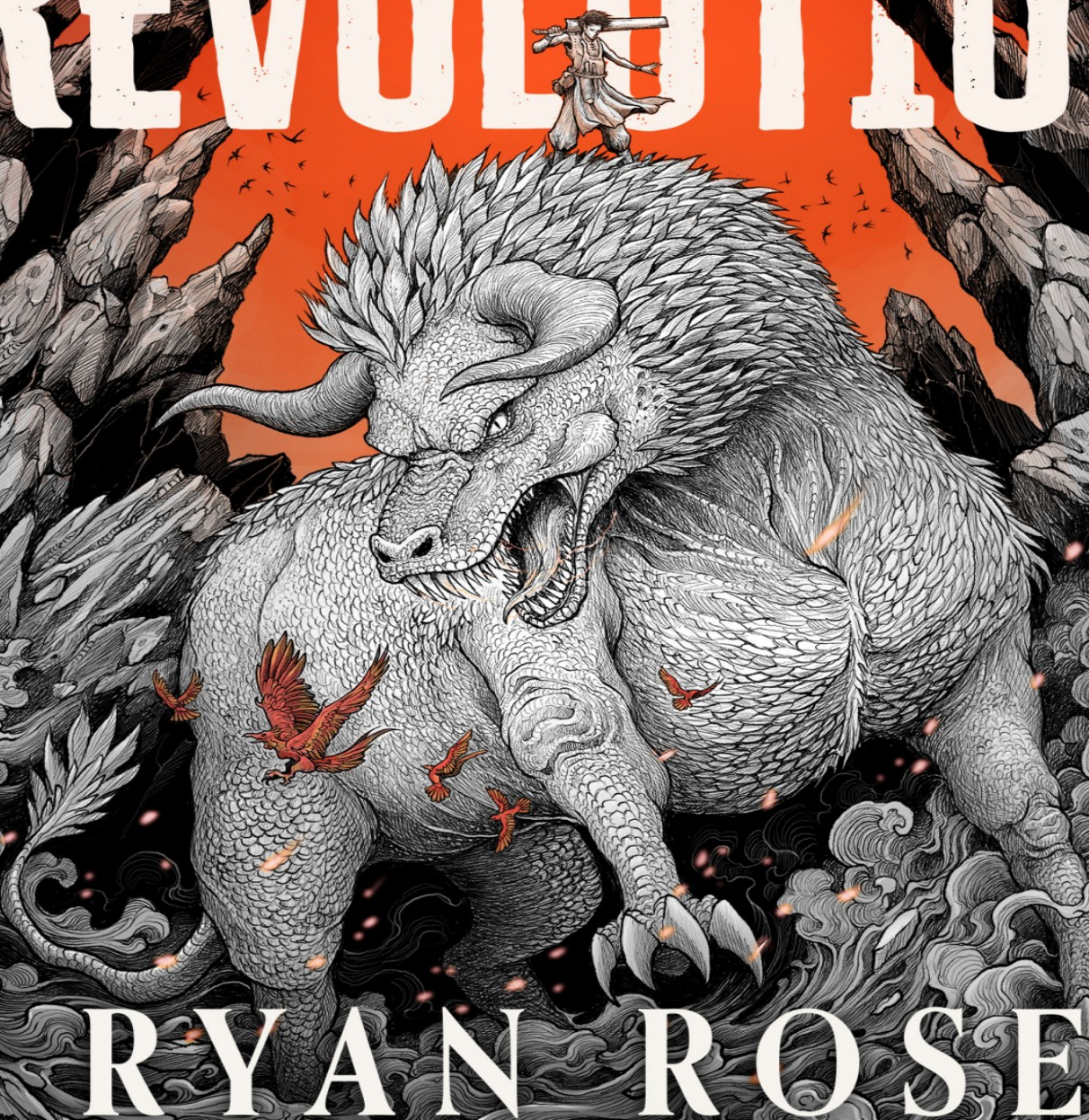


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SEVEN RECIPES FOR REVOLUTION



RYAN ROSE

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From Ryan Rose and Daphne Press

Seven Recipes for Revolution
Eight Tastes of Treachery
Nine Courses of Calamity

SEVEN RECIPES FOR REVOLUTION

RYAN ROSE

► Daphne Press

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To all those who cook so others can enjoy

TABLE SETTING

BEFORE HE WAS Paprick the Butcher, he was Paprick, a butcher. Not in earnest yet, but an apprentice still. Little more than a common farmboy, indentured to the factory, slicing emphon flanks the size of a bison into strips and steaks. It is no wonder *he* became the Butcher. The King's Factory churned out but one product: flesh.

