

Necroscope (Necroscope, 1)

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Twenty years ago, the horror world was forever altered by the publication of *Necroscope*. An instant classic, Brian Lumley's astonishing feat of imagination spawned a universe which Lumley has explored and expanded through more than a baker's dozen of novels and novellas. Millions of copies of *Necroscope* and its successors are in print in a dozen languages throughout the world. Nominated for the British Fantasy Award, *Necroscope* has inspired everything from comic books and graphic novels to sculptures and soundtracks.

This new edition of *Necroscope* uses the author's preferred text and includes a special introduction by Brian Lumley, telling how the *Necroscope* saga came to be. It also includes chapter ornaments by Hugo-Award-Winning artist Bob Eggleton, long identified with Lumley's blood-sucking monsters.

As a classic, *Necroscope* rightfully claims a place in the Orb trade paperback list, for scholars of the field and the dedicated Lumley collector. And also for all the people who have read more than one mass market copy of the book to tatters.

Harry Keogh is the man who can talk to the dead, the man for whom every grave willingly gives up its secrets, the one man who knows how to travel effortlessly through time and space to destroy the vampires that threaten all humanity.

In *Necroscope*, Harry is startled to discover that he is not the only person with unusual mental powers--Britain and the Soviet Union both maintain super-secret, psychically-powered espionage organizations. But Harry is the only person who knows about Thibor Ferenczy, a vampire long buried in the mountains of Romania--still horribly alive, in undeath--and Thibor's insane "offspring," Boris Dragosani, who rips information from the souls of the dead in a terrible, ever-lasting form of torture.

Somehow, Harry must convince Britain's E-Branch that only by working together can they locate and destroy Dragosani and his army of demonic warriors--before the half-vampire succeeds in taking over the world!

Necroscope Series

Necroscope

Necroscope II: Vamphyri!

Necroscope III: The Source

Necroscope IV: Deadspeak

Necroscope V: Deadspawn

Brian Lumley is the internationally-known creator of *Necroscope* and the *Necroscope* series, including *Necroscope: The Touch*. He has been nominated for the World Fantasy Award and has won the British Fantasy Award. His other works include the Titus Crow and Primal Lands series and the novel *Khari of Khem*. He lives in England.
NECROSCOPE
CHAPTER ONE
Moscow, May 1971

Central in a densely wooded tract of land not far out of the city--where the Serpukhov

road passed through a saddle between low hills and gazed for a moment across the tops of close-grown pines towards Podolsk, which showed as a hazy smudge on the southern horizon, brightly pricked here and there with the first lights of evening--stood a house or mansion of debased heritage and mixed architectural antecedents. Several of its wings were of modern brick upon old stone foundations, while others were of cheap breeze blocks roughly painted over in green and grey, almost as if to camouflage their ill-matching construction. Bedded at their bases in steeply gabled end walls, twin towers or minarets decayed as rotten fangs and gaunt as watchtowers--whose sagging buttresses and parapets and flaking spiral decorations detracted nothing from a sense of dereliction--raised broken bulbous domes high over the tallest trees, their boarded windows glooming like hooded eyes. The layout of the outbuildings, many of which had been recently re-roofed with modern red brick tiles, might well suggest a farm or farming community, though no crops, farm animals or machines were anywhere in evidence. The high all-encompassing perimeter wall--which from its massy structure, reinforced abutments and broad breast walls might likewise be a relic of feudal times--showed similar signs of recent repair work, where heavy grey concrete blocks had replaced crumbling stone and ancient brick. To east and west where streams ran deep and gurgling over black, rounded rocks, flowing between steep banks which formed them into natural moats, old stone bridges supporting lead roofs green with moss and age tunnelled into and through the walls, their dark mouths muzzled with steel-latticed gates. All in all grim and foreboding. As if the merest glimpse of the place from the highway would not be sufficient warning in itself, a sign at the T-junction where a cobbled track wound away from the road and into the woods declared that this entire area was "Property of the State," patrolled and protected, and that all trespassers would be prosecuted. Motorists were not permitted to stop under any circumstances; walking in the woods was strictly forbidden; hunting and fishing likewise. Penalties would be, without exception, severe. But for all that the place seemed deserted and lost in its own miasma of desolation, as evening grew into night and a mist came up from the streams to turn the ground to milk, so lights flickered into life behind the curtained ground-floor windows, telling a different story. In the woods, on the approach roads to the covered bridges, large black saloon cars might also appear abandoned where they blocked the way--except for the dull orange glowing of hot cigarette tips within, and the smoke curling from partly wound-down windows. It was the same inside the grounds: squat, silent shapes which might just represent men, standing in the shadowed places, their dark grey overcoats as like as uniforms, faces hidden under the brims of felt hats, shoulders robotically square ... In an inner courtyard of the main building, an ambulance--our maybe a hearse--stood with its back doors open, white-overalled attendants waiting and the driver seated uncomfortably at the high steering-wheel. One of the attendants played with a steel loading roller, spinning it on well-lubricated bearings at the rear end of the long, somehow sinister vehicle. Nearby, in an open-ended barnlike structure with a sagging canvas roof, a helicopter's dull paintwork and square glass windows gleamed darkly in shadow, its fuselage bearing the insignia of the Supreme Soviet. In one of the towers, leaning carefully on a low parapet wall, a figure with Army night-sight binoculars scanned the land about, particularly the open area between the perimeter wall and the central cluster. Projecting above his shoulder, the ugly blue metal snout of a high-calibre machine gun was limned faintly against a horizon growing steadily darker. Inside the main building, modern soundproof partition walls now divided what had once been a vast hall

