ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

GENERAL

Soul Travelers
Delena Epstein
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Three Stars (out of Five)

Marisa Sinclair has had a tough life. Abused and neglected as a child by her birth parents and the guardians in a string of foster homes she has found it difficult to make friends or form relationships as an adult. Even more problematic are her "visits"—out-of-body periods when she somehow inhabits another person's body but has no control over the host's actions.

During these "visits" Marisa is still enough of herself that she can write in her journal and describe what happens while she's "traveling." These journals help Marisa keep her fragile grip on reality and she is sure the memories hold the key to explain what is happening to her particularly when she reads that an alter-body has booked her into a dream research center. The director she later reads thinks he can help her control or at least understand her "visits." Marisa then travels across the country determined to find out what's happening to her.

Of course nothing is as simple as it seems and the people at the dream center and the bed and breakfast where Marissa stays during her investigation all seem to have secrets of their own or they know things about Marissa that they aren't disclosing. Some of these characters don't have the noblest reasons for wanting to help her either.

While the idea for *Soul Travelers* is an interesting one the conflict that is supposed to be building throughout the story never gives the reader any real sense of tension. The dramatic climax—the only time the reader senses anyone might actually be in danger—lasts fewer than 20 pages and is quickly and mostly happily resolved. Character development is also lukewarm. The reader can't be expected to invest much in people whom the author has spent so little time crafting.

Ultimately this part-science fiction part-love story is entertaining and offers a pleasant message for people who believe that angel-like creatures guide people on earth. But a more discerning readership will be difficult to suspend disbelief long enough for this story to have much impact. Readers are supposed to want to know what is happening to Marissa but enough of the story is implausible that the reader can only expect the resolution to be implausible as well. Marissa herself admits that the person explaining her out-of-body experiences "was

obviously suffering from mental illness” and sounded “like someone claiming abduction by aliens and returning to tell the world about it.” Though she quickly accepts the truth of what he is saying it is less easy for readers to make that leap.

Sarah White