



Necroscope III: The Source

By Brian Lumley

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When Jazz Simmons, a British agent sent to infiltrate the base, is captured by the KGB espionage squad and forced through the portal, his last message tells Harry Keogh, the Necroscope, that the vampires are preparing for a mass invasion.

Harry has only one option--to strike first. He must carry the human-vampire war to the vampire's own lands. But his strongest psychic power will be useless there. What good is the power to summon the dead in a country where nothing ever dies, where every man, woman, and child become half-dead servants of the Vamphyri?

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Necroscope III: The Source By Brian Lumley Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #262656 in eBooks
- Published on: 1989-09-15
- Released on: 1989-09-15
- Format: Kindle eBook

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Editorial Review

Review

“One of the best writers in the field.” ?*John Farris*

“Lumley's strength is in his jovial voice, a diction that dominates the narrative. Lumley's love of his pulp-horror subjects is gleefully apparent. He revels in every telling detail, in stories-within-stories....” ?*San Francisco Chronicle*

“Lumley never oversteps the delicate line between blood-chilling horror and cold gruel. An accomplished wordsmith, Lumley wields a pen with the deft skill of a surgeon, drawing just enough blood to titillate without offending his readers.” ?*The Phoenix Gazette*

About the Author

Brian Lumley is the author of the bestselling Necroscope series of vampire novels. The first *Necroscope*, Harry Keogh, also appears in a collection of Lumley's short fiction, *Harry Keogh and Other Weird Heroes*, along Titus Crow and Henri Laurent de Marigny, from *Titus Crow, Volumes One, Two, and Three*, and *David Hero and Eldin the Wanderer*, from the *Dreamlands* series.

An acknowledged master of Lovecraft-style horror, Brian Lumley has won the British Fantasy Award and been named a Grand Master of Horror. His works have been published in more than a dozen countries and have inspired comic books, role-playing games, and sculpture, and been adapted for television.

When not writing, Lumley can often be found spear-fishing in the Greek islands, gambling in Las Vegas, or attending a convention somewhere in the US. Lumley and his wife live in England.

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NECROSCOPE III: THE SOURCE

Chapter One

Simonov

THE AGENT LAY ON A PATCH OF SNOW IN A JUMBLE OF white boulders on the eastern crest of what had once been the Perchorsk Pass in the mid-Ural'skiy Khrebet. He gazed down through nite-lite binoculars on almost two acres of curved, silvery-grey surface covering the floor of the ravine. By the light of the moon that surface might easily be mistaken for ice, but Mikhail Simonov knew that it was no glacier or frozen river; it was a mass of metal some four hundred feet long by something less than two hundred wide. Along the irregular edges of its length, where its gently curving dome met the rocky walls of the gorge, and at both ends, where the arcing metal came up flush against massive concrete barriers or dams, the stuff was "only" six inches thick, but at its centre the moulded mass was all of twenty-four inches through. That was what had registered on the instruments of the American spy-satellites, anyway, and also the fact that this was the biggest man-made accumulation of lead anywhere in the world.

It was like looking down on the three-quarters buried, lead-wrapped neck of some giant bottle, thought Mikhail Simonov. A magic bottle--except that in this case the cork had already been pulled and the genie flown, and Simonov was here to discover the nature of that very dubious fugitive. He gave a quiet snort,

pushed his flight of fancy to the back of his mind, focused his eyes and concentrated his attention on the scene below.

The bottom of the ravine had been a watercourse subject to severe seasonal flooding. Up-river, above the "wet" dam wall, an artificial lake was now full, its surface flat and likewise leaden--but only its surface. Channelled under the great roof of lead through unseen sluices, the water reappeared in four great shining spouts issuing from conduits in the lower wall. Spray rose up from that deluge, froze, fell or drifted back to coat the lower ravine in snow and ice, where for all the apparent volume of water only a stream now followed the ancient course. Under the shield of lead, four great turbines lay idle, bypassed by the hurtling waters bled off from the lake. They'd been at rest like that for two years now, since the day the Russians had tested their weapon for the first--and the last--time.

