



## A Stalker's Journey

**John C. Lukegard**

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*This novella tells the tale of a mentally ill man's criminal escapades.*

In *A Stalker's Journey*, John C. Lukegard introduces Curtis Evan Ware, a force of evil to all he encounters. Lukegard attempts to share the depths of depravity this stalker will go to in order to satisfy his terrible desires.

Ware wanders from his home state of Iowa to the town of Riverside, Maine, after he is released on parole. Riverside is never the same. Ware begins his reign of terror by harassing citizens as a game operator at the annual Riverside carnival; he soon goes on to cause a great deal of trouble for a group of boys he feels have wronged him. In his wake, he leaves the residents with horrible memories of violent attacks and thefts.

The writing style is the greatest hindrance to this book's success as a horror story. Phrasing and word choice give the story a pedantic feeling, causing the writing to feel clunky and awkward. The pacing never varies, and this hampers the feeling of terror the author is attempting to create with Ware's hideous actions.

There is no development in either the good or the evil characters throughout the book. They are all drawn from stock stereotypes. Ware is evil from the beginning, and there is no change in his actions, including no escalation of his depravity. The neighborhood boys are there simply as Ware's foils, and their actions are predictable.

The dialogue is stilted, awkward, and unnatural: "Thank you, Karen. ... I just love the scenic view and the historical atmosphere of Riverside." Add to that the fact that much of the dialogue simply does not keep pace with the events, as when a character exclaims, "Someone is on the field with us! I'm being hit by small rocks."

The plot holds potential; Ware could be a truly stellar bad guy if he were more terrifying and less awkward. His obsession with the boys in Riverside and his untreated mental illnesses could be more completely developed to give his depravity depth. Also, additional knowledge about Ware's family and history would give a more complete picture of the villain.

Because of its short length and despite its issues with pacing, this book may appeal to those who are looking for a short story about a mentally ill man's criminal escapades.

LYNN EVARTS (August 11, 2015)

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