



# ROTGRIND

A WORLD  
IN DECAY



LORE

LARDERS OF THE SOLITUDE

# THE LARDERS OF THE SOLITUDE

*Penned by Lindrae Voradtralundir,  
Last Gourmand of Tyne<sup>1</sup>*

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*Greetings esteemed food consumers, sustenance requirers, and culinary aficionados, and thank you for purchasing another fine edition in my vaunted series of books dedicated to the various vittles available across our cherished world. Tyne is in a state of turmoil, it has been since before I was born, and it is because of this that I believed my time within our quaint little realm was best spent cataloguing the foods and delicacies from lands across our world.*

*The thought of losing any trace of these deeply storied, cultured, and revered foodstuffs fills me with sadness, thus I felt the best way to preserve even a fraction of our beleaguered plane's history was to pen this series of books. I have travelled the lands using what funds I can put together working in various places across the globe, and the proceeds of my books, in an effort to write a permanent recollection of these things.*

*In the two hundred some-odd years since I began this task, I have immersed myself in the food culture of just about every locale under the bright beautiful star which illuminates the lands. I now pass on my findings to you, dear reader, in the hopes that you can gain an appreciation for the edible goods that can be found worldwide! As per usual tradition, I have even included a few recipes at the end from the understandably tight-fisted locals who would care to share them with me!*

*From the highest highs to the lowest lows, you cannot turn over a rock anywhere in Tyne without finding some scrap of culinary culture. This is nowhere more apparent than in the dismal lands of The Solitude. Trawling one's way through the mires and morasses of this verdant hell is no mean feat, and as with any such feat you require food for energy! Unlike the foods found in the Inheritor Lands or other such cultured locales, the people across the Solitude do not refine foodstuffs for overmuch palatability, which is to be understood and appreciated! Food in the Solitude is utilitarian, purpose-built for sustaining your body as you work to maintain what meagre accommodations you may have erected, or in other cases... to rob the poor saps who built said meagre accommodations.*

<sup>1</sup> *Publisher's note: This statement has not been fact checked.*

Yes indeed, *The Solitude* is rife with banditry, skullduggery, and general highwayman-like behavior, so much so that they can safely be considered a community of their own, and as you know and as you know, any community worth writing about in the history books has their own food culture!

For the purposes of this edition of the *Larders* series I will be regaling YOU, THE READER, with my experiences in the footholds of the esteemed Twangfolk, and indeed in the myriad dens and hideouts of the entrenched freebooters and outcasts who would just as soon rob you as kill you. The difference between the two is both staggering, and fascinating, so I encourage you fair reader to enjoy!

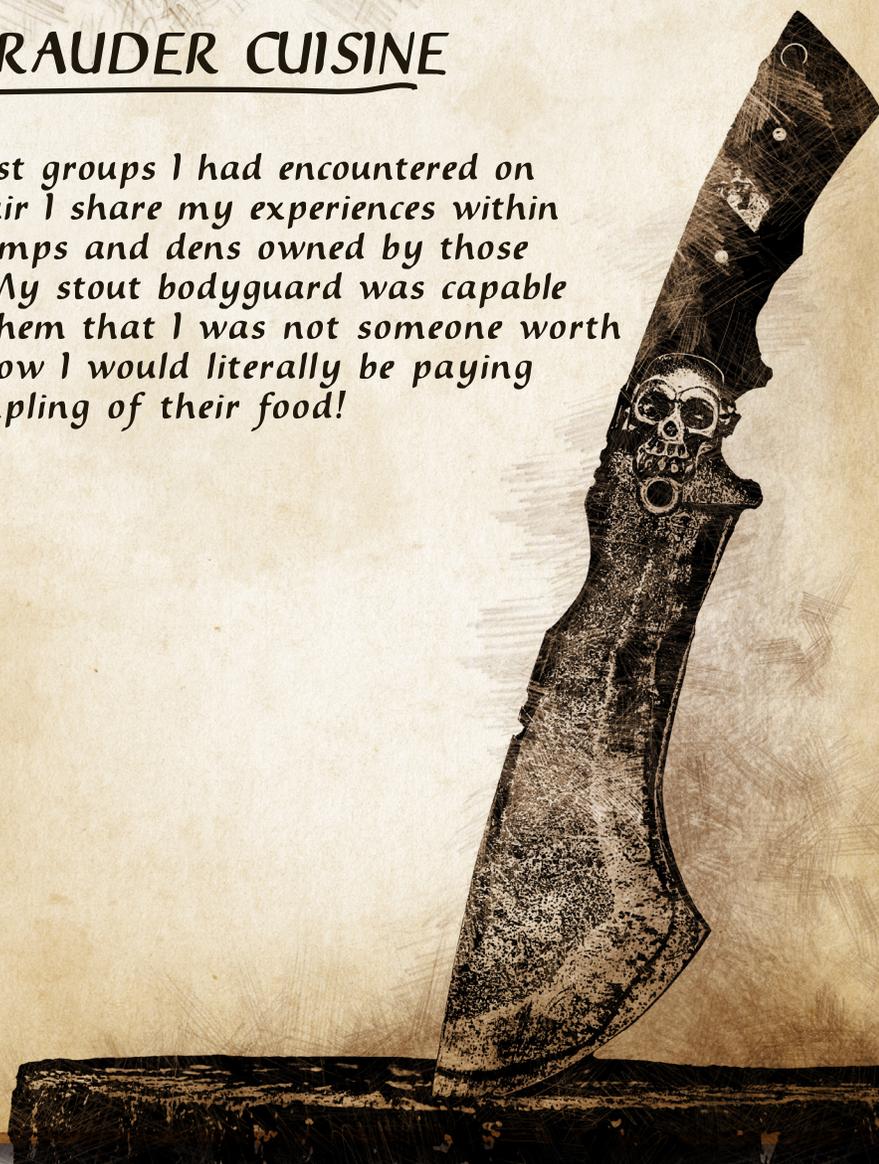
Additionally, I would like to dedicate this edition to my esteemed cohort, Vaygr the Bold, whom I paid to function as a guide and bodyguard! It was only through his interdiction at many junctures that I managed to live through our trip in the swamps, and as such he has been paid a significant stipend for his careful and watchful protection. Vaygr, should you live long enough to be able to read this book, and indeed attain literacy, I pray you are more than well, and that your bloodline remains as strong as you!





