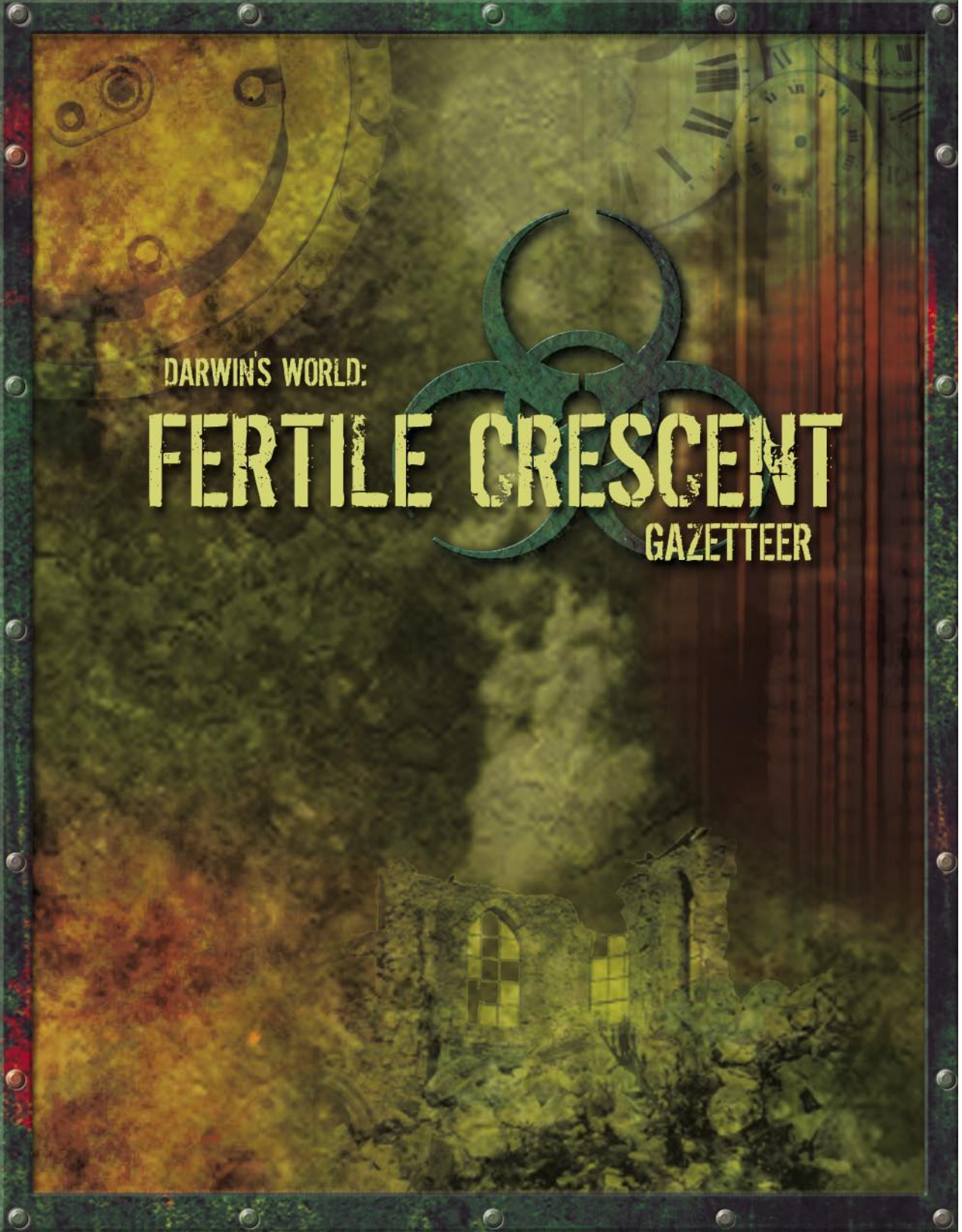

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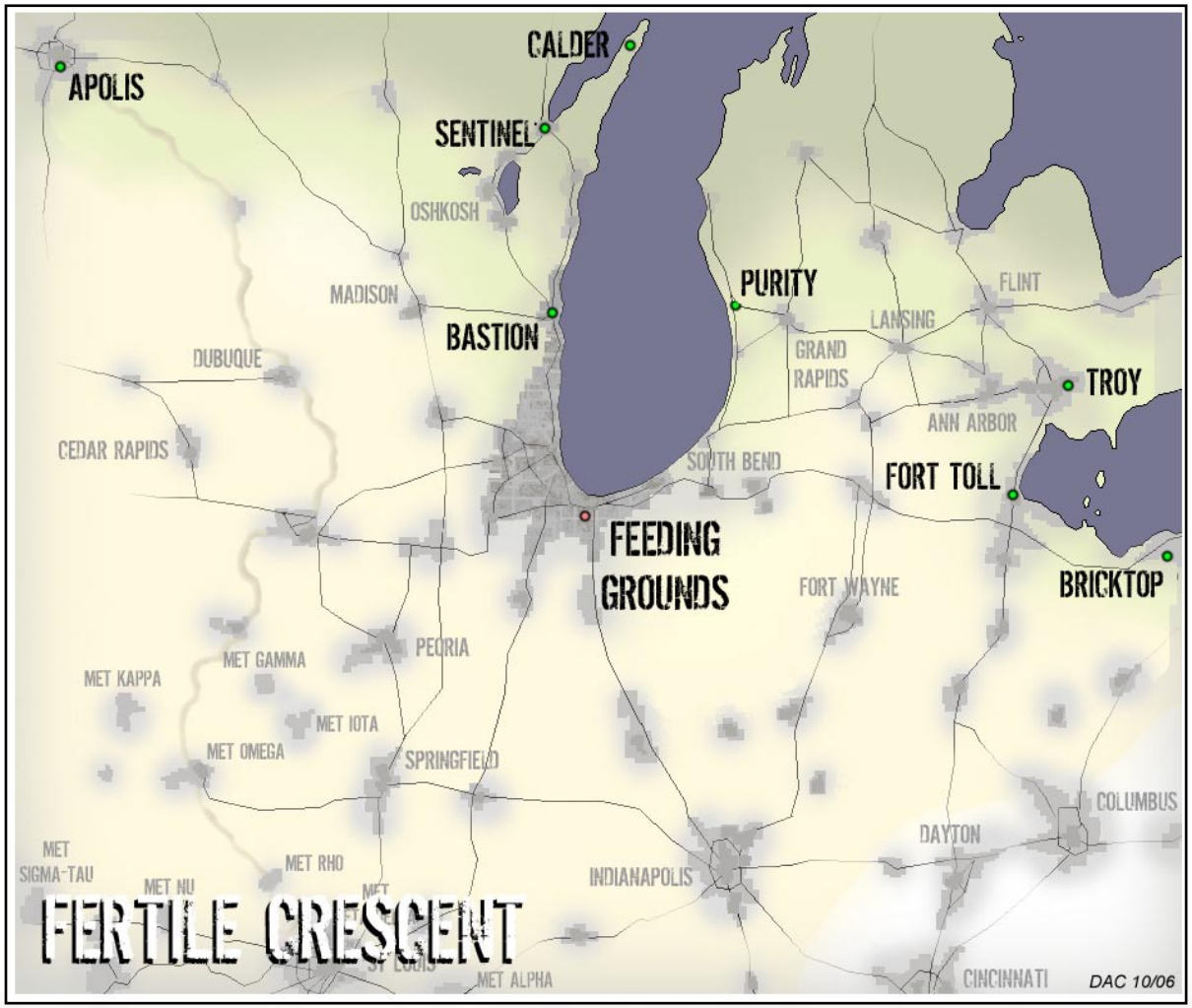
THE FERTILE CRESCENT



INTRODUCTION

Welcome to The Fertile Crescent, my own personal corner of Dominic Covey's magnificent Twisted Earth setting for *Darwin's World*. Since this book has been (more or less) in the works for a few years, I thought a little history might be in order as we prepare to explore a new area of the world after the Fall.

In 2002 I discovered RPGNow. Here the word "discover" is used in the same way in which Columbus "discovered" America. RPGNow was already around, making products and selling PDFs. I just had no idea it was there. I was on my way to India. Actually, I was looking for a good post-apocalyptic game for d20, something to allow me to run the Gamma World campaign of my dreams. I came across RPGNow and a book called *Darwin's World*. My first PDF seriously spoiled me and my campaign was up and running.

