



No Greater Sacrifice

John C. Stipa

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When archaeologist Renée d'Arcadia is summoned to France for the reading of a will, she is plunged into a maelstrom of deceit and destruction. Her challenge: solve a 100-year-old mystery originating from a sinister church where nothing is as it seems. Renée joins forces with David Arturo, an ex-helicopter pilot with a troubled past, to interpret clues cleverly hidden in tombstones and classic works of literature to find artifacts scattered across Europe. Racing against time, Renée and David must overcome their inner demons to outmaneuver a network of evil bent on destroying them. What they find in each other just might provide answers to some of mankind's oldest myths.

No Greater Sacrifice Details

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From Reader Review No Greater Sacrifice for online ebook

melydia says

Independently wealthy archaeologist Renee and troubled history professor David are summoned to a small village in France to hear the reading of a will. Though ostensibly strangers, it turns out the pair met a couple years before while vacationing (separately) in Rome, and their pasts intertwine even more. Their romance blooms in fits and starts, which didn't really interest me all that much but luckily was not a huge chunk of the story. Rather, the plot focuses on a strange artifact, broken into pieces and scattered throughout Europe. Finding and reassembling them becomes an obsession for Renee and David. The flavor is distinctly reminiscent of Dan Brown, except with far superior writing and less exasperating characters.

I think my favorite part was how our heroes pursue the secret of their inheritance purely out of personal interest and thirst for adventure. Yes, they're being chased by bad guys, but that's external drama and does not drive their quest. They could have simply forgotten about it and gone home, but of course then we wouldn't have had a story. Luckily, Renee and David let their curiosity get the better of them, and have some grand adventures in the process. Parts were clearly written with a camera lens in mind, but that actually made the action easier to visualize. Though I was still slightly confused as to what the Big Secret ended up being in the end, I had no problem keeping track of the myriad of players. All in all, a good first novel.

Giovanni Gelati says

Welcome to inaugural Self Published Sunday. I am really getting a groove on this. Why, you ask, is this so? My reasons are simple as I am not a very complex being. You will notice today that I am doing something each time with these posts that I don't do too often with my other posts that come from a more "traditionally" published author. That aspect is including information that they, the author has placed on different areas of the jacket. My point with that is this: the author placed that info there, not a different person whose sole job it is to make the novel appear as something it may not be. To me this is another window into their mindset, their soul, the way they want us to view the novel through their eyes. It is another piece of the puzzle. I think it helps bring us closer to the author and see the novel for what they intended, as they intended it.

I don't want to get up on a soap box, but my two cents is that once things shake out and even out a bit, the lines that are drawn now between "published" and "self-published" are going to be made gray and moot. Content is King, just as it is in the blogospheres, so it will be with digital shorts, full length novels, and graphic novels. 'Nuff said let's move on to today's kick-\$%^ novel, No Greater Sacrifice by John C. Stipa. Here is the back cover, it is a two parter so hang with me here: "When terminally ill archaeologist Renee d'Arcadia is summoned to France to take part in the reading of a will, she is plunged into a maelstrom of deceit and destruction to solve a 100- year-old mystery originating from a sinister church where nothing is as it seems. Renee joins forces with David Arturo, an ex-helicopter pilot with a troubled past, to interpret clues cleverly hidden in tombstones and classic works of literature to find artifacts scattered across Europe. Racing against time, Renee and David must overcome their inner demons to outmaneuver a network of evil bent on destroying them. What they find in each other just might provide answers to some of mankind's oldest myths.

John Stipa first began telling stories to his daughters at bedtime. In the beginning, they were comical romps and reprises of tales told by his father. It wasn't long before he realized the keyboard was his portal to worlds not yet created, characters not yet brought to life, emotions not yet known to exist. If you turn back the cover

and relax your mind, maybe he'll take you to a place you've always wanted to go, protected by the veil of your imagination"

I have to say that the second part you don't find the author writing that too much and I enjoyed every word of it, and found it very refreshing. The novel was a fun, quick paced read and I for one feel fortunate to have had a chance to read it. John Stipa delivered on all that was on the back cover plus. His narrative and plotline were well conceived and executed, the characters seemed genuine and meshed well, the entire novel. The attention to detail really won me over as his descriptive ability is first rate. No Greater Sacrifice was no sacrifice to read at all, it was a fun, enjoyable romp through history and a lot of other places.

