

# Forward

Thank you to everyone who has stuck with Loslin, West, and the crew through their many adventures—or, *misadventures*, as they so often are. The Turn of the Tides series has been an adventure for us as well!

If you liked the Turn of the Tides series, we have several more books published and more on the way. If you haven't done so already, check out *Fait*, *Madra Rising*, *Prophet's Revelation*, *The Return*, and *Birthed Joy*!

Now, we won't hold you up any further. Enjoy!



# Birthdays and Bear Cublings

(This event happened to West Kelser's father and his friend, Satub when they were young teens. It is earlier than the first book in the Turn of the Tides series, Talwan's Vengeance.)

Blue-gray eyes fluttered open. Fourteen-year-old Thomas Kelser stared up at the ceiling of the upstairs room he shared with his longtime friend Satub. Satub, his mother, and little sister had lived with the Kelsers ever since his father had been sent to prison for abusing his wife, Lucy, and his children. Thomas didn't dwell on that.

The young man sat up and rubbed the sleep from his eyes. Today was a special day. He beamed as he looked over at Satub. The other teen lay fast asleep, mouth agape and snoring softly. Thomas' grin widened. Today was Satub's fourteenth birthday, and Thomas had every intention of making this day a good one, as he did every birthday. He refused to let birthdays be boring.

He'd planned out the day. Yesterday, Satub had been out with his mother, helping her in town. Meanwhile, Thomas and his mother had spent the time baking a cake, which Mrs. Kelser had hidden in their large pantry. It sat

there, hiding, waiting to be eaten. Besides that, Thomas had planned the entire day.

He had something he'd carved for Satub—a wooden boat to which he had added accurate sails and rigging. He'd looked up every detail and even asked their neighbor—and old sailor—to help him get it perfect. Satub loved ships and sailing, and he often talked about becoming a captain someday. So, Thomas had made him his first ship. Granted, it was only a model, but the thing floated well. He'd made certain and tested it in the pond in the field behind their large home. When everything was perfect, he'd boxed it up and set it under his bed, waiting for the morning... and here it was.

Thomas slipped out of bed. He pulled on his everyday clothes and a jacket—because it was a rather brisk morning—and then pounced on the sleeping form of Satub, much like a cougar pouncing on its prey.

Satub woke with a squawk. “Thomas! That hurt! You’re hurting your best friend!” The teen faked a heartbroken look. He crawled around Thomas to the end of the bed, pulling on his own normal attire. “I wanted to sleep in because being woken up before Northern bears isn’t a good start to a day.”

Thomas chuckled. “Northern bears don’t have birthdays. At least... not ones they remember. Now, come on!” He grinned at Satub. “Surely you didn’t forget! You must have been expecting this. It’s not like I haven’t done it before.”

Thomas climbed off of his friend’s bed and walked back to his own. He flopped down on the edge and waited, smiling as he swung his legs back and forth, knowing that under his bed lay the masterpiece he’d worked half a summer to build. It had been no easy task hiding it from

Satub either, especially since they shared a room, and personal space wasn't in Satub's dictionary... or his own.

"How do you know? What if the little cublings like to eat cake, too? What if those poor papa bears are forlorn because no one knows it's their special day?"

Thomas raised an eyebrow. "Yes, I'm certain it breaks their hearts. But today isn't their special day, is it? It's yours, you annoying cubling you." Thomas chucked a fluffy down pillow across the room and smashed Satub's face.

Satub spat out a feather. "Thomas!" The exclamation squeaked, hormones taking out their wrath on his voice.

Thomas hooted with laughter, rolling back on his bed and laughing until he snorted. When it let up, he sucked in a wheezing breath. At last, he calmed himself down and sat up again. "Sit down," he commanded with a grin.

Satub flopped back down onto his mattress. "You're so bossy."

"Oh don't be such a grump." Satub wasn't actually angry or annoyed, this was just their routine. He woke up Satub, and Satub acted grouchy for about half an hour afterward. Thomas snorted at the thought then bent over, pulled the wooden box from under his bed, and shoved it with his foot. The box slid across the wooden floor and came to a stop before Satub's feet.

Thomas watched him with shining eyes. "Open it."

Satub less than carefully pried off the top. His jaw dropped. With a gleam in his eye, he picked it up to inspect the foot-and-a-half-long ship. For a moment, he let his expression go back to serious and met Thomas' eyes. "Well, it isn't bad."

He grinned again, setting it beside him with great care. Before Thomas could put up resistance, he charged across

the room, arms outstretched and tackled his friend with a cry of, “Bear hug!”

Thomas sat trapped in the bone-crushing hug. Glad Satub liked the gift, he laughed and returned the hug with a grunt. “So, it’s ‘not bad,’ huh?” After a couple of thumps to Satub’s back, he moved away. “Was that a northern bear hug?”

“I was showing you how pleased the northern bears would be if someone appreciated them!”

Thomas shook his head but couldn’t help the quiet laugh that escaped his lips. “All right, well, I still hope to never be hugged by a bear, appreciated or not.” His eyes sparkled as he asked, “So, you like it? For real?”

“Yes, of course, I like it, Chief!” The teen was grinning. “Now can we go eat cake? Please?” Satub clasped his hands in front of Thomas’ face and got on his knees beside the bed.