## MARAUDER CUISINE

*Being one of the first groups I had encountered on my trip, it is only fair I share my experiences within the multitudinous camps and dens owned by those unscrupulous folks. My stout bodyguard was capable enough to convince them that I was not someone worth robbing, seeing as how I would literally be paying them for just a sampling of their food!*



## Victor's Stew

When inquiring with my newly acquainted robber friends as to what their finest meals were, citing that price was no object, they turned to each other for a moment and chuckled. After relieving me of about five gold coins, they retired to the cooking tent that had been erected in their makeshift camp. To my surprise, a loud cheer erupted from the tent thereafter, and the sound of knives clattering and hacking as they worked, pots and pans clanging as they shuffled about, and audible pouring of broths and drink could be heard as some form of culinary alchemy transpired behind those cloth tent walls. I turned to Vaygr, and received a non-committal shrug from my companion.

About an hour later, the very robbers who had taken my coin returned with a large, hollowed out, round, crusty loaf of bread, within which a piping hot volume of a rich, thick, hearty, and positively beguiling stew sloshed merrily. The men plonked the bread down in front of me, and encouraged me to dig in, using only my hands and the bread as the utensils. The stew, while not the best thing I had ever eaten, was perfectly tasty, and filled me with a deep warmth and strength as I partook. As I ate, the bandits regaled the tale of the man named Victor, who was something of a local folklore figure among the criminal elements of the Solitude. He was apparently a renowned swashbuckler who had a roll of stories about a mile long, telling of deeds of great banditry, evil, swashbuckling, and general lowbrow adventure. As I chewed on the dry, hard rusk of bread, having long since polished off my stew, I felt a remarkable sense of camaraderie with these hooligans. I was quickly reminded by my companion, however, that their pleasantries lasted only as long as my coin, and so we had to make our stay as efficient as possible to ensure I was not robbed of my travel funds. Part of me believes the telling of these stories about the man called Victor is just as much an element of the stew's cherished nature, as the stew's decent quality itself.

Any bandit camp worth their salt is liable to provide you with their version of Victor's Stew, and while tastes vary from camp to camp, rest assured they will give you the best possible quality one should you prove your worth to them... or otherwise pay them for their efforts.





### Root Mix

Any traveller will tell you that moving along the trails and paths of the unexplored country is taxing, and food must be taken at regular intervals to sustain yourself. Trail mix is a common source of on-the-go nutrients, but the common ingredients of which are remarkably hard to get ahold of in this godsforsaken land. The banditry, however, came up with a remarkable solution to this issue, employing know-how either learned or stolen from the indigenous inhabitants of this realm.

What might at first be mistaken for an assortment of colored, cube-cut stones, is in actuality an invigorating and filling snack taken by roving highwaymen for their long, arduous tasks of robbing innocent people. Root Mix is compiled out of various safe-to-eat plant roots, cut from a wide variety of plants commonly found on the side of the road, or deep in the water, and candied in order to preserve it better. Initially I would have presumed that sugar of all things would be in short supply in this place, but as it turns out many plants can be refined into a form of sugar, containing beet-like quantities of it!

The cubes, though strange to look at and hard as a rock at times, are sweet, and contain a plethora of flavors owing to the variety of roots used in their production. Though not enough to sustain you as a full meal, they will make travelling that much more pleasant and doable for the common man! Beware the purple root cubes though! They have a wicked tendency to gum up your mouth, and for the unprepared you may find yourself with a non-viral case of lockjaw... or in my case, an accidental loss of a filling!

