ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

GENERAL

Soul Identity: A Novel
Dennis Batchelder
NetLeaves
978-0-9798056-0-8
Four Stars (out of Five)

Self-described computer security entrepreneur, Dennis Batchelder, has taken his considerable knowledge of security systems worldwide and crafted it into a fast-paced action-adventure novel involving a couple of competing cult-like organizations, Soul Identity (SI) and WorldWideSouls (WWS). One is good, one is evil. Thirty-two-year-old computer expert hero, Scott Waverly, his mom and dad, his one-eyed neighbour and the body and soul of Scott's flaming hot soul mate, "software girl" Valentina Nikolskaya—not to mention flamboyant palm reader, Madame Flora, twin granddaughters Marie and Rose, and various soul seekers, recruiters, overseers and a Tibetan Lama named Tinless Tiksey chase each other around the world in a series of exciting adventures of bits and bytes.

Batchelder has a flair for telling a story and involving his readers. Right from the get-go of a riveting Prologue there are the elements of suspense, sexiness, and humour that abound throughout the book. Scott is an expert self-employed computer security analyst who gets hired by a 2600-year-old SI organization to update its recently installed but flawed computer systems. It isn't long before he's is up to his scanner's eyeballs with problems far beyond the "just for a start" stage. Some of the problems are funny ones such as his encounter with Madame Flora and her weird ideas about the purpose for her fax machine. Rose and Marie do some comical turns too with cooking capers and an ambulance. Even the elevator rides with an eccentric centuriat operator have their soulfully funny moments.

Other problems, however, are less funny, with electronic bugs, deficient computer programs, malfunctioning soul-reading machines, an illegal corporate takeover and attempted assassinations by bombing, shooting and poisoning. The on-the-page sexual descriptions are evocatively and decently done and those off the page are left to the reader's imagination. Threats of bodily harm are adequately frightening and realistic with the more fantastic elements of the story becoming willingly believable for the sake of the action. Several historical bits are worthy of *Da Vinci Code* inserts while others get to the heart and soul of Venice, Iceland, India,

the Himalayan Kingdom of Ladakha, and the Buddhist gompa, Lamayuru. Character, action and place all complement the soul searching in *Soul Identity* and help make for an entertaining trip.

M. Wayne Cunningham