



The Haunted Trail: The war of the Dublin Woods

John C. Lukegard

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With nonstop action, this dark tale about an evil curse has the feel of a slasher film.

John C. Lukegard's *The Haunted Trail: The war of the Dublin Woods* is a dark, disjointed tale about an evil curse that irrupts in murder and mayhem on Halloween night in 1892. Each action-packed page is filled with disaster.

The Dublin Woods are filled with former residents of the local asylum, and they are all being influenced by an ancient curse. The police are overwhelmed by the evil racing around in the night, and they are trying to make sense of a string of murders while facing deadly peril themselves. Mick Patrican is a young man on the run from the crazed mob. He is saved by the ghost of one of his murdered brothers, who, along with the ghost of an ancestor who knows all about the curse in the woods, tells him that the fate of Dublin rests with him.

The book has the feel of a typical slasher movie. There is a great deal of seemingly random, often gory violence, all connected by a somewhat mysterious evil—a cursed mummy bent on destruction. Lukegard has crafted a complex premise to explain the curse that sets up the plot: “The mummy’s curse originated on Halloween night, two thousand years ago, when he was mummified in Egypt and possessed by an alien. The alien implanted a sacred clover in the mummy’s heart. The mummy and his followers invaded Ireland in search of our four-leaf clover.” Multiple supernatural elements, including a friendly leprechaun, are included in the story to offer assistance when it is needed.

Though creative, the plot lacks cohesion and is difficult to follow. There is nearly nonstop action, but nothing connects the events to create a sense of structure. Additionally, the characters remain undeveloped. Mick is the hero of the story, but he only appears in the beginning and end of the book. The middle of the tale is filled with a large cast of characters, mostly victims and murderers, who are generally indistinguishable from one another. When readers can’t connect with or relate to the characters, it is difficult to fear for their safety; thus, the narrative does not achieve the sense of terror the author wants to create.

The Haunted Trail is an ambitious, though brief tale of horror. Though the book fails to tell a cohesive story, the bones of an unusual and potentially scary plot can be found in its pages.

CATHERINE THURESON (November 3, 2014)

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