When offered, the price for a portion of Root Mix fluctuated between a single silver piece, to just over 5cp per handful. The price, as I determined, had little effect on its quality.

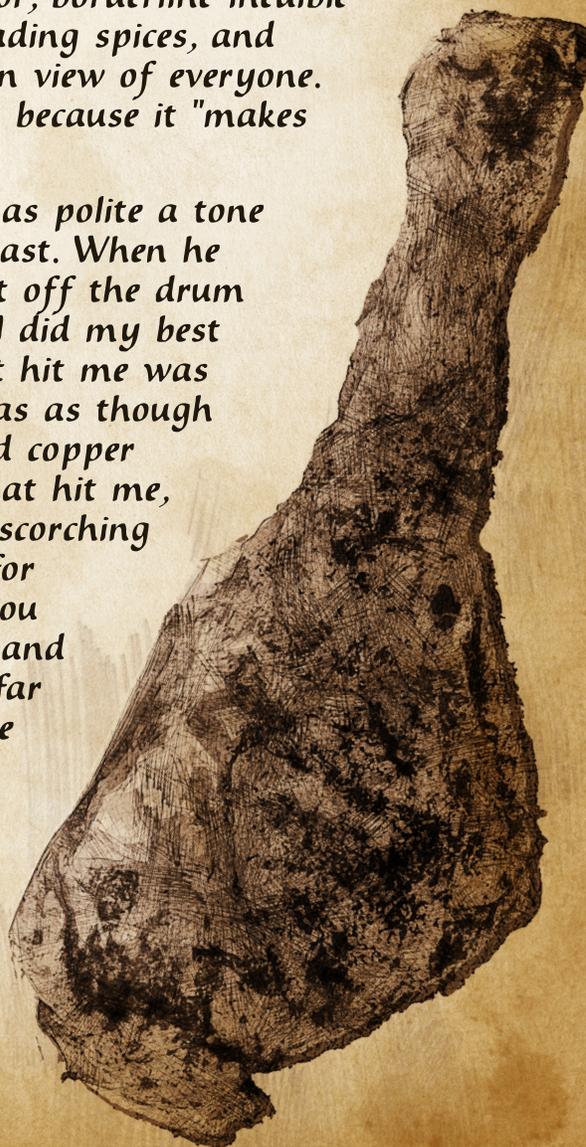
## Roasted Rust

Stopping once again at an encampment, Vaygr and I intruded on a special ceremony being held in honor of a local marauder chieftain, specifically during the feast to be taken after a successful haul, and the sorting of captives. As we approached the table to meet with the chief, I spotted him seated on a roughly-hewn, rather wide rug, with a nearly warhammer-sized roast leg of fowl, greedily and heartily taking stringy, juicy chunks out of it. As we spoke, he identified himself as Vark Broketooth, and as it turned out he was a surprisingly friendly and entertaining sort... for a murderous bandit. When I inquired as to what he was eating, he happily and loudly announced it was the roasted leg of an Ochre Ferroraptor, before he slammed a fist on his chest, and his attending flunkies all raised cutlery and weapons in cheer.

Vaygr explained to me later, when we were away from prying ears, that ferroraptor meat is generally only edible when obtained from the breasts or thighs. He continued by indicating that die hard fanatical chieftains such as Vark will take the inferior, borderline inedible meat from the leg, douse it in tongue-abrading spices, and gnaw on the piece of gnarly, spicy meat in view of everyone. When I inquired as to why, he said it was because it "makes them look 'hard.'"

I returned to the chieftain, and asked in as polite a tone as I could if I could sample some of his roast. When he pinched a small bit of glistening, hot meat off the drum and passed it to me in his filthy fingers, I did my best to identify the flavors. The first thing that hit me was the overwhelming taste of hot metal. It was as though I had placed a small volume of well traded copper pieces into my mouth. The second thing that hit me, was a decidedly flavorful, but unbearable scorching heat on my tongue, which did not abate for several minutes. I can safely say that if you are offered a leg of Roasted Rust, decline, and be prepared to deal with the cajoling, it's far better to deal with than the assault on the senses that comes with eating it.

While I would personally not waste time purchasing such a foul dish, Vark was kind enough to indicate between belches that he estimated the price for a good quality Roasted Rust would be around 5sp per drum.



## The Tin Tap

Owing to the large volume of goods traded via caravan across The Solitude, bandits oftentimes find themselves in possession of canned goods in high volumes. Canning is, mercifully, an art that is lost on them, and those who are less intelligent among them often have hard times recognizing when they have food before them. A few enterprising brigands, however, stumbled upon a rather brilliant use for a certain canned good, in the form of sweetened condensed milk.