And Paprick got his pound of it.

For all the good it did.

"The charges are as follows," read the executioner from beside the young queen, his voice booming before a crowd so large. "Three counts treason, twenty score counts murder, one count blasphemy, seven counts espionage, one count regicide, and..." His sneer rose to the execution girder, where the Butcher hung by bound wrists, wriggling like a fish hooked above the street two dozen meters below. "Two counts cannibalism."

The Archivist of Law dutifully scribbled the charges into record, as the crowd jeered and roared in a clash of ideals. In the archivist's opinion, too many of the Butcher's dissenters had joined the royalists in the square for the queen's verdict to be assured. But such was the nature of audience, and the conqueror didn't yet command the power to bar them.

"Butcher," Her Majesty addressed him when the crowd settled, "how do you plead?"

Several thousand eyes rose to the top floor of the four-story tenement where the emaciated Butcher dangled. The Butcher had always been lean, but his incarceration had withered him to a cord. His hair lay limp and uncut, not at all as he liked it. His exposed chest was painted with a violent mosaic of bruises and scars that matched the tattoos on his arms. Practically naked without his characteristic apron and cleaver. Yet his voice thundered.

"THAT IS NOT MY TITLE."

Shock chilled the archivist's nerves. The Butcher's words thrummed with Endurance, despite a fast imposed by his captors. To his herd, that magic was a feast of inspiration. Chants galloped through the crowd with the thunder of the bull emphon's hooves, rising and shaking the surrounding tenements as his supporters stamped their support.

"Chef King! Chef King! Chef King!"

"ENOUGH," the queen growled, her words carrying more Endurance

than his.

The chants fell to silence, her words carrying a magical command sharp as teeth. Even the archivist's foot stayed its impatient tapping momentarily, halted beneath Her Majesty's authority. But one voice was not stilled by the command.

"I accept the charges," the Butcher said. "But not their grounds or chargers. I call for the Rite."

The archivist's pen paused, unaware that the Butcher was so well-versed in laws he'd risen to destroy. Several heads upon the dais swung between the queen and the Butcher. Dissent carried on the humid spring breeze as the emboldened supporters blasphemed their sovereign, jeering in support of their idol.

"Give it to him, you cannibal hypocrite!" called a common who snuck amongst the Rare nobility in the front row. Her removal was swift and exacting.

"And upon whose authority do you lay such idiocy?" barked the executioner, surmounting the growing support of the crowd. "You've no proof of Rarity anymore!"

This was one answer the Butcher could not give, and all knew it. The crowd's fire weakened with each passing moment, and the smiles upon the dais strengthened returned.

"Then—" the executioner began.

"Mine," the archivist interrupted feebly, forcing the words from a reluctant throat.

A thousand stares carried the weight of a bull's gore. They struck the archivist in the gut and left anxious breath trickling away. Under all that scrutiny, the archivist yearned to slide beneath the table and disappear. To protect the wealth and security that subservience had afforded them this last decade. But the Butcher's truth was a delicacy like none before.

"I would hear it from the Butcher's mouth." The archivist's voice reached only the first rows of the crowd, the Tribunal, the executioner, and the queen herself, but the volume of its betrayal echoed to the children standing upon boxes of decayed meat in the very back. Cheers, both instantaneous and calamitous.

The crowd had expected this outcome. An incredible act of faith, given that until only seconds prior, the archivist had yet to reach that decision, and neither the Butcher nor his ilk could've known it could be reached. Not for certain. Not from the very person that condemned the Butcher's family to death.

And yet.

As the chants peaked, few heard the archivist's subsequent excuse: "He knows where it is." But the queen did, and her temper grew red as the spice for which Paprick the Butcher was named. Her Enduring glare could've set the dais ablaze with its fury. **"SO BE IT."**

A wave of power thrust the archivist into a teetering chair. An elderly Rare nobleman in the front—pressed already between the common at his back and the barricade against his ribs—gasped and collapsed over the fencing as the same power hit him.

