

The Steamy Side of Your IT Department

Mark Stone's new book "Behind the Screen: Hacking Hollywood" is for every one of us who has eavesdropped on the couple in line beside us at Starbucks. The juicy tidbits of gossip main character Jonathan Davis gathers at his new job of monitoring company e-mails may make an adult business owner blush. Half of the readers will wonder what kind of people write steamy stuff on their company correspondence...the other half will wonder if their IT guy read the thank you note they sent to their girlfriend after that most unusual evening. Stone could rely on the titillating aspects of a career that pays you to peek into co-workers inner most communications, but he proves to be a better storyteller than that. Sure, Davis hooks up with a couple co-eds at an IT function, scores dates with bondage e-mail senders from his office and trades MSN messages with a 17-year-old, but Stone does a masterful job of humanizing his "I.T. Romeo" before his escapades get out of hand. Early in the book Stone sets up his main character to be more than just a hot computer geek. John Davis is trying to run away from his past and create a new future. "John, 34-years-old, is a recovering gambling addict. He has not gambled at all in over a year. His evenings as an overly active participant at the card tables of Morongo Casino in Cabazon are behind him. He is proud of himself, but is heavily in debt." Only a writer like Stone could make a blackmailing tabloid writer non-cliché. He uses his gift to bring the reader along on a wild fantasy escapade. The difference in this novel is you want to believe. Stone does a masterful job of entertaining while storytelling. He throws enough truth of computers, relationships, coffee shops and coincidences to carry off the far-fetched. At times "Behind the Screen" reads more like a Hollywood screenplay than a novel. The twists and turns of each chapter are colorful, creative and continually ask you to believe the nearly unbelievable. A teenage girl who happens to know how to pick locks just as the skill is needed? An overworked boss who doesn't mind a mouthy, long-break taking new employee? Bank branches filled with some of the most outrageously hot to type employees? All these unusual coincidences are in the novel, but with Stone's incredible skill all come off as both believable and entertaining. "Behind the Screen" is not for the prudish, but it is a fast-paced and fun read for anyone who has ever sent a personal e-mail at work.

About the Author

Mark Stone is a computer security professional with eight years of experience in information security, primarily as an analyst for a large government organization. He enjoys writing weekly security articles for various newspapers and Web sites. Stone lives in Kelowna, British Columbia, with his wife, Reena. www.markstonebooks.com

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