One of the men who I spoke with in my travels shared with me a technique, in which they take a can of condensed milk, remove any label on it, and submerge it in boiling water for 15 or so minutes. They then remove the pot from the heat and set it aside near the coals, but not on them, for a whole two to three hours! The can is then extracted after this time, and after giving it a firm trio of taps upon the bottom, it is opened up, revealing a thick, rich, sweet, and thoroughly delicious caramel-colored substance within it! When I first saw it myself I was flabbergasted! I had no idea this was even possible, I had never seen this kind of culinary alchemy before in my life, and yet these grungy, foul bandits had discovered it seemingly by accident.

I now of course share this information with you so you may try it at home! I must warn you however, as you must be very careful with the heat, as a can is not designed to be boiled for too long, lest it rupture violently. Should you be successful however, the rich, caramel-like dessert within is enjoyed over cakes, iced creams, or even with fresh fruit! I can attest, having prepared The Tin Tap at home, including the requisite trio of taps upon the bottom. Traditions are best not messed with!

Cans of sweetened condensed milk are very cheap, going for roughly 3cp each, so this dish is highly re-creatable!



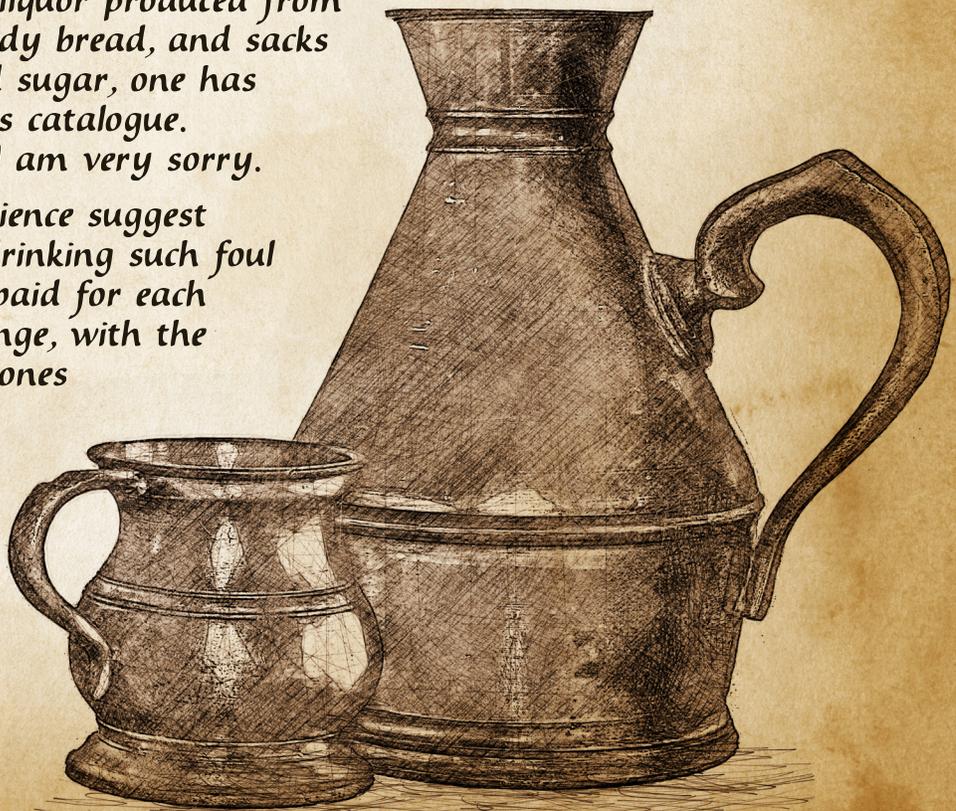
## Roughneck Alcohol

While *The Solitude* makes for a poor place to make permanent camp, some entrepreneurial fellows came up with a means of mobile distilling, a task to be performed between locations, and during camp prep. Now, you may ask, how do these backwoods brigands and hooligans prepare liquor of any kind? How can they possibly produce an alcoholic libation that cools and soothes thy heated brow in the dense air of *The Solitude*? The answer is that they can't. What I have come to know as *Roughneck Alcohol*, is a catch-all term for any vulgar, high proof hooch produced from a mobile still, with possibly the worst possible ingredients one could gather to perform such a task.

In my time within the *Marauder* reaches I have sampled *Roughneck Beer*, *Roughneck Stout*, *Roughneck Mead*, and even *Roughneck Port Wine*, and if I am to be frank with you, dear reader, they are all rather nuanced. They are all equally terrible, tasting of the most unpleasant, low quality toilet wine one could imagine, but they are indeed distinct. There is a certain charm associated with such feeble, vaguely insulting offerings such as these, they are produced so earnestly by these bandit brewers that I cannot help but be amused, despite the lingering sensation of rotgut.

If one has ever drunk liquor produced from canned vegetables, mouldy bread, and sacks of swamp water-soaked sugar, one has sampled the *Roughneck's* catalogue. And if this is the case, I am very sorry.