Thomas laughed. “Yeah, yeah. The way to a man’s heart is his stomach—the old saying is true... or is it that Mom is always right?” With a chuckle, he stood up, hauling Satub up with him. “Let’s go. I’ll race you to it?”

“Be warned; you’re going to lose!” The sound of their laughter and footsteps filled the house.

# The House

(The event in this one-shot is pre-Talwan's Vengeance and falls after Loslin escapes the slavers in the sírotište. Without West, he misses his family and wants to see his home.)

Ice-blue eyes stared intently through a window, lost in the imagination of a fourteen-year-old boy. He was oblivious to the sounds going on around him. Gulls called to each other, men and women walked along the streets, laughing and talking amongst themselves. A carriage drawn by two horses rolled by behind the young teen, and he still gazed into the window.

Loslin remembered the house—everything about it was the same—even the furniture was just as it had been. He breathed out and watched as his breath fogged up the glass. He put a cold hand against the glass and rubbed away the fog before leaning against it, peering once more into the home that had belonged to his family—the Kelsers.

Memories hit young Loslin like a storm at sea. He could remember West's laughter as the two of them raced through the house as fast as they could. He recalled their father setting them down and reading the World's Book to them. Not to mention all the times their mother, Allera, had allowed them to help her bake something or other.

The teen barely noticed as snow fell around him, coating his hair and eyelashes in a light dusting of white powder. He blinked, looking through the window at the warm fire in the hearth. He sighed, wishing his family still

lived in the house. Loslin wondered why he'd come back—because seeing his old home did nothing but bring him pain.

The door swung open, and a young woman and man stepped out, stopping under the outcropping roof and exchanging a quick kiss. Loslin flinched as though he'd been hit. Years ago, those two people leaving the house would have been his parents.

Both the man and woman paused, turning in surprise as they caught sight of Loslin. The man stood between Loslin and the young woman. "Excuse me, do we know you?" he asked with a proper tone.

Loslin backed up and shook his head, jamming his shaking hands into the pockets of his threadbare coat. "No sir, sorry. I just knew the people that used to live here."

That was when the woman spoke. "Henry, wait."

The man paused, turned toward her then shot her a confused look.

"He's just a boy..."

Loslin felt he should be offended by that, but he was thin and probably looked small for his age. Only a few months ago, he'd been starving to death on a ship he didn't know how to sail. He wasn't back to full health yet, so he took it for what it was.

"I'm sorry—my wife is right. I shouldn't have been so hasty. Would you come in?"

Loslin bit his lip. "Uh... I should probably go."

"Where are your parents?" the woman asked.

Loslin cringed but tried to hide it. After all, how was she to know? He shrugged, trying to answer, but not finding the words. Instead, he looked at the ground and shook his head.

"Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't know."



Yeah, Loslin knew that.

“Won’t you please come in for a bit? It’s cold out,” the man said.

Loslin glanced in the window once more and shook his head. “No, thank you. I really should go.”

The young couple looked torn but nodded. “Are you sure? Not even for tea?”

Loslin shook his head. “You were both heading out, and I don’t mean to impose. Thank you though. And... Enjoy what you have. You never know how long it’ll last.” With that, he turned away and jogged across the street, not looking back. He didn’t want to see them standing outside his home. He was happy for them—whoever they were, and they seemed truly kind. But it still hurt. At least, if he didn’t look back, he could pretend for a moment that everything was all right. He could imagine that his parents were sending him on an errand, and West was still there, waiting for him to come back home.

# Not Alone

(This is pre-*Talwan's Vengeance*, during the time Loslin searched for his brother, doing good deeds along the way while doing what he must to keep his young crew alive.)

Loslin strode toward the *Talwan*. He'd successfully acquired much needed supplies and was on his way back to the ship. Taking a little-traveled path that led along backstreets, the teen ended up at a long bridge. Fog hung over the ancient structure like a shroud. The moon shone through the mist with an eerie silver glow, illuminating a figure sitting on the old railing. Loslin almost missed her in the dark, but her white gown drew his eye. He paused before setting foot on the bridge, eyes narrowing as he watched her for a moment. The person—a young woman—swayed dangerously, hands barely gripping the splintered wood beneath her. Her feet hung over the edge as she stared down into the haze below.

A sob broke through the misty air and carried through the silence. Loslin tensed. He needed to get back to the crew but... The woman wavered, almost losing her balance. With a last glance toward his ship, Loslin decided they could wait a little longer. He strode forward, boots thudding against the wood beneath him. As he drew closer, he could hear the woman crying, whispering something. The words became clear.

"I'm sorry. I'm sorry... I can't do this anymore. Please forgive me."

“Miss?”

The woman gasped, flinching and nearly losing her balance on the thin beam. She craned her neck so she could see him. Her mouth opened and closed, but no words came from her pale lips.

“Are you all right?” It seemed obvious that she was anything but, yet Loslin felt it was right to ask anyway. He met her red-rimmed eyes, and she looked down.

“J-just...” the woman began, but stopped, shaking her head and holding up a hand as if to tell him to stay back.

Loslin spoke in a calm voice. “Perhaps you could move to this side of the railing, and we can talk.”

