

Monsters, Wyrms and Snakes of the Five Great Lakes

Come closer, my children, come well within arm's reach, for a sip of my whiskey and a puff off my pipe if you don't tell your mothers, and I will regale you with mariner's lore that will jiggle your cockles and tremble your wee scabby knees. The November Witch stirs the icy remains of shipwrecks along Gitchee Gumee with a sea broom, and her handsome sisters beckon the sky to pour ice and gin into sailors' cups, those miserable sirens. Their serpent-cat Mishipishu stalks whitecaps beneath Superior with lynx maw and whale tail for the next Edmund Fitzgerald to chime 29 bells, one for each soul sent straight to the bottom to be nibbled by werepike and brine-nippled merwolverines. Kinder to man is the still-fearsome Mackinac Kraken, which wriggles its ten limbs like Cthulhoid dill pickles escaping a cloud-giant's Vlasic jar. Only the wickedest of Lake Michigan bathers will feel its beak lopping off legs at the hips; instead, swimmers with fudge-sweet souls get cool caresses from massive blue tentacle tips. He once broke the Sault Ste. Marie locks to hook up with Huron, the legendary ten-headed lacustrine lizard from Thunder Bay. This baleful she-wyrm was known to turn fishermen into pasties with a glance from scaly eyes now dragged arm by arm to the Kraken's chest. They sired a nest of mutant brown bass with impenetrable scales and formed a love nest deep in the international mire, far from the mournful and heartbroken hooting of South Bay Bessie, solitary serpentine lover of hockey and dragon-prowed vessels, who still prowls Erie for the pirate ship of Mad Fergus Sweeney, infamous rammer of frigates, who fed Bessie kittens that had strayed from pre-statehood trading posts. And let's not forget the most dangerous behemoth bottled by the St. Lawrence River. Niagara is a two-headed creature with eyes like balls of fire which keeps one set of peepers ever vigilant toward Toronto and the other aimed at Buffalo. The Siamese serpent hadn't locked looks since the War of 1812 and I swear upon my mother's peg leg that a single kissing of selves would cause the world to spill out of its turtle egg.

So scamper home, young scalawags, and batten your bathtubs with licorice and salty gum; forge a blood brother with a slit on the thumb to cover your back as you swim in municipal pools. For these wet ancient varmints and their spawn never do sleep, and neither should you, lest the weird of the world drag you into the freshwater blue.