I cannot in good conscience suggest purchasing, much less drinking such foul drinks, but the prices I paid for each fell within the 3-9cp range, with the pricier drinks being the ones that are at best failed analogues to the finer beverages.



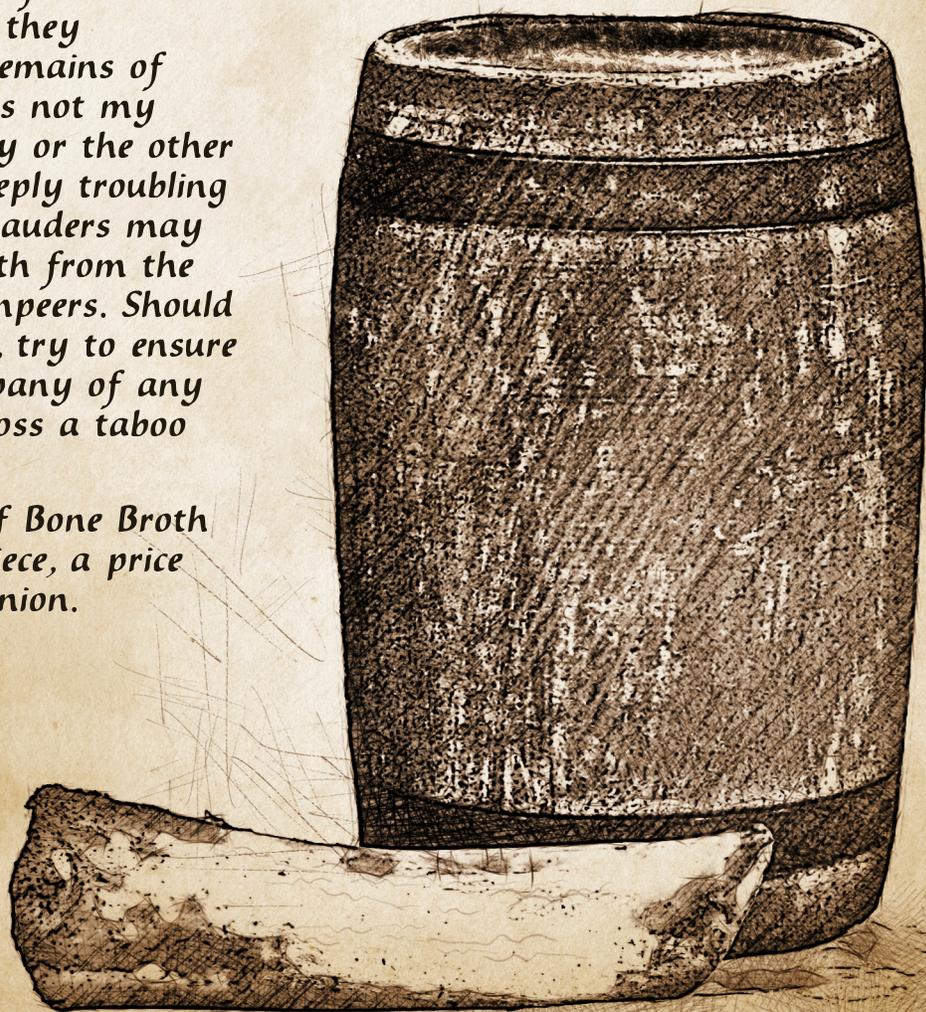
## Osseogrove Bone Broth

A frequent occurrence in *The Solitude* is a growth of bones, commonly referred to as an Osseogrove, and they naturally run afoul of travelling bandits as much as it does simple adventurers or caravans. While others are content to either simply avoid or destroy these things, bandits typically seem to take them as a good omen, as they usually proceed to engage it in combat and either cut it down wholesale, or take large trimmings carefully so as to not kill the tree of bones. They then take their hauls with them, often to their next sites, or back to camp, and they boil the parts they retrieve!

The result of this process is a thin, but highly warming, and... admittedly quite delicious broth, often quaffed with meals, or as a meal replacement entirely! It is salty, rich, and owing to the sheer volume of bones used in its production, likely quite nutritious as well. It is a small wonder that these wayward thieves and rogues manage to have such hearty constitutions with this drink in their steins or filling out their stews and soups.

One element, however, which plagues and concerns me, is that from what I know of Osseogroves... they sometimes contain the remains of people as well. While it is not my place to assume one way or the other as to the intent, it is deeply troubling knowing that these marauders may indeed gain their strength from the boiled bones of their compeers. Should you be offered a flagon, try to ensure you are not in the company of any man-eaters... lest you cross a taboo few dare to go near.

A solid wooden mug of Bone Broth ran me a single silver piece, a price well worth it, in my opinion.





