

The Horse-Eaters of Rockford

[\[The Day After Ragnarok\]](#)

City: Rockford, Illinois

Population: 20,000/100,000

Controls: parts of northern Illinois

Government: Despot

Problem: Hostile City: Chicago

Heroic Opportunity: Mercenary Work

City Aspect: Tense.

Rockford's elected mayor was assassinated about one month after the Serpentfall by would-be Marxist revolutionaries; they might have succeeded in actually taking over the city, except that factionalism immediately turned bloody among the revolutionaries. When the dust settled, the city found itself to have been instead taken over by Sgt. Frank Hammer, a soldier from the local Camp Grant who was in the right place at the right time. Hammer had two advantages: the first was the enthusiastic help of selected 'rehabilitated' World War II POWs at Camp Grant; and the second was his seizure of the Ken-L Ration factory, and its supply of canned foodstuffs. Horse meat might have been fit only for dogs in America, but by the

winter of 1945 Americans were ready to eat dogs if that's what it took.

Today, the Sarge rules directly over Rockford and the surrounding area, and schemes at forging a kingdom that can stand against Chicago's. His rule is hard, but not hopelessly so; the tribute the Sarge requires is not crushing, and those who submit to Rockford are allowed to go about with their lives and families unmolested. Also, the Sarge keeps the peace: when they are not hired out as mercenaries, elements of his seasoned *Horse-Eaters* motorcycle infantry regiment actively patrol the countryside for bandits and raiders. The best of the bandits that they capture are offered a chance to change careers; the rest are promptly hung as a warning. If one is not overly ambitious and can keep one's urges under control, the Horse-Eaters can be an attractive career choice.

The various companies and squads of the regiment are usually absent from Rockford, however. The Sarge sends them out publicly as mercenaries, and privately as spies; a town that uses the Horse-Eaters would be well advised to not show them possible weak spots in either the defenses, or the local morale. Then again, more than one settlement has joined Rockford more or less voluntarily. The Sarge

may be scary, but he is reliable, in his way -- and Chicago casts a long shadow.

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