“N-no... No, I don’t want to talk.” She shook her head vehemently this time.

Loslin moved forward, gripped the railing, and swung over, balancing beside her. “Mind if *I* talk?”

The lady stared at him, surprise evident behind the misery in her eyes.

“Difficult life?” Loslin asked.

His bridge companion nodded. Amber locks bobbed up and down at the movement.

Loslin looked her over. Her knuckles were white where she grasped the wood. She was still swaying. Every muscle in the woman’s body was tense. If her hands slipped, she would fall. “Things get better,” he began, watching the woman.

She only huffed in response.

“What’s your name?”

Baleful eyes looked at him. She seemed torn. “Tera.”

“Tera, you live here?”

“I did.”

Loslin nodded. “All right. Can I walk you home?”

The woman—Tera—looked at him through hooded eyes, sneering.

Loslin took that as a no. “All right, not home. Somewhere else then. Can you stay with your mother or father? Another relative?” He brought up her family to see how she would react.

“They won’t take me.” Tera’s expression turned to one of misery.

“Why?”

“B-because.” She shook her head, clamping down on whatever words were supposed to come next.

Women had terrible logic, Loslin decided. “If you won’t go to them, an inn would do just as well.”

Tera snorted. “I don’t *want* to go anywhere, don’t you see that?” Despair floated from her words.

Yes, it was obvious. “I do. But you don’t seem terribly comfortable where you are.” He nodded toward her trembling hands.

“Just go away.”

“I’ll go when you do.”

Tera glowered at him. “Why can’t you leave me alone?”

“Do you want to be alone?”

The woman shrugged. “N—yes... I... No one can help me!”

Loslin let out a quiet sigh. “I can help you, but you have to let me.”

“No, you can’t.”

“How would you know? We’ve only just met.”

Tera rolled her eyes. “Who are you?”

“Loslin.”

Tera shook her head. “What are you supposed to be? I mean, some kind of institution doctor? Will you lock me up for female hysteria?” She eyed him warily.

“Do I look that old?” Loslin asked, quirkling an eyebrow at her.

Tera gave a wry smirk. “Guess not. What are you then?”

“Would you believe me if I said, pirate?”

“You don’t look old enough.” The young lady laughed. “Or ugly enough.”

Loslin only smiled.

“What, you think I’ll believe you’re a pirate? You can’t be older than sixteen!”

Loslin shrugged.

“Perhaps *you* should be in an institution,” Tera said.

“Perhaps. Care to walk me to the nearest one?” Loslin smiled gently and waved one hand back toward the safe side of the bridge.

“No.”

Loslin let silence continue for several minutes. He didn’t move from his place beside Tera. She continued to sway, her hands dangerously close to slipping. Loslin knew by this point, the woman wouldn’t throw herself over while he watched. She didn’t want to be seen like that. Who would? So if he waited long enough...

At long last, Tera shakily climbed back onto the bridge. “What’s the point?”

“In what?” Loslin swung over and landed beside her.

“If I don’t do it today, what’s to stop me from doing it tomorrow when a pirate fledgling isn’t around to pester me away from the edge?”

Loslin’s expression twisted into one between irritation at his new nickname, and amusement. Fledgling? “Life

isn't that bad. Somewhere, something incredible is waiting to happen. If it hasn't happened yet, then the best is yet to come."

"The best?" Tera looked less than convinced. "The best thing for everyone would be if I just ended it."

Loslin shook his head. "You're wrong."

"You don't know me."

"Nor you me. But here we are. Promise me you'll keep looking for something better."

Tera shrugged.

"Don't let the bad days stop you from reaching the good ones."

At long last, Tera sighed. "Fine. I'll try. Will I see you again?"

Loslin looked over his shoulder, toward the docks. "Do you want to? I'm not safe company, you know."

Tera smiled. "Because you're a pirate?"

"Exactly. I'm wanted, too. If you look long enough, you'll find a wanted poster with my face on it, signed by the king himself." It was true. King Mathis Corell IV was no friend of Loslin's.

Tera snorted. "You're full of yourself."

"Maybe."

"You've got a good heart, for a *pirate*." Tera smiled, though she still looked skeptical.

Loslin smiled mirthlessly. If she'd seen some of the things he'd done... even that very night, she would not say that.

"I'll find an inn. Just to look for your wanted poster. You better not be teasing me," Tera said, pointing a finger at Loslin's chest.

Loslin smiled. "Look for Loslin Kelser. You'll find it easily enough."

# No Regrets

(This one-shot is from a time prior to Talwan's Vengeance (book 1 in the Turn of the Tides series), before Loslin finds West. He is sixteen years old.)

“Captain? Loslin? C’mon... *Loslin!*”

He heard the voice calling him, shouting his name, commanding him to pay attention to it. The tone was desperate and angry. He didn’t obey its call.

“Loslin, wake up!”

The sixteen-year-old recognized it as Rainor. Part of his mind understood he should listen, but waking up would be cold. His right hand inched upward until it grasped Rainor’s hands. They were slick with blood. His blood. “I am...” he hissed through clenched teeth.

“Yeah? Well, stay that way,” Rainor growled.

With that, Loslin felt the pressure of Rainor’s hands apply all the more. Loslin yelped in pain and then bit his lip to keep any more pained sounds from escaping. “I give the orders.”

