ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

GENERAL

When Pigs Fly
Bob Sanchez
iUniverse
978-1-935278-66-5
Two Stars (out of Five)

"George Ashe sat in the passenger seat, inside the ceramic urn still protected by the FedEx box," Bob Sanchez writes in a line that is typical of the humor in his latest novel. *When Pigs Fly* tells the story of Mack Durgin, a former police officer from Massachusetts, who has settled into retirement in Arizona only to be sucked into the biggest crime caper he's ever seen.

Sanchez's plot sounds original, but the novel reads like a watered down version of a Coen brothers' script. First, there's the compelling protagonist who wants nothing more than to settle down and enjoy some peace and quiet. Of course that can't happen, because a box arrives with his friend's ashes contained in an urn inside, and Mack knows that he has to fulfill a promise. The fulfillment of that promise becomes a harrowing task that involves over-the-top, one-dimensional characters like "Diet Cola"—an ex-con with a craving for calorie-free soft drinks—and an Elvis impersonator who is actually named Elvis.

Mack sets out to spread George Ashe's ashes over the Grand Canyon. Along the way, he's pursued by a variety of oddball characters who want to get their hands on another item contained inside the urn. This twist provides the hook that propels the tale forward.

Sanchez's humor falls flat from the beginning because the novel seems to be trying too hard to be something that it isn't. The characters are clichés that readers will have a hard time taking seriously. There are bad one-liners ("We're not in Kansas anymore Dodo") and downright shameless gags such as an Elvis impersonator getting stabbed in the eye with a tampon. Additionally, Sanchez contradicts himself often by making a point, then immediately overruling himself, as in this line: "Too bad tires were so hard to shoplift, or Ace could pick up some nice radials Stealing tires was always possible but it was tough getting them installed." Statements like these lead readers to question the tale as a whole.

The real shame, however, is that Sanchez is actually a good storyteller when he puts his mind to it. The narrative flows well and actually captivates at times, but sadly, his writing skills are overshadowed by silly character names and lackluster dialogue.

Even in the craziest of crime capers, readers must be able to identify with the characters and believe that, as strange as the story is, it could actually happen. *When Pigs Fly* does not succeed in this.