## VITTLES OF THE TWANGFOLK

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*Further into my ventures in the swamps, Vaygr informed me that there were many locales in which I could continue my investigations, but most of them would likely be far too dangerous or unsavory to be worth the added hazard pay. After weighing my options, I inquired with the good man about any other groups within the swamps who had any sort of culinary culture. The man thought hard for a good few seconds, before snapping his fingers and muttering "Twangers". And so he guided me to the remote reaches of The Solitude, far from any proximity to culture as we know it in our comfy, well heated, and suitably not damp abodes. Therein we encountered one of the very uncommon camps of The Twangfolk (a colloquialism coined by seemingly everyone BUT The Twangfolk), a curious and deeply intriguing people, with an evidently very rich culture. As for the foods I was allowed to procure from them, well...*



## Slimesteak

One of the first things I was offered by the illusive and somewhat untrusting members of this particular encampment was a roughly hewn wooden plate, with a decidedly generous portion of what appeared to be some form of seared meat. When I had Vaygr inquire with them about what it was, he clasped his gauntleted hand upon my shoulder, and said "Eat the damn slimesteak, Lind." I had received my answer, and began to tear small chunks of the disturbingly tender, and peculiarly springy 'steak' upon my plate, and ate them with as much gratitude as I could muster for being passed such a strange dish. As my teeth cleaved effortlessly through the pieces I was consuming, my mouth was immediately assaulted by the distinct and initially pleasant aroma of a wood fire, which rapidly evolved into a disturbingly bitter, and swampy aftertaste.



I am by no means a man of immense fortitude, but I did manage to finish my entire portion of slimesteak. While a thoroughly unpleasant experience from start to finish, I made note that for the rest of the day, I felt not a single pang of hunger or nausea, a rarity during my stay in that sodden land. When questioning my gracious hosts, they revealed that my meal was a carefully curated dish made from delicately prepared 'pellicles,' some form of swampy ooze or amoeba based on descriptions, and that those outside of their kai-bu couldn't possibly hope to recreate the dish with their level of efficacy. Of this, I have no doubt, for despite its necessity as a foodstuff, I can only imagine you would consume slimesteak unwillingly in any other circumstances.

In packing a slimesteak for travel purposes, I was able to purchase a good quality lump of pellicle for just over 2sp, a steal for its nutritive value, though definitely not pleasant to eat.

## Manto's Effigies

As I often ate with the Twangfolk in their various homes, campfire circles, and dining places, surrounding our places of eating were these curious little dark brown statues. They resembled to me a long, slender, straight sausage with a singular chestnut sized orb on top, and they were placed in the dozens around any place where one would eat a meal. I paid them no mind initially, assuming they were simply adornments meaning something to the Twangfolk, but often as I would excuse myself from my finished meal, I would draw curious looks as I left. Finally, as I prepared to do so for likely the fifth time, one of them spoke up to me, and asked "D'ye wish to displease Manto? Was our food no good?" I inquired as to what the fellow meant, and he proceeded to gesture to the little figurines.

I took one in my hands and weighed it, finding it to be rather lightweight, and having a hard-packed sand texture. The man then mimed biting the little figurine, to which I simply shrugged and bit it. I was surprised to find that it was in fact a small statuette... composed entirely of hardened sugar! I damn near chipped a tooth, but consumed the little 3-inch figure as I sat back down. He went on to explain that Manto is a lesser figure of some magical purport who ensures foods are safe to eat, and that the figures are made by children out of root sugar, being eaten after a meal as a form of giving thanks to the little deity. I had little to say regarding its taste, as it was all sugar, but I found the figures charming thenceforth, and would always snag one to eat at the end of the meal.

Though I cannot confirm this, I was also advised that Manto's Effigies are mildly magical! Supposedly if you strike a certain pose after consuming one, Manto blesses you depending on how well he finds you executed the pose. Now, that definitely rings of superstition to me, but who am I to deny people an amusing rite?

These little sugar statues are free with every meal taken in Twangfolk territory. Most commonly purchased as half-pound loaves, but one- or even two-pound varieties have been seen at specialized shops. 1(sp) per half pound.