“Not right now, you don’t.”

Loslin let out a harsh laugh, flinching then groaning at the pain. His blue eyes opened, and he stared at Rainor, whose own eyes were anxious and intense.

“You shouldn’t have done that, Captain.”

“What? *I* got us into that mess in the first place. It was *my* job to get us out.”

His eyes fluttered shut again, and he breathed in short gasps. He felt cold. As if in response to the thought, Rainor covered him with something warm—probably his coat. With that, he lost touch with the world, reliving the nightmarish evening from hours before.

*“Get out! Take them, I’ll be right behind you!”*

*“Captain...?” Rainor asked in a tense whisper.*

*“Go!”*

*The young man nodded, pulling out the other teens and kids with him, one by one. The halls of the nobleman’s castle were filling with armed guards. They charged forward with loud shouts and curses, heading straight for the group of unprepared pirate teens.*

*Loslin forced his power toward them, blocking the group. It was almost humorous to see several of them run into the invisible force-wall he put up. The others realized what he’d done and many of them darted into doors on the sides of the hall to look for other ways around.*

*Once the crew was safely out of the house, Loslin made his way back to the door, hoping to get out as well, but he wasn’t that lucky. When the clicks of several flintlocks sounded behind him, he turned sharply, groaning in complaint as he saw about twenty men he hadn’t noticed before.*

*One man sneered at him. “Your crew may have escaped, but you didn’t!”*

*Loslin shifted his power, using it to throw the man against the nearest wall. He hit it with a loud crack then fell to the floor, unmoving. The rest of the men charged forward at one time, and the ones staying back fired. Loslin directed the first several bullets into the men charging him. They all fell, never to stand again.*



*The remaining pistol wielders reloaded and shot at the young pirate again. He blocked most of the bullets, but with them coming from so many directions, it became more difficult. The loud reports echoed from the ceiling and walls, confusing his perception.*

*In that moment—the single moment of weakness and loss of focus—he lost everything as a knife blade sank into his side. The man had snuck up behind him after he'd lost the mental wall... and with the sound of gunfire, he'd missed the approach. He shivered for a moment, then jerked away, pulling the knife out of his side and stabbing it into the man's solar plexus.*

*Five men remained, perhaps more, but Loslin knew he wouldn't be able to hold them off. Not like this. With one final burst of energy, he flung their muskets and flintlocks away from them, knowing it would take them time to regain them. He fell to his knees, placing one hand tightly over the stab wound. He was losing blood fast.*

“Loslin!” Rainor's voice jerked him from the memory like the wind jerked the ship's sails forward in a storm.

“What?” he whispered, eyes opening to slits as he looked at the other teen.

“You were doing it again. I'm not gonna let you die today.”

Loslin nodded stiffly. He blinked owlishly at Rainor, then let his gaze slide past him. He lay on a cot in the sickbay on the *Talwan* but didn't remember that happening. “How did I...?”

“I carried you.”

“You *what*?”

Rainor smirked. “You heard me. Don't worry, I won't tell anyone.”

Loslin coughed out a laugh. “Thanks.” The other teen nodded in response, then went back to cleaning the wound.

“I called Notrom. I know he’s the cook, but he can doctor you if he has to.” Rainor chuckled.

“Heaven, help me,” Loslin muttered teasingly.

The door swung open, and Notrom entered, carrying a bucket of water in one hand and a leather satchel in the other.

The time passed quickly after Notrom went to work. Loslin shut his eyes tight and tried to stay still while Notrom set to work “doctoring” him. The captain listened as the cook announced that this would probably leave a scar and that Loslin had been stupid for staying behind alone like that, Gift or no Gift.

He hadn’t had a choice. The crew had to be safe, and since he’d done what was necessary, they were. The crew only did what he told them to, and that made him responsible for what happened to them. Seeing as how they were like his second family, he couldn’t bear being responsible for the death of any of them. Until he found West, they were all he had—the crew and an old pirate ship he’d risked their lives to steal so many years before.

There was nothing he wouldn’t do for them or West. Even *dying* if that was what it came to. In the end, he would do whatever it took... no matter the cost. He would have no regrets.

# Pity and Rats

(This happens before Talwan's Vengeance (book 1 in the series), while Loslin searched for West, who was a slave to Krej Obmund.)

The small opening at the bottom of the metal door creaked open, food slid under the door, and then a voice whispered, "I'm sorry—you poor thing."

Dark lashes fluttered over closed eyes. At last they opened, and he stared dully at the food. West was hungry, but his stomach lurched. He didn't want food—or the pity that came with it. He was so sick of it, yet it happened again and again. It was a circle of endless frustration.

When he would anger Krej, he would be locked up with no food until someone would take pity on him, bringing him something to eat. He should be grateful, but he couldn't be. Was the only reason because they pitied him? They brought him food because they were sorry he was starving? It hurt—didn't they see? Didn't they realize he would willingly starve if only they would care about him? Pity. West used to think it was genuine concern. But as it turned out that was just another lie. Lies hurt. His mother had been right, lies were like thorns, and he was sick of them.

