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*utdrag ur Passage to Dawn av R.a Salvatore*

### **Paradox**

We are the center. In each of our minds- some may call it arrogance, or selfishness- we are the center, and all the world moves about us, and for us, and because of us. This is the paradox of community, the one and the whole, the desires of the one often in direct conflict with the needs of the whole. Who among us has not wondered if all the world is no more than a personal dream?

I do not believe that such thoughts are arrogant or selfish. It is simply a matter of perception; we can empathize with someone else, but we cannot truly see the world as another person sees it, or judge events as they affect the mind and the heart of another, even a friend.

But we must try. For the sake of all the world, we must try. This is the test of altruism, the most basic and undeniable ingredient for society. Therein lies the paradox, for ultimately, logically, we each must care more about ourselves than about others, and yet, if, as rational beings we follow that logical course, we place our needs and desires above the needs of our society, and then there is no community.

I come from Menzoberranzan, city of drow, city of self. I have seen that way of selfishness. I have seen it fail miserably. When self indulgence rules, then all the community loses, and then in the end, those striving for personal gains are left with nothing of any real value.

Because everything of value that we will know in this life comes from our relationships with those around us. Because there is nothing material that measures against the intangibles of love and friendship.

Thus, we must overcome that selfishness and we must try; we must care. I saw this truth plainly following the attack on Captain Deudermont in Waterdeep. My first inclination was to believe that my past had precipitated the trouble, that my life course had again brought pain to a friend.

I could not bear this thought. I felt old and i felt tired. Subsequently learning that the trouble was possibly brought on by Deudermont's old enemies, not my own, gave me more heart for the fight.

Why is that? The danger to me was no less, nor was the danger to Deudermont, or to Catti-brie, or any of the others about us.

Yet my emotions were real, very real, and i recognized them and understood them, if not their source. Now, in reflection, i recognized that source, and take pride in it. I have seen the failure of self-indulgence, and i have run from such a world. I would rather die because of Deudermont's past than have him die because of my own. I would suffer the physical pains, even the end of my life.

Better that than watch one i love suffer and die because of me. I would rather have my physical heart torn from my chest, than have my heart of hearts, the essence of love, the empathy and the need to belong to something bigger than my corporeal form, destroyed.

They are a curious thing, these emotions. How they fly in the face of logic, how they overrule the most basic instincts. Because, in the measure of time, in the measure of humanity, we sense those self-indulgent instincts to be a weakness, we sense that the needs of the community must out-weight the desires of the one.

Only when we admit to our failures and recognize our weaknesses can we rise above them.

Together.

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