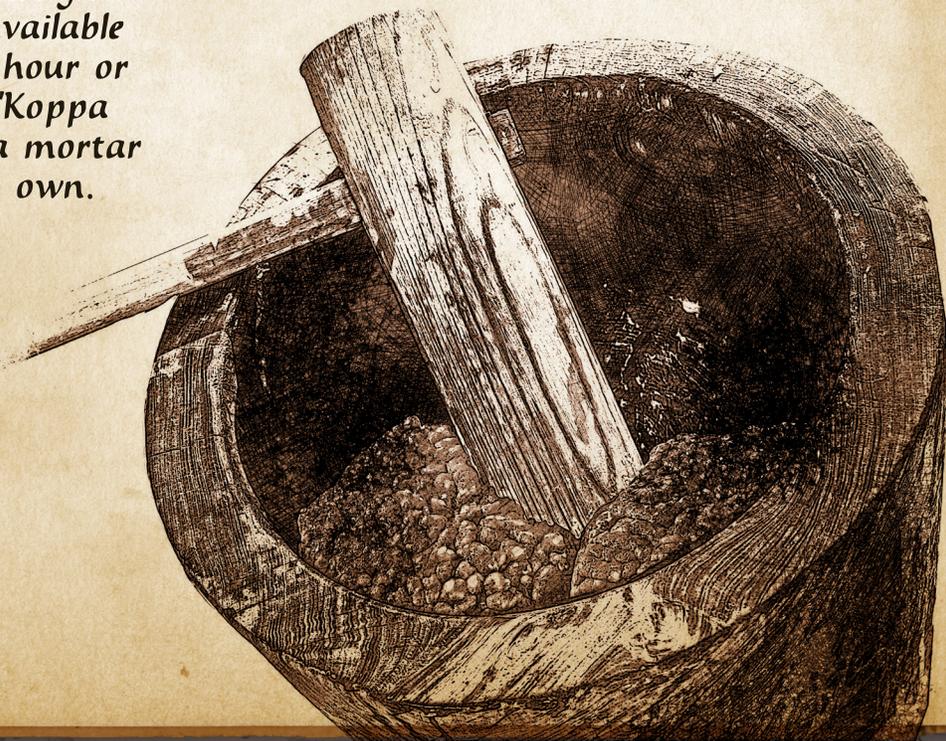
## Koppa Koppa

Around the camps of the Twangfolk, you may hear the semi-distant, but noticeable cadence of two or more people speaking the word 'Koppa,' a peculiar thing to be sure. On my third visit to one of these camps, I heard it for the first time, a distant, rhythmic, and regimented speaking of the word 'Koppa' in time with two others, interspersed with a dull thudding sound. As I went to investigate I came across a trio of women, each with large, narrow mallets, slamming them with force into a large mortar-like bowl. Each time they raised their hammers I would note a thin red slurry on the ends, and as such my curiosity was piqued. Inquiring with them, Vaygr at my side, as to what they were doing, they informed me they were making the farce for a kind of sausage, referred to across their camps as Koppa Koppa.

The name of the dish was of course derived from the words the farce-makers spoke as they took chunks of random assorted animal meat, offal or otherwise, and pummeled them in the receptacle. They would do this until a thick, sloppy farce was made, which was then spiced by hand and loaded into intestines for smoking and frying. Later on, when offered a surprisingly juicy serving of Koppa Koppa, I was delighted to experience a crisp snap of casing, followed by a curiously uniform interior. Their methods for meat preparation rendered the muscle fibres into a smooth, pleasant, yet firm paste, that when cooked yielded the most uniform and texturally superior sausage I have ever enjoyed.

The process for preparation takes hours of hammering, the word said by the pulverizers apparently being the sound a hammer makes into an empty mortar, said as a means of avoiding hitting the bowl directly with their mallets. All I know is that they were kind enough to share the recipe with me, and though I lack the esoteric spices available to them, I have spent an hour or two by myself chanting "Koppa Koppa Koppa" as I used a mortar and pestle to prepare my own. And it was good.

A single link of Koppa Koppa cost roughly 8cp, while a day's food worth of links was about 6sp. A great treat for the road.



## Gut Canoes

A delightfully bizarre and gory name for this dish, the Gut Canoe was something of the Twangfolk's repertoire that I enjoyed greatly during my stay. Indeed, much as a canoe upon the water holds fishermen, passengers, or simple travellers, the Gut Canoe is a vehicle for ingesting as much offal as possible in as short a time as can be mustered. Wildlife within The Solitude is considered to be generally either inedible, or only partially edible, with nutritional values varying wildly across the board between them. However, what remains a fact of life for the general populace is that while the meat and more 'normal' components of these animals tend to be unpleasant and distasteful, several people have found within themselves a taste for Swamp Offal!

I was dubious at first as I saw the halved and scooped root vegetable brought before me; it smelt of roasted potato, perhaps more vegetal, and within the hollowed out 'canoe' of root sat a heaped mound of red-hued, irregular offal, roasted, boiled, fried, or charred variously. But as it was brought to my face, the scents merged into a sensational chorus of savory delights, and the root they were served in was but the vessel for them, and their assorted dripping, fatty juices to sit in! The age-old adage of "don't judge a book by its cover" really has never been as strong as when I was offered this lumpy, viscera-stuffed root-skin. It may have been one of the few things during my stay here, save for the Victor's Stew, that I can say truly left me feeling warm, happy, and full.

A single Gut Canoe, filled to the brim with rich, spiced offal, is a bargain at 1sp per root. Some places offer them as a 3-for-1 special, but only to revered guests to their tribes.



## Horehound Tincture

Though generally the Twangfolk imbibed either imported drinks, or distilled waters, there was one curious beverage which was offered to me on more than one occasion in their camps. It was a particularly sweet drink, perfectly refreshing when cold (which it never was in the Solitude), but oddly medicinal, and filled with a cavalcade of flavors. A wide variety of plants grow within the underbrush of the Solitude, and none more so cherished as the Solitude Horehound, a plant with tiny, delicate, white flowers that grows especially well in less-sodden clearings.