Grey eyes stared at the food, only there because of someone's pity. He sighed and pulled one knee up, letting his left elbow lean against it. His right leg lay straight ahead of him, and his right arm rested on his leg. He sighed and

watched as his cell mates—the rats—scurried over and started nibbling away at it.

The fourteen-year-old huffed out a tired laugh. The rats squeaked and flinched, looking as though they wanted to run. “D-Don’t worry guys, I’m n-not gonna stop you. At least you’re honest.”

The rats seemed to understand and returned to munching on the biscuit and cheese. The rats, for all their faults, didn’t pity him. They took what they wanted, then went on living their lives. Yet people hated them so much, and West didn’t know why.

He inched forward, until he sat right beside them, then ripped off a piece of the cheese. They all flinched away again. “Like I s-said... I-I’m cool.”

He held out the bit of cheese, lowering his hand so it lay close to the rats, palm open. He held his breath and sat still until one rat looked up at him through shining, dark, and clever eyes. It hesitated.

“Take it. If you were a sp-spider, things would be different... but I d-don’t have anything against you,” he whispered to the small grey-brown creature.

It squeaked, inched forward, and grabbed the food from the hand that offered it. West watched as the creature held the cheese in two hands and bit into it, like a human might, only... the rat was... well, a rat.

The young man set about counting the little creatures—they were like little people to him. He decided, since they had a culture, hierarchy, and faces with little expressive eyes, he was going to name them. That way, he didn’t have to be alone, and he’d have a few companions that didn’t pity him.

“I’m a c-call you... Sam. My brother and I had a gerbil named Sam once. Is it okay if I call you S-Sam?”

The rat backed up, still holding the cheese while he stood on his back legs.

“Okay, th-that’s a yes.”

He looked over the rat, toward the others. “That one there, he’s your brother? Okay, H-he can b-be... Shawn.”

His gaze swept over the others, coming to rest on a big, rotund, speckled rat. He chuckled. “He’s th-the crazy uncle. We’ll call him... Flub.” He laughed. He rather liked Flub. The rat was white with grey flecks and black, beady eyes. When Flub moved, he swayed, waddling back and forth on little pink feet.

West turned his attention back to “Sam.”

“I’m West, by the w-way. And, I have a brother too... hi-his name is L-Loslin.”

The rat squeaked. “Y-yeah, I agree.” He shook his head. *Great, now I’m talking to them like I understand them! I’ve really lost it.* “Well, I haven’t always been locked up here. I used to have a big house... a-and a family—who, by the way, *is* c-coming. L-Loslin’s gonna find me someday. And—when he does... Everything’s gonna be different th-than it is now.”

He watched as Flub tried to steal Shawn’s bit of bread. “Hey! You’ve had m-more than enough, Flub!” he patted a hand on the floor, and Flub dropped it, waddling into the shadows to glare at him. He laughed. It was so nice to not think about problems, to not be pitied, to just... be.

Someday, he could be himself *all* the time, and he wouldn’t *need* anyone’s pity. He wouldn’t be a slave forever. It was moments like these that reminded him of that—slivers of hope that had him dreaming... waiting. Because one day, everything would change.

# Drown Your Sorrows

(This happens before Talwan's Vengeance. The time to find West is just around the corner.)

The murky air was thick enough to cut as eighteen-year-old Loslin walked into the tavern. He crossed the room, not so much as glancing at the other patrons. It'd been a long week, longer month, and the years? He didn't even want to mention those. He felt... old. It shouldn't be right for a kid his age to be so tired.

He crossed the room and sat at the bar, looking over it in exhaustion.

"What can I get for ya?" a bartender asked as she stopped in front of him.

"A refund..." he muttered.

"Oh sorry, we don't give—"

"No, I mean on life. I'd like a refund." He huffed out a sigh and shrugged, trying for a smile.

The young woman snorted and shook her head. "Yeah, so would I. But whoever made life ain't givin' those out. Now is there anything else I can get you?"

Loslin nodded. "Water, please."

She looked skeptical. "You're gonna drown your sorrows in water?"

Loslin's smile was half-hearted. "Yes, last I checked, everything else drowns in water—may as well try it before I turn into one of them." He pointed to a bunch of old, bewhiskered, pot-bellied men in the corner. Not only were they rather ugly, but they looked miserable, and all of them were drinking something stronger than water. "It hasn't done much for them, has it?"

The bartender laughed and snorted at the end, tossing her blonde hair over her shoulder and rolling her eyes. "Okay, water it is then."

Loslin watched her walk away. His eyes followed her movements sluggishly. He was tired. This was one of the days he wanted to go home, curl up under the covers, and pretend he didn't have to be in charge for once. Home—to him—was made of wood, tied to a dock, and more often than not, was quite a pain to deal with. Ships could be temperamental, needed maintenance, and were hard to handle. But again, it was home.

The bartender returned with a glass of water. She set it in front of him. "It's on the house."

"Thank you," he muttered as he pulled the glass toward him and stared into it, looking at his reflection. He didn't look like Loslin Kelser anymore. Loslin Kelser was a nine-year-old boy with no worries except watching out for his little brother. No. Whoever was staring back at him from the water in the glass wasn't Loslin Kelser. It was Loslin, the Pirate Captain of *Talwan*, also known as *The Revenge*—tired, angry, and hateful. This was what Loslin Kelser had become—the side of Loslin that did what had to be done, the bad, ugly, awful things that Loslin Kelser couldn't do.