The mainline campaign setting was a little grimmer than what I had in mind, so I decided to get all "do it yourself" and homebrew. I picked the area around the Great Lakes, which hadn't really been covered by any books to date as the location for my campaign. I decided to leave the lakes more or less intact, making the campaign area a relatively fertile region, a place where civilization might be reborn. Once I decided to get all historical and call the region the Fertile Crescent, after Mesopotamia, I knew I had a place where heroes could make a difference. Maybe even rebuild.

Around this time, I started talking to Dominic and Chris at RPGObjects about my campaign and bugging them to release it. They liked the idea and although a lot of ideas went back and forth, I ended up doing other things for them, including providing some editorial help on *Terrors of the Twisted Earth* and *Metal Gods*. Eventually I would make a book with RPGObjects, then another, then dozens more, starting with *Blood and Space*. The Fertile Crescent was always just on the horizon but it never seemed to float up to the top of the list. In short we got busy.

When it came time for *Darwin's World 2nd edition*, I provided some mechanical help and figured that was that. When I saw the map for the game though, Dominic had marked the Fertile Crescent to Great Lakes region. That was my first signal that a gazetteer of the area would eventually need to be done. Eventually, Chris and I just decided to do it and the area was fleshed out. Since we needed an adventure for GenCon, I decided to use that adventure (*Feeding Grounds*) as an introduction to the setting. The ball was rolling.

So here we are, nearly four years later and the sun is finally rising on the Fertile Crescent. Will it be an anecdote lost to history, uncovered by future explorers? Or will it be a new beginning. That's up to you. Beyond the occasional adventure, my part is mostly done. The Fertile Crescent is yours now and I hope it brings you as much gaming fun as it did me.

ABOUT THE REGION

CLIMATE

Although the Fertile Crescent was spared less direct nuclear strikes, the region is still heavily irradiated and affected by the overall warmer, drier climate of the Twisted Earth. The closest analog in modern Earth to the climate of the Fertile Crescent is that of the modern African steppe with long cycles of drought followed by short intense rains. A short season of powerful rains swept through the region fed by the massive lakes. This creates many large waterholes throughout the region as well as feeding the numerous small lakes scattered through the area. As the dry season wears on, these watering holes gradually disappear leading the many gronts and wild fraxx in the area to gather in great numbers around the lakes, allowing hunters and top predators to pick off the slow or the inattentive. The top predators in the region are the Howlcats, Buzzbees and Lake Dragons.

RAD BLIZZARDS

Despite the overall warming of the climate, winter does come to the Fertile Crescent and when it does, it hits *hard*. Just as rainstorms sweep off the mighty lakes during the warmer months, during winter massive storms bringing blinding snow pound the region. Worse these choking blankets of white and cold bear extremely high rad content, making winter a time of sickness and death, with a blanket of radiation visited on the region.

When accompanied by winds (when the snow is falling or blowing) a Rad Blizzard bears a radiation intensity of *moderate* to *high* (depending on the strength and severity of the snowfall). Walking through a snowfall has a radiation intensity of *light* to *moderate* (one category lower than the storm that deposited it).

NOTABLE FEATURES

CROSSLAKE FERRY

This ferry ran between Bastion and Purity before the Fall and the governments of the two cities have maintained the ancient craft as a quick means of travel between the two communities. A single passenger with one pack can ride the ferry for as little as 25 cp. Traders can transport up to 1,000 lbs of cargo for 250 cp. The ferry can cross Lake Michigan in under 3 hours, avoiding the quite dangerous trek south through Chicago. The ferry is a massive boat, capable of carrying 250 passengers and 44 tons of cargo.

OLD 31

This road serves as Purity's link to the Old 94 and is exclusively maintained by the CrystalTime.

OLD 41

The ancient highway heads north from Bastion, connecting it to the small villages of the Black Wolf tribe, continuing further north to the town of Sentinel.

