

A Disturbing Nature

Brian Lebeau

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Set in the 1970s, Brian Lebeau's psychological thriller *A Disturbing Nature* follows a serial killer's trail of bodies in New England.

Francis Palmer, a chief investigator with the FBI, solves mass murder cases. He discovered evidence that led to Ted Bundy's arrest. But his job takes a toll on his psyche, leading to a second personality whom he's named The Beast: though Palmer captures monsters, he finds himself on the brink of becoming one himself.

Meanwhile, childhood trauma left Mo with the mental capacity of a child. At twenty-four years old, he's forced out of his somewhat safe home, required to make it on his own as a groundskeeper at a rural college. Mo's immaturity and dark memories put him on a precarious edge as his secrets threaten to come to light.

The book opens on Palmer interviewing Mo Lumen about murdered women in Rhode Island and Massachusetts. It then spools back to detail the men's pasts and mental states. The losses of their families, mounting mistakes, and growing darkness within both of them shape them and their futures. Palmer tries to belong by protecting innocent people, even at the cost of personal happiness; Mo's disability leads to overt positivity, even as he encounters people who are devoid of morals.

The rapid prose utilizes short sentences, clipped conversations, and brisk chapters to its benefit. Still, the story takes its time to unfold, alternating between Mo and Palmer to maintain its momentum. Its psychological examinations of both men are engaging.

A Disturbing Nature is a haunting thriller in which a serial killer evades capture as two broken men try for their own happy endings.

JOHN M. MURRAY (May / June 2022)

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