"You gonna drink that?" the bartender asked.

"Getting to it," Loslin said with a smile that never reached his eyes. After he said it, he picked up the glass, put it to his lips and drank, simply because she expected

him to do so. She nodded, and he smiled; again, the smile was faker than a wooden anchor. His smiles were very rare, and when he did, it felt out of place and fake. Smiling—an act of happiness—was, for the most part, done for the sake of other people when he was the one doing it.

“Cap’m!” Treelor’s voice called from the edge of the pub.

He set the glass back down and turned, looking back at the other teen. He waited for him to speak.

“Dat guy you was talkin’ ‘bout findin’? I think he’s at da inn next door.”

Loslin stood up, nodded to the bartender, and walked out. He had other things to do. He preferred it when he had a job so he didn’t think about giving up or feeling weighed down. Instead, he thought about revenge for his family, and for West. It was easier that way. That’s who he was now—Loslin... just Loslin.



# A Day in the Life

(Loslin sets his sights on Krej Obmund. This is just before the beginning of Talwan's Vengeance.)

Treelor woke up with a loud yawn. His face had a grin on it already. He rolled off of his cot and landed nimbly on his bare feet. "Wake up Ever'body! We's settin' sail t'day!" he said with a grin. The crew stirred, many of them getting up at the first call. Others, like Ostaf, grumbled and rolled over.

"Ostaf, Ya might wanna git up. Cap'm is gonna wake ya up if yer not up soon, an' he's in a mood." Treelor said.

At that, Ostaf rolled out of his cot. Today, the *Talwan* was attacking an island—a small island owned by one man, Krej Obmund. The captain, Loslin, had chosen this island out of all their other pending "jobs." He had seemed particularly intent on this island and getting Krej. Treelor didn't know why, but he was okay with the choice.

As he ran up on deck, the sound of his bare feet slapped the wooden deck.

"Morning Treelor," the first mate, Tarana called to him.

"Mornin'!" he called back with a bright grin. Tarana laughed and nodded to him.

After breakfast, which consisted of a bowl of fruit and a glass of water, Treelor went about with his usual chores. He swept and mopped the deck, checked the sail rigging, and cleaned the cannons, talking to each one. "You's gonna

get a workout tonight... excitin' huh?" he asked one of the guns before turning to a different one. "Well, don't you be gettin' jealous. You can git in on it too."

"What are you doing Treelor?" Ostaf asked.

"Ya know, just preppin' de cannons?"

"By giving them a pep talk?" Ostaf snorted.

"Leave him be, Ostaf." Captain Loslin's voice came from behind them. Treelor chuckled as Ostaf jumped. The other teen did as commanded instantly.

Within an hour, the ship was on its way to the island. It would be an all day trip.

\*\*\*

The sky was dark, and the ship floated unseen high in the clouds above Krej's compound. The cannons were ready to go. Treelor stood ready at his post until he heard the captain ask who was on the cannons. He ran his hand over one of the guns and called, "I'm on de cannons, Cap'm!"

There were a few subdued chuckles from those around him, but other than that, silence. This was about to happen. "Oh boy... dis is when it gets interestin'."

Things happened all at once. Part of the crew lined up at the ship's sides and began rappelling down. The plan was to rescue slaves and get the spoil from the place. The *Talwan* would stay here, and fire on the ships.

Treelor and some of his shipmates loaded the large cannons and fired them on Loslin's command, blowing holes in the side of a large ship then reloading. The gun crew fired again, taking down the first vessel before moving on to the next one. He hummed as he worked.

Rainor came up beside him.

“Does the captain seem different to you today?” he asked.

“Uh, maybe a li’l more serious than usual, but dat’s fine wit me.”

Rainor nodded and smiled slightly at Treelor’s speech habits.

Soon, the *Talwan* landed, causing Treelor to come away from the cannons to check out the reason. He hit the edge of the boarding ramp just in time to see the captain and first mate walking up. Draped over the captain’s shoulder, was a teenaged boy about Treelor’s age. The kid was bloody and looked starvation thin. Treelor frowned in concern.

“He gonna be okay?” Treelor asked Tarana as she made it up the ramp. The first mate shrugged and looked over at the captain and the wounded teen. “I hope so,” she said. Treelor nodded and moved back to his post.

This was his job. They helped people. No matter what happened, it would always be worth it. All the kids they had helped and the money they had returned to families would always be worth it. The whole crew agreed on that.

Treelor let a small smile creep back to his face. Everything would be all right, even though he didn’t know how he was so sure.

# When it Rains it Pours

(These events happen just after *Once Upon a Time*—  
Book 3 in the *Turn of the Tides* Series.)

With the timeline corrected and Mathis gone, Thomas almost couldn't believe it had all happened. His plans had been so small compared to the grand scheme of things. The first thing he and his sons had done was find Allera. Now, as he sat in the mess hall, at the table with the crew of *Talwan's Vengeance*, he couldn't take his eyes off her—his wife. She was even more beautiful than he remembered.