into fairly large rooms, serviced by a central corridor lit with a row of fluorescent tubes strung along a high ceiling. Each room had a padlocked door and all the doors were fitted with tiny grille windows with sliding covers on the inside, and with small red lights which, when blinking, signified "No Entry--Not to be Disturbed." One of these lights, halfway down the corridor on the left, was blinking even now. Leaning against the wall to one side of the door with the blinking light, a tall, hard-faced KGB operative cradled a submachine-gun in his arms. For the moment relaxed, he was ready to spring to attention--or into action--at a moment's notice. The merest hint of the door opening, the sudden cessation of the red light's blinking, and he would snap up straighter than a lamppost. For while none of the men in that room was his real master, nevertheless one of them was as powerful as anyone in the highest ranks of the KGB, perhaps one of the ten most powerful men in Russia. There were other men in the room beyond the door, which in fact was not one room but two, with an interconnecting door of their own. In the smaller room, three men sat in armchairs, smoking, their hooded eyes fixed on the partition wall, of which a large central section, floor to ceiling, was a one-way viewscreen. The floor was carpeted; a small wheeled table within easy reach supported an ashtray, glasses, and a bottle of sirovitz; all was silent except for the breathing of the three and the faint electric whirr of the air-conditioning. Subdued lighting in a false ceiling was soothing to their eyes. The man in the middle was in his mid-sixties, those to right and left perhaps fifteen years younger. His proteges, each of them knew the other for a rival. The man in the middle knew it, too. He had planned it that way. It was called survival of the fittest; only one of them would survive to take his place, when eventually that day came. By then the other would have been removed--perhaps politically, but more likely in some other, still more devious fashion. The years between would be their proving ground. Yes, survival of the fittest. Completely grey at the temples, but with a broad contrasting central stripe of jet-black hair swept back from his high, much-wrinkled brow, the senior man sipped his brandy, motioned with his cigarette. The man on his left passed the ashtray; half of the hot ash found its target, the rest fell to the floor. In a moment or two the carpet began to smoulder and a curl of acrid smoke rose up. The flanking men sat still, deliberately ignoring the burning. They knew how the older man hated fussers and fidgets. But at last their boss sniffed, glanced down at the floor from beneath bushy black eyebrows, ground his shoe into the carpet, to and fro, until the smouldering patch was extinguished. Beyond the screen, preparations of a sort had been in progress. In the Western World it might be said that a man had been "psyching himself up." His method had been simple ...startlingly simple in the light of what was about to occur; he had cleansed himself. He had stripped naked and bathed, minutely and laboriously soaping and scrubbing every square inch of his body. He had shaved himself, removing all surface hair from his person with the exception of the close-cropped hair of his head. He had defecated before and after his bath, on the second occasion doubly ensuring his cleanliness by washing his parts again in hot water and towelling himself dry. And then, still completely naked, he had rested. His method of resting would have seemed macabre in the extreme to anyone not in the know, but it was all part of the preparations. He had gone to sit beside the second occupant of the room where he lay upon a not quite horizontal table or trolley with a fluted aluminium surface, and had lain his head on his folded arms where he rested them upon the other's abdomen. Then he had closed his eyes and, apparently, had slept for some fifteen minutes. There was nothing erotic in it, nothing remotely homosexual. The man on the trolley was also naked, much older than the first, flabby,