A dozen times, the archivist dined as the queen's guest, and a dozen times over, the archivist would have sworn the woman could not have glut the portions necessary to wield so much Endurance. For the queen to have feasted in the present famine was a statement beyond words.

But the archivist managed to rise, and the crowd's roar frenzied as if its fickle nation had actually won the war. There was no recourse for the queen now, and her anger simmered to disappointment. "You always put God before country, and today it is your undoing. When he proves guilty, you die beside him."

"Lower him," the archivist instructed, feigning indifference to the threat.

The executioner's beady brown eyes found the resplendent, Enduring yellow of the queen's own. Without slaking her gaze from the archivist, she nodded. A pulley spun to life, and the Butcher lowered with the slow grace of Olearth's angels. Whatever fear might have wormed into common hearts boiled away. The crowd grew riotous in its exultation, smashing forward to crack the ribs of a dozen more Rare against the barricades.

Chaos.

Running, screaming. The common fought their way to the queen's dais to set it alight, and as the archivist was ushered to safety, the historian-turned-lawkeeper pondered whether future historians would see that moment as the start of a second civil war or merely the end of an intermission.

*

Hours later, in a dusty prison cell painted crimson by the fires burning outside the palace, the archivist taps a foot, guilty with responsibility and apprehensive of the Rite that will decide two lives. With perfect posture, the archivist suggests confidence and lifts a pen to begin.

For his part, the Butcher slumps nonchalantly behind the bars between

them. Flagrant as ever in his casual approach to death. The archivist hates it. Or perhaps, still hates him. He who reeks of memory. Sweat and chicory. Smoke.

“I knew you’d bite,” the Butcher says. “Curiosity was always your dish.”

“I care little what you think of me, Butcher.” A lie and both know it. But ever his mothers’ son, the Butcher graces the archivist with an opening rather than objecting to the statement.

“That is not my title,” he declares.

“You relished the mantle once, but you claim Chef King, now. What’s changed? I remember when you hated that you might be royalty.”

The Butcher’s Enduring eyes flicker in the writing lamp’s wan light as he leans forward. “There are two types of royals: those born into the curse and those who seize it. I’m neither.” Shadows crawl over the contours of the Butcher’s scarred face as his cell’s darkness swallows him back. Only the yellow illumination of his eyes remains. “And both.”

The archivist regards the shadow of a man some believe closer to a god. There could be some truth to his declaration, and by the Rite, it would be either validated or disproven by the end. But there is something more critical in the Butcher’s story. The secret to Endurance itself. The secret of God’s location. And there is very little the archivist would not risk to record *that* truth. Not the reopening of wounds. Not the deaths of people they both loved. Not even an impending execution should the Butcher fail to prove his innocence.

But maneuvering the Butcher into revealing it will be no easy feat. Admitting that would seal his guilt.

Ah, it will be a worthy duel between two former friends, the archivist expects. But not one quickly won. As a boom thunders the cell walls—a reminder that their conflict is but one of many—the archivist opens the Rite book to a blank page.

“From the beginning, then,” the archivist instructs. “The factory. Meg.”

Course 1: The First Flavor

A meager cut, the First Flavor is best served as an appetizer or alongside a salad of herbaceous greens in a vinaigrette for acidity. Pair with a light red wine to start your evening.

Ingredients (serves 1–2):

50–100g bull emphon round steak
1 sprig of bull grass
1 clove garlic
Salt to taste
2 tsp coarsely ground black pepper
4 tbsp oil or butter

Steps:

1. Preheat oven to 135°C. Let steak sit at room temperature for 30 minutes.
2. Finely dice bull grass. Mince garlic.
3. Fork steak and rub salt and pepper into the meat.
4. Heat oil or butter over high heat in a cast iron pan for 30 seconds.
5. Sprinkle bull grass and garlic into the pan and sauté until aromatic, approximately 30 seconds.
6. Press round into pan for 15 seconds, flip, press for an additional 15 seconds, and transfer steak to the oven for 10 minutes.
7. Remove and let rest for 10 minutes before serving.