*Talwan's Vengeance* rocked gently on the waves, docked on a small island far from Acirema, Aissur, and Luno Zátoka. Moonlight joined Candlelight, illuminating the meal before them, but Thomas was... distracted. He'd not let go of her hand since he'd found her. "You're here," Thomas said—rather stupidly if he admitted it—as he gazed at her. Those same words had already been spoken several times, but sometimes, Thomas had to repeat them to convince himself it was still true.

"Of course I am, silly." Allera gave his hand a squeeze and offered a calm smile.

One of the teens groaned a quiet, "Yuck," but Thomas found he didn't much care. He leaned over, kissing Allera's lips. More "ew's" erupted from around them. Kids.

“Food’s gettin’ cold! Are ya’ plannin’ on eatin’ it?” Notrom asked.

Allera pulled away with a slight shake of her head, blue eyes gleaming. “Pass the pepper, please?” She smiled again, never breaking eye contact.

Thomas complied, waving a hand toward the closest teen without looking.

“Here ya go.” A young man—Thomas had heard him called Treelor—passed the pepper. “Want da salt too?”

“Uh, Yes. Please. And thank you.”

“Here ya go.” Treelor passed the salt. Thomas added another thank you then handed the pepper shaker to Allera. He took the salt and began shaking it out over his food. His gaze never left Allera while he kept pouring.

“Hmm,” Allera commented in her own way, blinking owlishly. “I thought I was the only one who had ever had cravings, dear.”

“Hmm... yeah.” Thomas didn’t realize what he was doing as he smiled at her.

“Dad...” Loslin snorted.

Thomas looked over with a question in his eyes. He turned in time to see Loslin elbow West and burst into laughter. When Loslin laughed, it seemed all the other teens did too. Satub just sent him a sly grin. “What?” Thomas growled out.

West choked on the bite of potato he had taken and thumped a fist against his chest.

“Honey?” Allera’s voice was light with laughter, her gaze drifting towards his plate.

“Wha—” Thomas looked down. His food—once it might have been noodles—lay covered in a mountain of white salt. He grimaced. With a loud groan, he looked

around at grinning young faces—young other than Satub, who was now hooting with laughter, bent over double.

“Ha, ha, hilarious,” Thomas grumbled, even as a slight smile crept across his lips.

Satub slapped the table, gasping in a long breath only to let it out in another howl. “Well, you’ve gotta eat it now, Chief!” he wheezed, his face scrunched in laughter, “What’s that saying? Waste not, want not?”

“I ought to keelhaul you,” Thomas responded. Still, the grin spread across his face. At long last, he turned to Notrom. “You wouldn’t happen to have any water I can rinse this off with, do you?”

Notrom grinned—a rare expression on the young cook—and nodded. “Pass the pitcher!” He called across the table. Loslin picked it up and passed it across the table without ever touching it. The crew didn’t so much as bat an eye. “Thanks.” With that, Notrom scooted the pitcher to Thomas.

Thomas sighed, shook his head, and dumped water on the noodles then proceeded to pick up his plate and slosh it around until he was certain he’d removed enough of the flavorful mineral.

Allera broke out into laughter, a hand covering her mouth as she did so. She shook her head and attempted to rein in the sounds, poking at her own food with her fork.

Thomas smiled at the sound—one he’d missed more than even he remembered. In that moment, he decided a little salt was good for the soul.

## **BOOKS IN THE TURN OF THE TIDES SERIES**

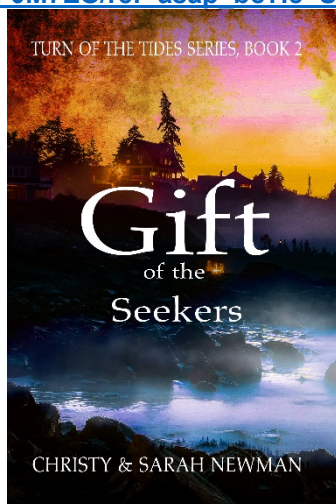
[https://www.amazon.com/Talwans-Vengeance-Turn-Tides-Book-ebook/dp/B00NEB6LPK/ref=asap\\_bc?ie=UTF8](https://www.amazon.com/Talwans-Vengeance-Turn-Tides-Book-ebook/dp/B00NEB6LPK/ref=asap_bc?ie=UTF8)



18-year-old Loslin Kelser has had to grow up fast and has gone from being a slave to a feared master pirate. His ship, the Talwan, takes him on many adventures on the planet Atho. With his brother West (who now stutters from all the abuse he has endured as a slave), sidekick Tarana, and a ship full of ex-slave teens, he embarks on the adventure of their lives. In their quest to uncover the truth about a mysterious scroll linked to the Kelser family, the crew of the Talwan encounters perils and discovers secrets hidden for years.