Dare to be different and start to embrace the "Self" in publishing. It isn't going anywhere and it is just getting some momentum. I have presented to you a great example of the beaten path and the road less traveled. I have a feeling the traffic is going to pick up on that side of the road though. Do yourself a favor next time you are looking around for a good novel to read, look a little harder, go a little further, find that gem that is just waiting to be discovered, it is really nice to hold in your hand and enjoy.

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Janice says

This book has it all : adventure, romance, archaeology, history, puzzles to be solved, some mysticism, lightening-speed travel jaunts across Europe, faith lost and found, good versus evil--it is a fun, mostly light read that was exciting and absorbing. I got a little lost in all the symbolism, and how the pieces of the puzzle all fit together, but I see this as my own short-coming, not that of the book. Renee D'Arcadia is a great heroine, honest, direct, super strong both physically and emotionally. It is great to see a male author create such a wonderful female character. Her hero, and ours, David Arturo, is strong, gentle, an almost ideal man--(with a few of the flaws most men seem to struggle with). The other characters contribute just the right tension and fullness to the story. This is a great accomplishment for a debut novel.

Emily says

This book was sent to be from the author, and it is not a book I would normally have chosen. However, I enjoyed this book very much. The biggest complaint I have is no fault of the author, it is mine alone. I don't speak french. I was pulled out of the story many times wondering 'how do you pronounce that?' So, as I said, the fault is mine. There were many unanswered questions at the end of the book, but I guess that's OK, in life you rarely get all the answers. I would recomend this as a great adventure book to read during the summer. It is a fun ride and I loved that the 'Indiana Jones' like character is FEMALE, how great is that? I would love to see this made into a movie. Great, great, great ride.

Susan (aka Just My Op) says

This first novel by Mr. Stipa takes the reader on a “Indiana Jones meets Angels and Demons” journey. Archaeologist Renee d'Arcadia is on a quest to find pieces of an apparently ancient puzzle and solve the mystery. She is summoned to Rennes-le-Chateau to receive an inheritance, and there makes an uneasy alliance with David Arturo and Paul Meehutch, who join her quest. And, as in any good mystery, there are bad guys behind every bush.

For me, the book had both pros and cons. On the con side, I thought some things happened or were figured out too easily and too quickly, the coincidences a little too convenient. Occasionally, the story seemed a bit repetitious and drawn out, even that that seems to contradict what I just said.

On the pro side, I loved the storyline and really enjoyed the character development. Paul, I really didn't see that one coming (chapter 45). The prologue, taking place at the church at Rennes-le-Chateau almost a century earlier, is very intriguing and made me want to know more. While this story is fiction, I appreciated the inclusion of real places and information about those places. The illustrations were fun, and I would have enjoyed even more of them.

Thank you to Mr. Stipa for providing a copy of his novel. I will certainly read more of his work.

Maicie says

I received a free, signed copy from the author for the Allen Gregory Bookclub.

Lost artifacts, a tomb raiding heroine, suspense and humor. This tale is the very definition of a thriller/mystery. The author's daughter provided the illustrations in the book so the reader can get right in there and figure the clues out along with the characters.

If you like adventure tales that really make you think, No Greater Sacrifice is the book for you.

A wonderful first novel from a promising author.

Gary Tenuta says

An exhilarating ride! A thrilling page turner!
Move over, Dan Brown. John C. Stipa's in town!

John C. Stipa's debut novel, "No Greater Sacrifice" is in the genre of Dan Brown's "The DaVinci Code", "Angels & Demons" and "The Lost Symbol" but is totally original in concept and plot and takes no back seat to any of them. This thing rocks! Take the elements that made those stories so wildly popular, mix them with all of the elements that thrilled fans of the Indiana Jones adventures and you get the tremendously satisfying thrill ride called "No Greater Sacrifice" by John C. Stipa.

This book is a top-notch, exhilarating and (dare I say?) "brilliant" page-turner that kept me up until the wee hours several nights in a row. The plot is complex and deftly crafted. The twists and turns come at a furious

pace. The two main characters (charming, ex-helicopter pilot, David Arturo and the sexy, adventurous archaeologist Renée d'Arcadia) have genuine emotional depth. The mystery they're confronted with is a real puzzler steeped in ancient mythology and esoteric lore. The narrative moves along at a quick pace. The action scenes explode across the page with tremendous descriptive power. The writing is impeccable. The final quarter of the book is hold-on-to-your-seat stuff and the ending is worth every minute it took to get there. Have I left anything out? Did I mention this thing rocks? Strap yourself in and hang on. You're in for a terrific ride.