Expected Endurance Effect(s):

Endurance, 6–8 hours

THE KING'S FACTORY

THE GARGANTUAN MONSTROSITIES the Rare call bull emphon and the common call carnephon produce seven main cuts of meat living, and eight dead.

As an apprentice butcher, I was stuck with the shank. A terrible, tough cut in front of the brisket. Dry. Sinewy. Barely edible outside a stew. But the master butchers didn't post me there because it cut like tree bark and I was good with an ax. The glory of carving the shank was mine because our bull was a forty-ton carnivore, twenty meters from scaled claw to feathered shoulder, and slicing off its forearm didn't please its sword-length fangs much. Better the wiry sixteen-year-old common with a fresh indenture gets eaten than someone who knew the fine cut of sirloin.

The day Meg quit, I climbed the ladder anchored into the carnephon's bones, drudging my cleaversaw, a slicing tool as long as my leg that weighed twice as much, behind me. Not an elegant cooking knife but an unholy marriage of sword and ax, only faintly reminiscent of a butcher's cleaver due to its rectangular blade. Its length kept the sheathed blade far from the saw's handle in my hand, but my long torso meant the block knocked into my calf with each rung of the ladder. After a season on the job, the bruises ached endlessly as I bore my weight upward, but better them than the whip on my back—large target that it was—or worse, penalties on my indenture for laziness.

My work platform sat above the forward loop of the suspension harness, which held the bull off the ground with leather tanned from one of its long-dead ancestors. By the time I reached it, my labored breath fogged through the mouth slit of my head-to-toe butcher suit, the temperature frigid as imported ice slowly melted along the factory's walls. I sucked air through

my nose, inhaling the stench of iron and offal without notice. Months had numbed it, but those first few weeks had been a constant battle against rising bile.

The well-liked apprentices were carving into the brisket off to my left, a stone's throw below me, splattering the ground with gore. Bessa—yes, I named her—trembled with pain as they bit into her with their saws. It was early yet, so her roars were faint, stored deep in the pit of her lungs, but my place at the shank exposed me especially to her hurt, so close to her terrified heartbeat.

"Sorry, girl," I whispered, laying my free hand against her scales as I caught my breath.

If I leaped up, I could run my fingers over the pink and green feathers that fluttered and twitched where they remained on the scales of her shoulder, but the pluckers had removed the feathers from her hide so that butchers could find the grain of her scales easily. Plucked, she looked more bovine than reptilian, though the reality was neither. While she might have the same general shape as the cows of Olearth, her milk secreted out of sacs above her sharp canines rather than udders. My grandmama said cows didn't have man-sized long claws on their forelegs, only hooves like Bessa had on her hind legs.

A hand tapped my foot, and I made room for my mentor to join me on the scaffold. In her butcher suit, Meg was a featureless rubber doll. Shorter than me by two heads but broad in shoulder and hip, she carried a strength that barely registered the weight of her flatsaw—similar to my cleaversaw, but thinner and angled more like a paring knife. Perfect for getting beneath the inedible scales and slicing them cleanly from the muscle. By all accounts, she was the best butcher in the Panchon Kingdom for her age, but that only made the overseers hate her more, which is why she was stuck with me.

"What are you waiting for?" she asked.

I scowled, knowing she couldn't see my expression. Cutting into Bessa wasn't something I did lightly. Blasphemous, I know, but I didn't want the emphon to think I was hurting her in spite. I always shared a moment with her, to thank her for the meat she was providing first. "I know you like the first cut," I joked.

"Just get in position before we get a deduction."

I didn't have time to move before Meg hefted the flatsaw and placed it perpendicular to the scale's grain. With a grunt, she began serrating between the scale and the muscle. Blood splattered across my mouth slit, filling my mouth.

"Starving rookie," Meg cursed as I cleared the blood from my mouth.

The last few weeks, my mentor had been less and less the friend I'd grown up idolizing. Angrier each day as she approached her eighteenth birthday and all that brought. But to intentionally splatter me wasn't like her.

"What's wrong?" I encouraged her as I got into position, gripping the scale she was cutting so that I could pull it away from Bessa as Meg cut deeper. When she'd gotten halfway down the scale, I'd support its weight so that it didn't peel off and damage the meat beneath.