The Horehound Tincture is considered a bit of a superstitious cure-all for what ails you, from stomach disease, to nausea, to weakness, to blindness; if you've had a debilitation, odds are the Twangfolk swear that tincture will cure it... eventually. I can confirm it definitely helps one recover from eating any dubious foods, or from any deleterious effects from consuming swamp water! From what I have seen, the Twangfolk also administer the tincture to livestock in order to help purge them of digestive parasites. Quite a useful drink!

A bottle of the brown, sweet soft-drink ran me 8cp, and a filtered bottle without the pulp was 10cp.





### Burst Syrup

Typically when producing food and drink, it is considered a bad sign when your crockery emits a loud crack, or soft explosion. In the instance of Burst Syrup, however, it is a sign that it is ready for consumption. This particular drink is the result of a small volume of sugar-rich fruits, roots, and vegetables specific to the Solitude being placed into a clay jug half-filled with water, then topped with a form of sealant. This could be wax, tree sap... I have even seen one roughly stoppered with a mass of tar! Once sealed, the jug is left to ferment in a special container, fitted with a strainer and collecting vessel, and it is left there for quite some time.

Owing to the air-tight nature of the vessel, pressure builds as the materials inside either decay or ferment, and after a period either the stopper, or the entire jug simply explodes! The material produced from that point is collected in the container below, being strained of any rotten detritus or bottle/stopper chunks, re-bottled, and stored. The result is a strangely syrupy drink, not too thick to drink, but not so thin as for me to call it a liquid, that has a sweet, complex, peculiarly sour, and decidedly alcoholic flavor. Having never had thick booze before, it takes some getting used to, but these Twangfolk have the matter down to a science, so it's perfectly safe to drink!

Served by the cupful, a serving of Burst Syrup costed me about 9cp. This is one drink for which you definitely need a napkin.



*Packing up my travel belongings and securing what remaining supplies I had from my foray into this untamed, verdant morass, I began to wax poetic to my good compeer, Vaygr. Though not by any means a talkative or conversational sort, Vaygr had kept me company for the duration of this adventure, and had always lent an ear to me when I needed to speak on something, so before we returned to the relative safety of our set-off point, I had some things to expound upon to him with the hope that he would reply in turn with something useful.*

*I mused to Vaygr about the relative differences between those two abundant groups within the wilderness: the lawless brigands, and the self-contained Twangfolk, and how despite similar leanings culinarily, their two cultures intersected barely at all. He merely postured that the differences between them, for as many as they are, were negligible to him. Though one group sought to rob, kill, and maraud as they saw fit, at the end of the day they were both cultures that were surviving, and indeed thriving in this swampy, moistened locale, and for that they both garner a great deal of respect from him. I had to genuinely inquire with him as to whether or not he respected the bandits, to which he simply replied "They're still bandits. They cross me and they're dead. But you have to take them seriously. They're doing a lot better than we are in some cases."*

*For as much food as I had taken in and written about during my stay, Vaygr, it seemed, had yet more food for thought for me to peruse. It is indeed very easy to write off any one element of the opposition as simply being an 'other,' a being for which you carry little curiosity. After all, a bandit holding a knife to you is a far more pressing concern than what he had for breakfast that day, and what condiments he chose to season it with.*

But it is definitely worth keeping in mind, whether you are a seasoned veteran, or a greenhorn adventurer, that whatever sapient opposition you face is just as much alive as you are. You must keep that in mind, for it is the very difference between a man and a beast: one considers his opponent, the other simply kills them.

While I thought this over on the dirt footpath we took, I was struck by the sudden urge to vent my guts, and a strong bout of nausea overtook me. It was then that I was reminded of something very important which I must share with you all:

### You don't need to visit The Solitude.

A uniquely cultured land it may be, but as far as a place for recreational tourism is concerned, it is the furthest thing from it. Take it from me, dear reader: you do not wish to spend hour upon hour in the privy after contracting some water-borne illness that happened to worm its way into you. The Solitude has that in spades, and much more besides, and therefore I cannot recommend a visit for anyone but the hardiest and most bored of adventurers. Besides, if any of the above delicacies and treats have piqued your interest, as with all of these volumes I have included a recipe with which you can produce a rough approximation at the very end of this book!

While I lack the specific flora and fauna of this place, I can help you to conjure a near-enough experience that you never need to even DREAM of visiting this humid bog! I cannot promise my Victor's Stew, or even my preparation of Slimestek will measure up, I assure you that whatever minute deviations my cookery has compared to the real deal are negligible compared to the displeasure you would have in visiting The Solitude to experience them.

A magnificent specimen was  
only one of the delights I had  
the chance to partake in.



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