Charlie Brown says

Very good book. This is the second time to read this book and it was better than the first time.

Kristina says

Read the full review @ Frazzled Book Nommer.

No Greater Sacrifice is a cross between Indiana Jones and The Da Vinci Code (or at least these are two of the more prominent titles that is close to his work/influence). If you're a Dan Brown lover, you'll love this book. But at the same time, it is in no way comparable, because the concept is unique and there was so much more involved than just mystery. I took a long time to read this because I was so absorbed into solving the mystery behind Saunière's secret myself – I was that intensely involved in the novel!

By default, you'd expect plot twists and jaw-dropping action unfolding, but John did it in a way that caught me so off-guard. Sometimes, he'd even do it relatively bluntly and you'd be left screaming, "What?!" at the page. The pacing of the novel was fast-paced most of the time. There were slow moments where Renée and David would debate back and forth, throwing ideas at each other, but after they'd reach a conclusion, the pace would pick up again in action-packed adventure.

I didn't expect John to be writing about dealing with deeper issues – I really only suspected mystery and adventure. So when other issues came up, like death, betrayal, incest, insecurities, conspiracy, not living up to expectations, and cancer, I was mildly pleased! I loved how these issues were incorporated in the story, yet it never took hold of the story – we could still read about depressing issues without it transforming into a novel about cancer.

The characters were extremely realistic and were very easy to connect with. There's Renée, who is an archeologist and was always pushed hard by her father. She's fierce, assertive, stubborn, resilient, and will never say no to an adventure. She's battling with leukemia and her imminent death from it looms over most of the actions she takes, and she's more reckless because of it. Then there is David, an ex-army man turned college professor who has inner demons and insecurities. He's chivalrous, humorous, and so-darn-cute sometimes!

The romance in the novel (because yes, there's romance, as well!) was outstanding. It was executed in such a way that it didn't take the spotlight away from the original plot. Of course, it was still present and sometimes

entire chapters were devoted to the romance, but ultimately, everything would come back to the mission. And wow, John wrote some romance scenes like a woman! That is not an insult – it's a huge compliment. The romantic elements were tender, yet steamy; subtle, yet intense. I suppose I just assumed a man couldn't write passages that radiated with such warmth and love... until I read this book.

The amount of work and research that went into this novel was amazing. There was so much detail of archaeology, mythology, religion, famous landmarks – it was easily overwhelming. I could practically see all the hard work and sweat that went into developing this novel. I have to give John mad props for weaving this tale and connecting all the dots so seamlessly that they made sense (to an otherwise slow person who can't make connections, like myself!). The man is ingenious for all the debates and clue-work he did!

My only complaints are that John doesn't name what foods are in the book – they sounded so delicious! I was ready to go out and order half of the things that were mentioned in the novel, but I didn't have names to go with the delectable foods he was describing! I also didn't like the alternating point of views within the same paragraph, but you get accustomed to it after the first 50 or so pages. Very, very small dislikes compared to an otherwise amazing novel.

Overall, No Greater Sacrifice is a complex novel about intriguing mystery and exhilarating adventure. This book was crafted on a highly intellectual level, incorporating endless mysteries and well-thought out debates. Plot twists and betrayals are around each corner. There were so many things incorporated into the book – mystery, adventure, mythology, religion, romance, archaeology, history, symbolism, social issues, disease, humor... You name it, this book has it! Plus, there are illustrations in the novel. That was way cool and definitely enhanced my reading experience (because I used them to try to solve things out before reading what Renée and David would come up with!). Not to mention the illustrations were drawn by his daughter! How cool is that?

I highly, highly recommend this book to anyone, really.

Heather Fineisen says

I received this in a GoodReads giveaway and it has been buried in a book stack. Glad to get to it as I can't put it down. Sometimes books find you when you need them and this is serendipity! Fans of Dan Brown and Steve Berry are in for a treat. The illustrations, most by the author's daughter, are a great addition to the story. This is a detailed puzzle for readers who like a thriller with thought.

