ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

GENERAL

The Ancients
Gregory M. Tucker
iUniverse
978-1-4401-0965-2
Three Stars (out of Five)

“Sam wondered if the old man’s mouth and tongue would soak the beer in before he could swallow” the author writes. “Everything about the man seemed dry. Even his eyes seemed waterless slowly closing as the cold beer ran down his throat.” Gregory M. Tucker’ debut novel showcases his deft hand at description and kicks off with an opening that grabs readers’ attention.

The book begins with a mysterious confrontation between Lowry an old but wealthy adventurer and Sam a young microbrewery owner. Lowry has sought out the younger man in order to obtain two audio tapes that contain information about a staggering cache of gold hidden in the New Mexico desert. Sam and his friends found this treasure several years before when they were teenagers. At that time they vowed to destroy information leading to that cursed treasure. But Sam unbeknownst to his friends held on to the taped information and fended off inquiries through the years. Now several groups seek the treasure including Lowry and his grandson. A lost group of ancient Spaniards dedicate their lives to guarding the gold. Sam and friends know well the evil that present when they practice their blood-thirsty pagan rituals and they reunite to once again find the treasure and save others from its evil.

The Ancients is a sort of combination of Indiana Jones *National Treasure* and that old John Huston movie *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*. The ensemble cast of primarily young men with broken dreams alcohol addiction and empty lives looks promising as the author explores their relationships and friendships.

Unfortunately the plot based upon the ubiquitous treasure hunt stumbles over slow pacing and uneven writing. The author devotes the first five chapters to slowly building character identity and storylines including an ongoing flashback to the 1930s. With the overwhelming number of similar characters keeping track of who did what becomes troublesome. And minute details clog the exposition rather than move it forward. A bar scene in which the author discusses Sam’s boyhood friend Michael and his obsession with image wealth

and his appearance in is a prime example.

Even with the excess of details the characters fail to endear themselves to readers. The secret of the treasure may keep pages turning but readers will be tempted to skim and skip sections.