

A BOOK REPORT
By Shawn L. Perrot
on:

Forgotten Realms
The Dark Elf Trilogy
By R.A. Salvatore

R.A. Salvatore has written a series of books about the **Forgotten Realms**, a place where things like magic and wizards, dwarves and goblins, orcs and troll, and even humans and elves, all exist, although never in harmony. The author uses his prequel, **The Dark Elf Trilogy**, a collector's edition containing: **Homeland**, **Exile**, and **Sojourn**, to tell a very eloquent tale about the childhood of Drizzt Do'Urden, one of the main characters in the **Forgotten Realms** series. Salvatore weaves his tale with such skill, that it was only a matter of time before I simultaneously lost track of time, while forgetting, even if only for a moment, that I was reading a fantasy fiction book and not living the adventures myself. More importantly, I also discovered that the author had chosen his books to bring to light issues like prejudice and discrimination, friendship and loyalty. I could not only feel our character's pain and suffering, his joys and triumphs, I could also understand why he had those feelings, which is a testament to the author's skills.

When our story first begins, Drizzt's mother is just about to give birth to him, while at the same time, waging war against one of the more powerful political families. Somehow, she's wildly successful with her multi-tasking. After Drizzt's birth, he's immediately turned over to his sister for proper education and training for the first 10 years of his incredibly long life.

As I learned more about Drizzt's upbringing, I found myself amazed that he'd turned out to be such a wonderful person. Most people become a product of their environment, but Drizzt refused to give in to the evil morals and standards of his people. Where they had a thirst for unnecessary bloodshed, Drizzt sought friendship and loyalty, concepts completely unfamiliar to the dark elven race. It wasn't long before he'd made the decision to forever turn his back on his people, and attempt to make his own way in the world above-ground.

As Drizzt makes the transition from living underground to living above-ground, he discovers that his race is feared and hated for the evils they've done for centuries upon centuries. The moment they see his dark skin, they realize that he's a dark elf, and they alternate between shunning him, acting with hostility or even hunting him down to punish him for the sins of his people. Through it all, Drizzt shows remarkable compassion and strength, understanding the reasons behind their powerful emotions. Despite this, he feels sorrow at having to be alone, wishing that they would just give him a chance to show that he's nothing like the rest of his people.

Eventually, his persistence, combined with being in the right place at the right time, finally pays off, and people begin to judge him on his actions, and not the color of his skin. The transformation, not just in the people who gave him a chance, but also in Drizzt, is remarkable. For the first time, he's made some true friends, the kind who'll gladly follow him to the ends of the Earth, and he's careful never to take their friendship for granted.

As I continued to read, I was struck by some of the similarities between Drizzt's struggle and those of the African Americans during the civil rights movement. Both the African Americans and Drizzt were judged by the color of their skin, judged not on what was in their heart, but on stereotypes and bad acts of others preceding them. Of course, in Drizzt's case, there was a major difference, that difference being that Drizzt may have been the only person in the entire history of his race to go out and try to do something positive.

I was inspired by Drizzt's story. For starters, he showed me that I could have whatever morals and standards I chose, that I didn't have to settle for those of the people who raised me. Just because someone committed evil in front of me, or against me, as a child didn't mean that I in turn had to grow up to become the same type of person. Just as importantly, Drizzt showed me that I had the power to choose my response to the actions of those around me. I didn't have to meet force with force, negativity with negativity, and with this realization came the understanding that my future hasn't been set in stone.

R.A. Salvatore has written a wonderful series of books, not just because they're entertaining enough to help you escape the pain and sadness in your life, but because they teach you valuable lessons at the same time, without making you feel as if you're being lectured to. It's a shame that there aren't more books in this series, but it's satisfying to know that I can go back and reread them anytime I desire.

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