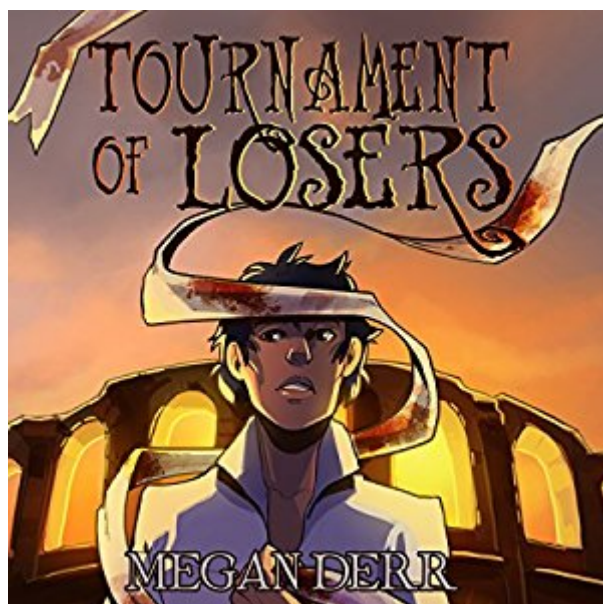


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# Tournament Of Losers



## Synopsis

All Rath wants is a quiet, peaceful life. Unfortunately, his father brings him too much trouble - and too many debts to pay - for that to ever be possible. When the local crime lord drags Rath out of bed and tells him he has three days to pay his father's latest debt, Rath doesn't know what to do. There's no way to come up with so much money in so little time. Then a friend poses an idea just ridiculous enough to work: enter the Tournament of Losers, where every 75 years, peasants compete for the chance to marry into the noble and royal houses. All competitors are given a stipend to live on for the duration of the tournament - funds enough to cover his father's debt. All he has to do is win the first few rounds, collect his stipend, and then it's back to trying to live a quiet life....

## Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 6 hours and 26 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Less Than Three Press, LLC

Audible.com Release Date: August 3, 2016

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B01JH5MGZA

Best Sellers Rank: #78 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Romance > Fantasy #681 in Books > Romance > Gay Romance #1127 in Books > Romance > Fantasy

## Customer Reviews

I received a free copy via Inked Rainbow in exchange for an honest review. I think this is probably my favorite Megan Derr story to date. There wasn't a single thing I didn't love about it, right from the first page. Every bit was pitch-perfect. Rath is the ideal antihero-who-is-actually-just-a-hero. He seems gruff and a bit rough around the edges at first, but it quickly becomes clear he is a genuinely good person. Tress, who slowly moves from casual fling to lover, is equally good and surprisingly scrappy and resourceful for a person of noble lineage. I loved how the social messages about wealth and poverty never devolved into one being somehow superior to the other and yet still touched on what it means to have privilege. What I love about Megan Derr's work is that she doesn't waste a lot of time on complex details of world-building. It's all laid brick by brick through the eyes of

the characters. She's created a place here where gender and orientation and expression are simply part of life and not channels of oppression. No one identifies in any particular way because it isn't necessary in this universe. But unlike a contemporary realistic story attempting "no labels," this is done beautifully and seamlessly. Although there is a definite love story, the romance between Rath and Tress is not the central focus. There's no steamy intimacy on the pages, and I feel that was a wise choice here. It would have distracted from the larger themes and the bigger story being told. Without it, we get to see the love growing between Rath and Tress, and readers will be delighted to figure out the clues long before Rath pieces it all together.

This book was pure enjoyment. Right from the start I loved it. The fantasy world is well-crafted and interesting and Rath is a great main character. Sure, I could see where the romance was going from a long way out, but it was cute and fluffy on that side, while everything concerning the Tournament and the city injected a deeper vein of social commentary that stopped it from becoming too light. I loved Rath. He's a dock-worker and mostly-retired prostitute who loves his mother and, even though he can't stand the man, is willing to pay off his father's debts rather than see the man killed. He's loyal to his friends, has a great sense of humor and is curiously attracted to a pretty nobleman who keeps following him around like a puppy. He's a good guy, brought up rough, but made smarter and stronger for it. I really liked that his prostitute background is never anything to be ashamed of. It's neither demonized nor glamorized, it was just something he did because it paid well and they taught him how to read and write. Likewise he goes back when he needs the money, but it doesn't define who he is. Then there's Tress, his pretty, well-born lover, who adores Rath and spoils him whenever he can. He's sweet and a touch idealistic, but the pair of them together are adorable. As for the Tournament, which is designed to find commoners worthy of marrying into the nobility, well, to say Rath is less than enthused about taking part would be an understatement. He does it for the money, but I loved how despite the dangers and his own contempt of the whole process, he also can't help but compete. Even when he's trying to get out of it. Yes, it's obvious where it's all going, but it's also fun and it was great to see Rath shine.

I will be honest - normally when I see the book that employs the trope that reminds me of "Bachelor/s" reality shows I give this book a side eye and keep walking past it. But this was Megan Derr's book and I rarely pass her longer works and reviews by my buddies seemed to be positive, so I clicked. It was very entertaining, so I am glad I did. Yes, the premise for this book that once

every seventy five years this kingdom conducts a Tournament which gives poor a chance to compete for marrying lots of nobles in order to add fresh blood to high classes - there are like seventy or more chances to get oneself married (barrons, dukes, and even royal family participates). Legend says that one of the previous Queens (Regent Charles) established the tournament in honor of peasant woman who saved the kingdom when it fell on bad times and Queen fell in love with her. Of course the obvious question I had what happens if noble families do not have marriage age candidates when the tournament year comes, but I handwaved it and moved along. Our main character Rath (aka Rathatayen but unsurprisingly he prefers to go by Rath) just wants peace and quiet. He works all kinds of jobs for very little money in order to survive but he also has a no good father whom he constantly needs to save from the situations man gets himself into. Now his father owes a lot of money which he cannot pay back. Rath's attempts to get that much money is not quite successful. Till friend suggests he tries participating in the Tournament because if he gets in the second round he will get a stipend which maybe enough money to save his father again, for a little bit anyway.

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