OLD 94

This ancient road has been actively maintained by the people of the Fertile Crescent (most notably the governments of Bastion and Purity) since the time of the Fall and serves as the main land trade artery in the region. It connects Bastion to the Feeding Grounds in the south and it connects Bastion to Apolis in the West. The Old 94 also curves around the southern edge of Lake Michigan and continues to Troy.

PLACES

APOLIS

Pre-war name: Minneapolis

Estimated Population: 1,500 Nyr Men, 500 human craftsmen and tradesmen

Ruling Faction: Nyr Men

Background: Ritual Preservationist

Skinball team: Apolis Silverbacks

For much of the history of the Fertile Crescent, the Nyr Men lived as nomadic tribals, hunting, gathering and raiding the occasional town for supplies. All of that changed when they encountered the Oracle. By all accounts a human girl, her ability to predict the future awed the Nyr Men, who follow her every directive, serving her willingly. At her direction not only have these brutes made peace with the surrounding villages, they have taken the abandoned dome of Apolis, cleared out the creatures that used to inhabit the city and made it their own.

Recently artifacts and corium have been offered in trade for local craftsmen to come and improve the technology of the city and a growing number have accepted these calls. The largest ongoing project being supervised by these craftsmen (with the Nyr Men providing the labor) is the repair of the Old 94. This main artery of the Fertile Crescent region will bring in a flood of trade from Bastion and Purity and make Apolis a major center for exploring areas further west.

Another recent step taken by the Nyr Men at the behest of their mysterious Oracle is the formation of a Skin Ball team: the Apolis Silverbacks.

ADVENTURE HOOK: BOMBING RUN

As one of the northernmost cities in the region, Apolis sees more than its share of conflict with the buzzbees when they emerge from their winter hibernation. This summer has been especially bad, with the buzzers pulling down parts of the dome to drop on farmers in order to scare them away from their fields, so the buzzers can go in and steal the ripening crops. The city has put out a bounty on buzzers, offering 50 cp for each carcass delivered as well as 500 cp for proof that a nest has been destroyed.

ADVENTURE HOOK: KING'S HIGHWAY

Increased traffic along the northern stretch of the Old 94 also means increased raider activity. The Highwaymen are recruiting, looking to increase their presence on this newly reopened section of the Old 94. Do you have what it takes to be one of the few? The Proud? The Highwaymen?

BASTION

Pre-war name: Milwaukee

Estimated Population: 3,000 (2,000 transients during the best of times, swelling to an estimated 10,000 transients during times of severe drought)

Ruling Faction: Guardsmen

Background: Visionary Reinventor

Skinball team: Bastion Gronts

The guiding light of the western side of the Great Lakes, this city, along with Purity to east brought the Fertile Crescent through the dark times in much better shape than most regions of the Twisted Earth. The fact that the two cities have ceased to cooperate and seem to preparing to turn against one another is like a dark cloud on the horizon for the entire region.

The modern history of Bastion begins when the city was still called Milwaukee, in the days immediately after the Fall. A young Wisconsin National Guardsman, Pfc. William Whittaker, was sent to take temporary military command of police and emergency services in Milwaukee until such time as reinforcements could be sent. They never came. In the orgy of destruction that was the Fall, the Midwest seemed spared almost by the hand of God. No nuclear weapons struck the shores of the Great Lakes or its mighty cities and the leaders themselves seemed to forget about these cities as they concentrated on the battles taking place at the edges of the country over the east and west coasts. The android round-ups and executions that were a fact of life in so many other areas of the country simply did not happen in the Midwest. This isn't to say that there were no threats to the region as the country fell apart around it. Those threats came from without and within: the chaos of war, the Pariahs and the Ghouls being those best remembered from the city's earliest days.

EARLY HISTORY: WHITTAKER TAKES COMMAND

No one knows why the Midwest was spared so many of the ravages suffered by the rest of the country. The missiles did not target the great cities. The android commanders and combat walkers all mysteriously shut down in the early days of the conflict. Rather than commanding the armies of man to their destruction with "brilliant" battle strategies that used human beings as cannon fodder or becoming the threat themselves (more details on these events can be found in the *Metal Gods* sourcebooks) the robots of the Midwest went dormant early during the Fall and remained that way for the length of the conflict. The humans had to fend for themselves.

When Whittaker arrived to take command of

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