



The Haunted Trail

John C. Lukegord

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Mummies, ghosts, and clowns, oh my! Read this book by a campfire to get the most out of the danger and thrills.

The Haunted Trail, by John Lukegord, is an anfractuous tale of murder and insanity. Taking place in the backwoods of late-1800s Dublin, the curse of an ancient mummy wreaks havoc on the inhabitants of the forest, culminating in a very bloody Halloween night.

The book starts out with the gruesome murder of two young boys who unknowingly stumble into the woods and anger the men who live there. At the same time, three brothers are attacked while fishing on the southern end of the Dublin River just past a “no trespassing” sign. One of the brothers, Mick Patrican, manages to escape, and desperately attempts to make it out of the woods alive. The tale twists and turns through the backstories of the forest-dwellers’ insanity as the body count of the innocent piles up.

With an insane asylum, Halloween night, anniversaries of massacres, ghosts, and even an ancient mummy, every campfire cliché is thrown into this confusing and meandering narrative. The descriptions of the men are limited to their deeds, with very little in the way of mannerisms or looks. Each character has the same expressive dialogue punctuated with modern words, many exclamation points, and incongruous swearing. The staccato writing style is a distraction, and often repeats information previously stated.

It is difficult to follow the story from scene to scene since there is no cohesive context to explain why anything happens. There is mention of a cursed mummy that brings insanity to those who have stepped on its grave, but it is too easily explained away by the brief mention of a fictitious Irish-Egyptian war. When Mick accidentally steps on the grave, he does not suffer the same fate; then, “the mummy dropped dead after Patrican managed to fight it off.”

The story takes unexpected detours from the main plot, following a series of side stories that do not tie in to Mick’s plight. One of these takes place in the local insane asylum, where a man named Evil Chef Scumbag murders an innocent couple and chops their bodies into stew for the patients to eat. In another, Lukegord attempts to adapt a pendulum as a literary device, à la Poe.

The book is littered with inconsistencies, both within the framework of the story and within the setting of late nineteenth-century Dublin. At one point, the ghost of an evil clown decides to help Mick and is surprised that Mick is still alive, though they had never met before the clown’s murder. In addition, there are anachronistic mentions of genetic testing, an electric chair, a tranquilizer gun, and modern-day camouflage.

The Haunted Trail is a unique story with inventive characters. The tale is filled with thrills and danger, and would best appeal to those looking for something to read late at night on a camping trip, or perhaps on a dark Halloween.

SHANNAN SPITZ (May 6, 2015)

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