

The Golden Horseshoe League

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

In the first years after the Serpent Fell, the lands of the Canadians and the Americans were wracked by fire and war and poisoned rain. New nations were forged in the broken-backed forge of the Middle West: Chicago, with its desperados and Aldermen; blood-soaked Iowa, where the very grain itself called out for human gore; haunted Birmingham, grim Bone-lands, home of the Ghost-men, eternally damned yet more afraid of the shadows; and many others. But in the North there was a League of cities: proud Toronto, subtle Buffalo, fierce Hamilton, and clever Rochester. United, the League of the Golden Horseshoe kept peace along the Eerie Lake and the Sea of Shining Ice.

Well... a sort of peace. For the freebooters and privateers of Hamilton and Buffalo would admit to having no masters but themselves, and gloried in the strength of their arms, their ice-ships, and their crews. Their Lucky Skull flag struck fear in the hearts of slavers and pirates from Oswego to New Toledo; and yea, indeed, at times in far-foreign lands of the Green Bay and even dour Chicago itself. Those were great voyages indeed! It was a time for

heroes, villains, warriors, and poets; the birth of an Age that would last through the ages.

Or so men hoped.

The Golden Horseshoe League consists of Buffalo and Rochester on the American side, and Hamilton and Toronto on the Canadian. To the disgust of Buffalo's venal (and extremely wealthy) merchant princes, Toronto is the most powerful of the four, thanks to what remains of Ontario's war production sites, and good Canadian gold. As to the other two cities: Hamilton is the mailed fist of the League, while Rochester provides the clever devices and puissant weapons needed to carve out what treasure and safety can be found in the Frozen North.

The League survives on salvage and trade with the warmer south; treasures looted from frozen Ottawa and Montreal flow south, to pay for foodstuffs portaged from Buffalo to Hamilton via the Dead Queen's Road. At every step danger lurks; the salvage caravans must be wary of land-raiders and ice-corsairs, all the way from King's Town to Niagara-on-the-Ice. From there the dangers are mostly nature's, for the Niagara Ice-road to Buffalo is perilous (every year, it seems, the Jotun's Staircase alone will claim an ice-barge as its fee). And it need not be said that

running a caravan of food in the Poisoned Lands is no job for the timid.

But it is profitable work, for those who can survive it. Most of Ontario away from the Great Lakes simply froze to death, so the cities are largely intact and full of valuable salvage. Lake Ontario is almost permanently frozen over at this point, which makes it easier to move caravans via ice-ship down to what used to be the Niagara River. The League makes enough money from the trade to keep themselves fed and even prosperous, but a lot of their profit goes to pay off guards -- and mercenary companies, for when the League decides that a pirate clan has gotten a bit too daring and successful. That happens often enough to satisfy any fighting-man's taste for action.

But is the whole thing sustainable? Hopefully. After all, eventually it has to get warmer again, right? And if the League weathers Ragnarok, it will be in a position to take over most of the east half of the Great Lakes. Or possibly eastern Canada. That's a goal worth striving for, with rich rewards at the end; the League just has to tough it out until then. And if it cannot: better by far to die spitting defiance at the dark and the cold than to curl up in fatal surrender to it, eh?

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