"What's wrong?" Sarcasm edged her voice as her blade cut deeper and faster. Protocol dictated that she slice slowly rather than saw coarsely into the scale, removing it gently. Then I'd replace her with the cleaversaw to get deep into the tissue from the outside, cleaving to the bone so that we could both edge around it to remove the lean, working muscle cleanly, preserving as much flavoring from the tendons as we could.

Cleanly, as if it didn't involve draining a living thing of liters of blood.

But Meg was mad, and she didn't stick to protocol.

Meg shouldered through the hard clot of Bessa's epidermis scales and sank into the dermis flesh beneath it. Fresh arterial blood sprinkled the air, raining down on us, the platform, and a dozen more butchers cutting the length and breadth of Bessa's enormous body. The liters spraying from her at any given moment were little more than the bites of parasites. What would have killed any of us in moments barely registered. But enough blood loss would collapse even a twenty-meter-tall demigod, if the loss wasn't properly regulated by the cocktail of alchemics being pumped into her spine, stomach, and kidneys by the masters.

Meg's cut tipped the delicate balance, and Bessa's whole body quaked, straining the platforms anchored into her bones. Wood cracked below us. I grasped at the railing, but slipped on slick blood underfoot, wrenching my knee. Meg's hand snatched out and caught me by the forearm before I fell.

Suddenly, Bessa stilled, alchemics readjusted for the mishap. One of the overseers shined a spotlight on the geyser from the platform twenty meters above, drawn to blood like a vulture.

"Artery damage!" called the overseer. "Deduction levied to butcher Meg and apprentice Paprick."

"Confirmed, three percent!" replied another.

Black sludge splashed over the wound. An instant later, a gout of flames set the sludge aflame, cauterizing the wound and proving that the Enduring Defense Branch, the king's secret police, had a carver among the overseers to channel Endurance.

"Look what you've done now!" Meg shouted over Bessa's pained roar.

“Me? I didn’t do a starving thing.”

“You never do! Do you know what that three percent cost me?”

I did. But I wasn’t in the mood to apologize, not for something I hadn’t done. “I’m not the one holding the saw.” I punctuated the words by wrestling control of the cut away from her, forcing her blade to the proper angle by heaving my weight into the scale and tilting it up.

The flatsaw sank the final meter toward my ankle. Meg yanked it away in a huff so that I could drop the severed scale away into the offal and waste below. With the scale removed, about a third of Bessa’s forearm shank glistened sanguine under the factory’s dull red chandeliers. Individual muscle fibers thick as my arm interweaved as capillaries beat.

The first time I saw it, Bessa’s exposed muscle mesmerized me. The enormous pressure of her heart moving all that blood. How it rushed then stopped and rushed then stopped. Then a master had cut a small artery no bigger than my hand and sprayed all of us with blood. I vomited into my suit. That had been near the sirloin though, where the muscle was tender and marbled with lack of work. The forearm shank, even strung up in the enormous contraption of leather the factory suspended her in, was tight working muscle.

We had five more scales to remove before we could remove the shank. The total portion would feed the army for a day or two if butchered properly. Which I would be sure to do. We’d already had a deduction. If we wanted any chance of making a dent in the debt we earned at birth, the shank would have to come away clean and whole.

“Cleaversaw’s covered in blood,” I complained, noticing gore stuck in the grooves of its handle. I was no knifehead, obsessed with having the cleanest saw and using it for precisely the right cut, but I knew better than to hold a giant slicing instrument when it was wet with blood. By the time I had it clean, Meg had produced a small pocketknife and cut three slices of shank from the greater mass. None was longer or wider than my hand, but each was worth a few hundred gold knuckles on the black market. More if you knew how to get it to the rebels.

“I said I wasn’t down for this!” I whispered, hurrying to block any overseers—or worse, the EDB carver—that might see her. “How’d you even get that in here?”

Meg ignored me as she shoved a fourth slice into her apron pocket.

“They’ll notice!” My hand snapped to her wrist, but she leveled the knife at my gut, low and out of sight.

“Meg,” I said cautiously. “Walk me through this. Those aren’t going to make a dent in your indenture.”