Despite all the USSR's technological camouflaging countermeasures, that test, too, had been "seen" by the American spy-satellites. What *exactly* they saw had never been made public or even hinted at outside of higher-echelon and correspondingly low-profile government departments, but it had been sufficient to jolt America's SDI or "Star Wars" concept into real being. In very small, very powerful and highly secretive defence circles throughout the Western World there had been worried discussions about APB (Accelerated Particle Beam) "shields," about nuclear- or plasma-powered lasers, even about something called a "Magma Motor" which might theoretically tap the energy of the small black hole believed by some scientists to lie at Earth's core, simultaneously feeding upon and fuelling the planet; but all such discussions had been purely conjectural. Certainly nothing substantial--other than the evidence provided by the satellites--had leaked out of Russia herself; nothing, that is, in the way of normal intelligence reporting. No, for the Ural Mountains in the region of Perchorsk had been for some time far more security-sensitive than even the Baikonur Space Centre in the days of the Sputniks. And it was a sensitivity which, in the aftermath of that single, frightful test, had suddenly increased fourfold.

Simonov shivered in his white, fur-lined anorak, carefully demisted his binoculars, flattened himself more rigidly to the frozen ground between the boulders as scudding clouds parted and a nearly full moon blazed treacherously down on him. It was cold in the so-called "summer" up here, but in the late autumn it was a kind of frozen hell. It was autumn now; with a bit of luck Simonov would escape suffering through another winter. No, he mentally corrected himself, that would take a *lot* of luck. A hell of a lot!

The scene below turned silver in the flooding moonlight, but the special lenses of Simonov's binoculars made automatic adjustment. Now he turned those lenses on the pass proper, or what had been the pass until the Perchorsk Projekt had got underway some five years ago.

Here on the eastern side of the ravine, the pass had been eroded through the mountain's flank by one of the sources of the Sosva River on its way down to Berezov; on the western side, it had been dynamited through a deep saddle. Falling steeply from the mountains, its road roughly paralleled the course of the Kama River for two hundred and fifty miles to Berezniki and Perm on the Kirov-Sverdlovsk rail link.

In the forty years prior to the Projekt, the pass had been used chiefly by loggers, trappers and prospectors, and for the transportation of agricultural implements and produce both ways across the range. In those days its narrow road had been literally carved and blasted from the solid rock, and so it had remained until recently: a rough and ready route through the mountains. But the Perchorsk Projekt had brought about drastic changes.

With the construction of the Zapadno rail link to Serinskaja in the east, and the extension of the railway from Ukhta to Vorkuta in the north, the high pass had long since fallen out of favour as a route through the mountains; it had only remained important to a handful of local farmers and the like, whose livelihoods hardly mattered in the greater scheme of things. They had simply been "relocated." That had taken place four and a half years ago; then, with all the speed, ingenuity and muscle that a superpower can muster, the pass had been re-opened, widened, improved and given a two-lane system of good metalled roads. But not as a public highway, and certainly not for the use of the far-scattered "local" communities. Indeed, their use of the pass had been strictly forbidden.

In all the project had taken almost three years to complete, during which time the Soviet intelligence services

had leaked innocuous details of "a pass in the Urals which is undergoing repair and improvement." That had been the official line, to forestall or confuse the piecing together of the true picture as seen by the USA from space. And if additional proofs of the innocence of the Perchorsk Projekt were required, it could also be seen that gas and oil pipelines had been laid in the pass between Ukhta and the Ob gasfields. What the Russians couldn't conceal or misrepresent was the construction of dams and the movement of heavy machinery, the incredibly massive lead shield built up in layers over the erstwhile bed of a powerful ravine torrent, and perhaps most important, the gradual build-up of troop movement into the area to a permanent military presence. There had been a deal of blasting, excavation and/or tunnelling, too, with many thousands of tons of rock moved out by truck or simply dumped into local ravines, plus the installation of large quantities of sophisticated electrical equipment and other apparatus. Most of which had been seen from space, and all of which had intrigued and irritated the West's intelligence and security services almost unendurably. As usual, the Soviets were making life very difficult. Whatever they were up to, they were doing it in an almost inaccessible, steep-sided ravine nine hundred feet deep, which meant that a satellite had to be almost directly overhead to get anything at all.

