

Afterword

So, where did all this come from? Good question, and the answer is I've been carrying Zsallia around in my head for 30 years or more. I've always been a writer, though more for my own enjoyment than anything else, but I'd always wanted to write about Zsallia. It never seemed to come together... until blogs were born.

Zsallia made her first public appearance in December of 2002 with the opening of Methuselah's Daughter on BlogSpot (<http://3500years.blogspot.com>). I vowed to write in her voice for one year then sit down to finally write the novel. When December of 2003 arrived she had grown into a very real, far more complex creature than I'd ever imagined. She also had a small, but devoted following, one of whom was Dean Esmay (<http://www.deanesmay.com>).

Dean had no idea who was behind the web site, but he knew a great story when he saw it. He contacted Zsallia, looking to edit her blog into a novella. I told him who I was and that I had more ambitious plans... and he really wasn't interested in co-authoring a book! He said he'd be the editor and help me get things organized. That arrangement lasted about one week after which we both understood Dean had much, much more to offer to the story. And so Zsallia stopped being all mine and became ours.

Zsallia's blog was reborn at <http://3500years.com> and we set out on a three year adventure. We hummed like a well-oiled machine, except when we fought like lions over some of the simplest, yet most fundamental aspects of the story. We stopped talking to each other for almost 6 months and the project nearly died.

Dean and I finally met just a month ago, on his birthday. My wife and I flew out to Michigan and spent a pair of days with Dean and Rosemary- up until that point we had only spoke over chat or on the phone. We had the chance to sit down and hash out our differences, and we found those differences were pretty trivial in comparison to what we'd created together. We were both determined to see this extraordinary tale brought to press.

And here we are. Hope you enjoy.

John Eddy

Concord, New Hampshire

August 26, 2006

<http://www.jaedly.com>

John's memory isn't quite the same as mine, which is normal in these circumstances. But it is mostly-true to my memory. When we started, I thought I would be 85% editor, and 15% writer. I had in mind that I would write a chapter or two of introductory material, mostly starring me (without name) "discovering" Zsallia and helping her to tell her story. I then had a notion that we would simply present the beautiful vignettes that she had told on her weblog over the course of the last year, and then I would write a closing chapter or two, and that would be that. She would perhaps disappear after we were done. "Six, tops, and we're done," I told John. It might be a novel, or just a novella, but we'd be done either way. I figured that I'd have a hundred or two hours of work ahead of me, then I'd we'd have something to be moderately proud of.

John remembers it as a week. I remember it as more like 6 weeks. I even remember him becoming insecure, saying, "hey so far what we have seems like more your book than my book." I tried to reassure him: "Look, I'm just writing some introductory chapters to set it all up. Then we're going to just reprint almost everything that appears on the blog, mostly verbatim with a little light editing, then I'll write a closing chapter or two, and we'll be done. It's mostly your book, dude."

Perfectionist that he is, John kept being unsatisfied with what I'd presented. And while that went on, Zsallia kept working her way into my subconscious, making it harder and harder for me to think objectively, even making me lose sleep some nights. John kept telling me about how much more he wanted to do, and presenting me with his ideas. And instead of just writing those parts, he'd tell me what he was frustrated about, and I slowly found myself writing whole new parts of the story and asking him what he thought. It mostly came out without my bidding. I felt very presumptuous at first, but I'd send things to him and he mostly liked them, although he kept changing them. He'd change them some, or argue with me about some, but he loved them. Before I knew it, I'd written perhaps 70% of the story of Att, and Attuz. John kept adding details, and kept adding a richness to it, and expanding upon it. And then at some point

he gave me the biggest compliment that anyone has ever given me creatively: “You know I hate to admit it but I have to tell you: at this point she’s as much ours as mine.”

An amazing compliment, that. Suddenly she wasn’t just his, she was ours.

I took it to heart. I even told him, a few months later, “Hey John we need to make a pact: she’s ours, and we won’t ever sell her out unless we both agree, yes? We won’t whore her out to anyone. We both honestly believe she is a character unique to Western literature. So we just have to do her justice, right?”

Does that seem arrogant? Perhaps. But we are both certain that it is true. For he agreed then and there.

How much of this book you have just read is John Eddy’s work, and how much is Dean Esmay’s? No one can tell you, not even John or me. There is likely not a single paragraph in this entire novel that does not feature changes, edits, additions, or deletions that John or Dean has not written—although there are whole sections written 90% by John, or 90% by Dean, I don’t think you can see them. Even though we are very different people, this book is a gestalt of both of us. Yet I am entirely certain no one will find the final result schizoid in the least. Indeed, I am convinced that it is quite beautiful, and is probably the best thing I have ever done creatively in my entire life (save the birth of my two sons Jacob and Draco).

But it never would have happened without John.

In closing I will add about *Methuselah’s Daughter* that I believe it to have been the first novel that was born out of the blogosphere. Blogs are all the rage today, with literally millions of them out there. But this started in 2002, when there were only a few hundred blogs. *Methuselah’s Daughter* was one of the first, and should be remembered by history for that if nothing else. It is also the first truly completed novel that came out of the blogosphere—of this I am certain.

Regardless, it’s the best thing I’ve ever done creatively. And yes, as you must realize, there is room for a sequel. In fact, we are about 25% done with the sequel. Whether that sequel will see the light of day depends upon how many people buy this first novel.

Another question comes to mind: is this all a ruse so that we can fool people into thinking that Zsallia is really just a fictional character? Is she really out there in rural Pennsylvania, looking to reveal herself to humanity?

Heh. Maybe. You tell me.

Dean Esmay

Westland, Michigan

August 27, 2006

When we started writing this book we asked for volunteers, bloggers and other friends, to help us out by being our test readers. That group fluctuated over the years as some left and others joined, but that group was always crucial in keeping us focused and ferreting out great ideas that just didn't work the way we intended:

Jayne D'Arcy:

A Light in the Dark

<http://www.jaynedarcy.us/>

Andrew Cory:

The Punning Pundit

<http://www.punningpundit.com>

The Rev. Dr. Paul Burgess:

Let the Finder Beware

<http://pmburgess.blogspot.com>

Mr. E Poet:

Pocket Full of Mr. E

<http://www.andresperales.com/mrepoet/>

Jay Ellis:

Accidental Verbosity

<http://blogblivion.com/>

Kristina O'Donnely, author:

Andromache - An epic novel of Troy and a Woman's Triumphant Valor

<http://www.trojanenchantment-novel.com>

Dale Channing Eddy:

Engineer, author, pilot, and cantankerous Yankee

curmudgeon in training

Weekend Pundit

<http://www.weekendpundit.org>

Trudy W. Schuett:

Desert Light Journal

<http://desertlightjournal.blog-city.com>

Andrew and Melissa Thornton:

Fictional Realms

<http://www.fictional-realms.com>

Kathy Kinsley:

On the Third Hand

<http://site-essential.com/>

Joe Bowers:

Zsallia's first internet acquaintance

Jerry Kindall:

Friend of Dean and Finder of Broken Phrases

<http://www.jerrykindall.com/>