---

[https://www.amazon.com/Gift-Seekers-Turn-Tides-Book-ebook/dp/B00NF0M7EO/ref=asap\\_bc?ie=UTF8](https://www.amazon.com/Gift-Seekers-Turn-Tides-Book-ebook/dp/B00NF0M7EO/ref=asap_bc?ie=UTF8)



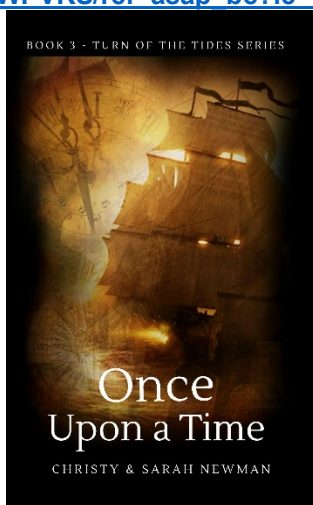
In this, the second book of the series, Turn of the Tides, magic-wielding pirate captain Loslin and his brother West follow the cryptic riddles in the magic scroll left by their father for them. They are sent to Acerima to find a mysterious man named Bobbyn and hone the skills they need in order to fulfill their role in the ongoing saga.

The story is packed full of magic, brotherly love, battles with monsters and men, and some fun surprises along the way.

---



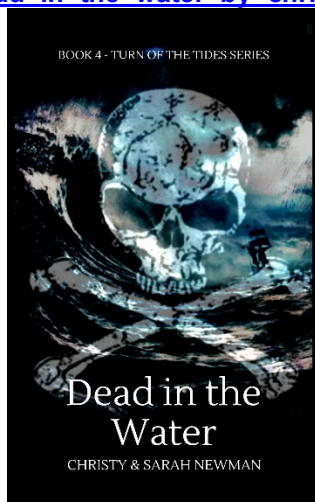
[https://www.amazon.com/Once-Upon-Time-Turn-Tides-ebook/dp/B00V3WPVKS/ref=asap\\_bc?ie=UTF8](https://www.amazon.com/Once-Upon-Time-Turn-Tides-ebook/dp/B00V3WPVKS/ref=asap_bc?ie=UTF8)



In the sensational third book of the Turn of the Tides series, Loslin and West are swept into a breathtaking turn of events. After developing their individual Gifts, they are well-prepared to meet the obstacles strewn along their path toward destiny. Will they be able to rescue their father, who remains in the grip of a powerful, evil king? Will they be able to stop the hands of time that spell either their doom or their ultimate triumph? Along the way, stunning new relationships are formed or revealed.

---

[https://www.amazon.com/dp/1545255164/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1492447777&sr=1-1&keywords=dead+in+the+water+by+christy+newman](https://www.amazon.com/dp/1545255164/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1492447777&sr=1-1&keywords=dead+in+the+water+by+christy+newman)



With the timeline set straight, Loslin and West Kelser make it their business to rescue those victimized by human traffickers of Atho. When trouble runs headlong into their ship, Loslin, West, and the crew are drawn into a fight against a horrific evil—a man who kidnaps those with the Gift. Meanwhile, Satub leads a personal war against his long-time enemy who is hiding and reproducing unhindered on *Talwan's Vengeance*—skubrats.

---



## **About Christy and Sarah Newman**

We are sisters and best friends, artists, musicians, and award-winning authors who live, eat, ride horses, sing off key, and work in tandem to produce books for your entertainment and our pleasure. We are students living, studying, and writing in the high desert. Our goal is to provide clean fiction with no sex or foul language.

My sister and I love writing together. We enjoy it so much we don't consider the uncountable hours we spend on our books as work. Life can be difficult, and our books will take you away to another world for a while. – In His Grip, Christy & Sarah Newman.



Please see our website at <https://www.SilverMistBooks.com>

Our Social Media Links are:

<https://www.facebook.com/Silver-Mist-Books-778362175552501/?fref=ts>

[https://www.amazon.com/Christy-Newman/e/BOONK4HOHK/ref=dp\\_byline\\_cont\\_ebooks](https://www.amazon.com/Christy-Newman/e/BOONK4HOHK/ref=dp_byline_cont_ebooks)

[https://www.amazon.com/Sarah-Newman/e/BOOMQUYXQE/ref=dp\\_byline\\_cont\\_ebooks\\_2](https://www.amazon.com/Sarah-Newman/e/BOOMQUYXQE/ref=dp_byline_cont_ebooks_2)

[http://www.amazon.com/Lost-Whispers-Samantha-D-Meshla/dp/1499368585/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1462850366&sr=1-1](http://www.amazon.com/Lost-Whispers-Samantha-D-Meshla/dp/1499368585/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1462850366&sr=1-1)

<https://www.goodreads.com>

Contact us at [SilverMistBooks@yahoo.com](mailto:SilverMistBooks@yahoo.com) if you have any questions or would like to sign up for a free short story.

If you enjoyed reading one of our books, **please** help us by reviewing it on Amazon.com. (It is not required that you purchase the book at Amazon.) Search for its title, click on the version you have—either Kindle or Paperback, and scroll down to the “write a customer review” button. Thanks!

---

All of our books can be seen on our secure website, [www.SilverMistBooks.com](http://www.SilverMistBooks.com), or may be purchased at [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com), and other online merchants. If you enjoyed reading one of our books, **please** help us by reviewing it on Amazon.com. (NOTE: You do not have to purchase the book on Amazon to review it there because all of our books are sold there.) Search for its title, click on the version you have—either Kindle or Paperback, and scroll down to the “write a customer review” button. Thanks!

If you wish to be notified when we have a new book published, just click the “GIFT WITH EMAIL SIGNUP” option on our website. (You will receive two award-winning short stories and maybe other goodies.)