wrinkled, and bald but for a fringe of grey hair at his temples. He was also very dead; but even in death his pallid, puffy face, thin mouth and dense grey inward-slanting eyebrows were cruel. All of this the three on the other side of the screen had watched, and all had been accomplished with a sort of clinical detachment and no outward indication of awareness from the--performer?--that they were there at all. He had simply "forgotten" their presence; his work was all-engrossing, too important to admit of outside agencies or interferences. But now he stirred, lifted his head, blinked his eyes twice and slowly stood up. All was now in order; the inquiry could commence. The three watchers leaned forward a little in their armchairs, automatically controlled their breathing, centred all their attention on the naked man. It was as if they feared to disturb something, and this despite the fact that their observation cell was completely insulated, soundproof as a vacuum. Now the naked man turned the trolley carrying the corpse until its lower end, where the clay-cold feet projected a little way and made a "V," overhung the lip of the bath. He drew forward a second, more conventional trolley-table and opened the leather case which lay upon it, displaying scalpels, scissors, saws--a whole range of razor-sharp surgical instruments. In the observation cell, the man in the centre allowed himself a grim smile which his subordinates missed as they eased back fractionally in their chairs, satisfied now that they were about to see nothing more spectacular than a rather bizarre autopsy. Their boss could barely contain the chuckle rising from his chest, the tremor of ghoulish amusement welling in his stocky body, as he anticipated the shock they had coming to them. He had seen all of this before, but they had not. And this, too, would serve as a test of sorts. Now the naked man took up a long chromium-plated rod, needle sharp at one end and bedded in a wooden handle at the other, and without pause leaned over the corpse, placed the point of the needle in the crater of the swollen belly's navel and applied his weight to the handle. The rod slid home in dead flesh and the distended gut vented gasses accumulated in the four days since death had occurred, hissing up into the naked man's face. "Audio!" snapped the observer in the middle, causing the men flanking him to start in their chairs. His gruff voice was so deep in its range as to be little more than a series of glottal gurgles as he continued: "Quickly, I want to listen!" And he wagged a stubby finger at a speaker on the wall. Gulping audibly, the man on his right stood up, stepped to the speaker, pressed a button marked "Receive." There was momentary static, then a clear hiss fading away as the belly of the corpse in the other room slowly settled down in folds of fat. But while yet the gas escaped, instead of drawing back, the naked man lowered his face, closed his eyes and inhaled deeply, filling his lungs! With his eyes glued to the one-way screen, fumbling and clumsy, the official found his chair again and seated himself heavily. His mouth, like that of his opposite number, had fallen open; both men now perched themselves on the front edges of their chairs, their backs ramrod straight, hands gripping the wooden arm rests. A cigarette, forgotten, toppled into the ashtray on the table to send up fresh streamers of perfumed smoke. Only the watcher in the middle seemed unmoved, and he was as much interested in the expressions on the faces of his subordinates as he was in the weird ritual taking place beyond the screen. The naked man had straightened up, stood erect again over the deflated corpse. He had one hand on the dead man's thigh, the other on his chest, palms flat down. His eyes were open again, round as saucers, but his colour had visibly changed. The normal, healthy pink of a young, recently scrubbed body had entirely disappeared; his grey was uniform with that of the dead flesh he touched. He was literally grey as death. He held his breath, seeming to savour the very taste of death, and his

cheeks appeared to be slowly caving in. Then--He snatched back his hands from the corpse, expelled foul gas in a whoosh, rocked back on his heels. For a moment it seemed he must crash over backwards, but then he rocked forward again. And again, with great care, he lowered his hands to the body. Gaunt and grey as stone, he stroked the flesh, his fingers trembling as they moved with butterfly lightness from head to toe and back again. Still there was nothing erotic in it, but the left-hand man of the trio of watchers was moved to whisper: "Is he a necrophile? What is this, Comrade General?" "Be quiet and learn something," the man in the middle growled. "You know where you are, don't you? Nothing should surprise you here. As for what this is--what he is--you will see soon enough. This I will tell you: to my knowledge there are only three men like him in all the USSR. One is a Mongol from the Altai region, a tribal witch-doctor, almost dead of syphilis and useless to us. Another is hopelessly mad and scheduled for corrective lobotomy, following which he too will be ... beyond our reach. That leaves only this one and his is an instinctive art, hard to teach. Which makes him sui generis. That's Latin, a dead language. Most appropriate. So now shut up! You are watching a unique talent." Now, beyond the one-way window, the "unique talent" of the naked man became galvanic. As if jerked on the strings of some mad, unseen puppet-master, his burst of sudden, unexpected motion was so erratic as to be almost spastic. His right arm and hand flailed towards his case of instruments, almost tumbling it from its table. His hand, shaped by his spasm into a grey claw, swept aloft as if conducting some esoteric concerto--but instead of a baton it held a glittering, crescent-shaped scalpel. All three observers were now craning forward, eyes huge and mouths agape; but while the faces of the two on the outside were fixed in a sort of involuntary rictus of denial--prepared to wince or even exclaim at what they now suspected was to come--that of their superior was shaped only of knowledge and morbid expectancy. With a precision denying the seemingly eccentric or at best random movements of the rest of his limbs--which now fluttered and twitched like those of a dead frog, electrically coerced into a pseudo-life of their own--the arm and hand of the naked man swept down and sliced open the corpse from just below the ribcage, through the navel and down to the mass of wiry grey pubic hair. Two more apparently random but absolutely exact slashes, following so rapidly as almost to be a part of the first movement, and the cadaver's belly was marked with a great "I" with extended top and bottom bars. Without pause, the hideously automatic author of this awful surgery now blindly tossed away his blade across the room, dug his hands into the central incision up to his wrists and laid back the flaps of the dead man's abdomen like a pair of cupboard doors. Cold, the exposed guts did not smoke; no blood flowed as such; but when the naked man took away his hands they glistened a dull red, as if fresh painted. To perform this opening of the body had required an effort of almost ...

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