

Just North Of Luck Book Excerpt

“Chase drives these mountains like he’s on flat land,” I explained to Pepper, who was pale. He took the hint and slowed his speed, soon coming to a parking area off to the left. We pulled in and locked up. A white plastic banner across the road twinkled bright lights: *Go Nuts at the Testicle Festival!* I spotted a television cameraman filming cooks and getting reactions from tasters. People were bestowing glorious accolades on the samples.

We approached the tables and a man shoved sturdy cardboard platters into our hands. I tried to give mine back, but Pepper pulled me toward a deep fryer filled with bubbling oil. Chase gave me a bemused look and egged Pepper on to get me to try a fried bull gonad. Unexpectedly one was on my plate, sizzling, and smelling--alluring. I shook my head. What was I thinking? I turned and watched in horror as Pepper and Chase counted to three and bit into a crispy gonad. They both leaned toward me, chewing and moaning as if it were wonderful, but they weren’t fooling me.

“Eat up, Logan. They won’t be this good once they cool off,” Pepper warned. She and Chase both took another bite. Chase winked at me and walked off toward some boiled kudzu, adding it to his plate. I followed them with my gonad still in its entirety.

Chase handed me some sort of brew. “Here. Drink this with your meat.”

I glared at him. “Chase! I can’t believe you all are eating this stuff! How nasty can you get?”

Pepper explained that once the testicles are removed, they are skinned, and the meat is pink and clean. “Logan, you eat range chicken all the time. What do you think they eat? They walk around eating bugs and nasty worms. They even eat their own shit! This is much cleaner! Don’t be such a prude. Have an adventure.” She darted off toward some other concoctions.

“Pepper, are you planning to put gonads on the menu at your restaurant?” I had to know.

“Of course not, silly. This is just for fun.”

What fun, I sulked. But, I decided to appease them and after that go throw up over by the bushes. I screwed my face and sank my teeth into the fried bull testicle, still warm, and managed to chew and swallow, holding the brew Chase had given me close by. Umm, tender. Juicy. It’s not that bad. It resembled a large Irish potato cut length-wise and fried with the peel on. It didn’t taste like a potato, but it didn’t taste like meat either. A new taste, for sure. Chase pulled me over to some barbecued nads and we both plated one and joined Pepper at the turkey balls. They tasted like chicken nuggets.

I took a sip of the liquid in my hand and spewed it. “What the hell?”

Chase turned with a red face. “Um...straight rye whiskey.”

“Are you seriously trying to kill me?”

“Sorry.”