Terri Wright says

I found the characters in this book to be very likable (at least the ones you're supposed to like!).

Having read Steve Berry's "The Templar Legacy", I was familiar with the historical basis, but the road that Mr. Stipa takes us down is very entertaining.

I have to thank Mr. Stipa for sending me a copy of "No Greater Sacrifice" and for Dustin for recommending it!

Keep writing John - I want more!!

Marilyn says

I received this book from Goodreads Firstreads giveaway. When I read the synopsis for this book, I thought it sounded interesting. I was not wrong. It has adventure, mystery, love, hate, travel, illness, good guys and bad guys; you name it, it seems to have it. Most people, men and women alike, would love to have the adventures the characters in this book have. The author did a great job and the story is fantastic. I would also like to add that I would like to see these characters again. Maybe a series. Think about it Mr Stipa.

Carrie says

Totally loved this book. Wish I had finished it sooner but life got in the way. Near to the end, I wanted to put it down because "that is not the way it's supposed to happen" but I kept going and I was right, that isn't the way it happened. I really enjoyed the "history lessons" I received throughout the book. I can't wait to read the next adventure.

Christine says

If you like Dan Brown's novels, you will like this one or you may find this novel more of the same. The history and puzzles needed to solve the mystery are the best parts of the book. The characters were ok and more likable than not. In a lot of ways this book would make a better movie, lots of action, and the author's writing made it easy to visualize what was happening and the things his characters were seeing.

Dan Marvin says

There's good confused, and there's bad confused. As I read John C. Stipa's No Greater Sacrifice, I was good confused. If you've read any of the Dan Brown novels you know the confused I'm talked about, where the characters leap to the right conclusion time and again when presented with sketchy puzzles while you're left in the dust.

It helps that our heroes are super-hot Renee D'Arcadia, an archeologist running from her leukemia diagnosis and David Arturo, ex-special forces history professor running from his past. They're good at these puzzles where I would still be trying to figure out the first one. When they are summoned to France for the reading of a will, they are given the first few pieces and thrust into a circle of ne'er-do-wells who, as fate and plot development would have it, are trying to give them just enough rope to hang themselves.

As we learn more about our protagonists, we discover that they have met before and the meetings were not necessarily good ones. This time, however, romance blossoms as they must lean on each other to solve the puzzles and find the next clue. A small but strong supporting cast gives them assistance in sorting through the centuries-old mystery. We are dragged along into under-ground caverns, crypts, and cathedrals as the pieces slowly start to fall in place.

Stipa's dialogue is crisp and the pacing of the novel is unrelenting. It bogs slightly as the heroes gather to work through most of the 'thinky' parts of the puzzle, then speeds off again once we're given enough pseudo-history to explain why they're getting shot at, stabbed, and chased. While the action parts are fast paced and well described, the characters also dive into their emotions and motivations with dialogue such as this:

'David rocked back and rested on his heels. "People are raised thinking relationships require a certain level of deception, as if it's some sort of psychological game. And they think it's normal! We learn the ploys and tricks as early as middle school. Girls play hard to get, boys tease them instead of showing emotion. I never got it. I wasn't smart enough to keep up with a lie. It was easier to be truthful.'"

This slow building of sexual tension between Renee and David doesn't detract from the story. When a misunderstanding temporarily divides them, they (and we) quickly realize that they are much better together as a team. Still, the hook of this book is the action and that is where Stipa's writing shines. As the heroes close in on their final objective they are being pursued by a killer and we get this description as he climbs across a rope with bleeding hands in chase:

'Dropping to the ground, he braved a glimpse at the ragged peels of skin and shredded rope mixed with dirt and blood. He dabbed the seeping mess against his trousers. Pulling out his pistol, he stole into the chamber and hid below one of the outer stones. The man and woman were talking, something about a Telesterion. He closed his eyes and said a silent prayer. 'For the Lord has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place.' Like fog creeping in a cemetery, he moved to the inner circle.'

Technically, the book was a treat. Well edited with great cover art and some helpful illustrations inside (I would have loved to have even more), it feels like a polished and finished piece. More importantly, I enjoyed the writing and the story of No Greater Sacrifice. Even if most of the history and puzzles left me confused, it was a good confused. The good guys solve the puzzle, prevail over the bad guys, and find each other in the process. In the end, that's what a good romantic thriller is all about.