Conjecture in the West had gone on unabated. The alternatives were many. Perhaps the Russians were attempting to carry out a covert mining operation? It could be that they'd discovered large deposits of high-grade uranium ore in the Urals. On the other hand, maybe they were concerned with the construction of experimental nuclear installations under the very mountains themselves. Or could it be that they were building and making ready to test something quite new and radically different? As it happened--*when* it happened, at that time just two years ago--advocates of the third alternative were seen to have guessed correctly.

Once again Mikhail Simonov was drawn back to the present, this time by the low rumble of diesel-engined transports that echoed up hollowly from the gorge to drown out the wind's thin keening. Just as the moon slipped back behind the clouds, so the headlight beams of a convoy of lumbering trucks cut a swath of white light in the darkness where they stabbed out from the gash of the pass in the deep V of the western saddle. The huge, square-looking trucks were just under a mile away across the ravine and some five hundred feet below the level of Simonov's vantage point, but still he flattened himself more yet and squirmed back a little into his nest of gaunt boulders. It was a controlled, automatic, almost instinctive reaction to possible danger, in no way a panicked retreat. Simonov had been very well trained, with no expense spared.

As the convoy came through the pass and turned its nose down the steeply descending ramp of a road cut from the face of the ravine, so a battery of spotlights burst into brilliant life, shining down from the sheerwall and lending the well-gritted road excellent illumination. Fascinated, Simonov listened to the great diesels snarling into low gear, watched the routine of a well organized reception.

Without taking the nite-lite from his eyes, he reached into a pocket and drew out a tiny camera, snapping it into position in the lower casing of the binoculars. Then he pressed a button on the camera and continued watching. Whatever he saw would now be recorded automatically, one frame every six seconds for a total of four and a half minutes, forty-five tiny stills of near-crystal clarity. Not that he expected to see anything of any real importance: he already knew what the trucks contained and the camera shots were simply to certify that this was indeed their destination--for the satisfaction of others back in the West.

Four trucks: one of them containing all the makings of a ten-foot electrified fence, two more carrying the component parts and ammo for three twin-mounted, armour-piercing, 13mm. Katushev cannons, and the fourth and last loaded with a battery of diesel-powered generators. No, what was being hauled wasn't the question. The question was this: if the Russians were going to defend the Perchorsk Projekt, who were they defending it against?

Who ... or what?

Simonov's camera clicked almost inaudibly away; his eyes took in all that was happening below; he was aware that he mustn't stay here more than another ten or fifteen minutes at the most, because of the high radiation count, but part of his mind was already somewhere else. It was back in London just two months short of two years ago. Shooting the arrival of the trucks had done it, set Simonov's mind working on that

other film he'd been shown by MI6 and the Americans in London. A real film, however short, and not just stills. He relaxed just a fraction. He was doing all that was expected of him, could afford a little mental meandering. And actually, once you'd seen that film, it was difficult not to keep going back to it. The film was of something that had happened just seven weeks after the Perchorsk Incident (called "pi") and had earned itself the acronym "pi II" or "Pill." But it had been one hell of a pill to swallow. It had come about like this.

... Early morning of a bright mid-October day along the eastern seaboard of the USA; but along the "obsolete" Canadian DEW-line things have been stirring for some three hours, since a pair of spysats with overlapping windows on the Barents and Kara seas, and from Arkhangel'sk across the Urals to Igarka, flashed intruder reports down across the Pole to listeners in Canada and the USAF bases in Maine and New Hampshire. Washington has been informed, and low-key alert status has already been notified to the missile bases in Greenland and the Foxe Peninsula base on Baffin Island. Other DEW-line subscribers have been notified; Great Britain has shown mild interest and asked for updates, Denmark is typically nervous (because of Greenland), Iceland has shrugged and France has failed to acknowledge.

But now things begin to speed up a little. The original spies-in-the-sky have lost the intruder (an "intruder" being any aerial object passing east to west across the Arctic Ocean) out of their windows, but at the same time it's been picked up by DEW-line proper crossing the Arctic Circle on a somewhat irregular course but generally in the direction of Queen Elizabeth Island. What's more, the Russians have scrambled a pair of Mig interceptors from their military airfield in Kirovsk, south of Murmansk. Norway and Sweden join Denmark in an attack of the jitters. The USA is hugely curious but not yet narrow-eyed (the object is too slow to be a serious threat) but nevertheless an AWACS reconnaissance aircraft has been diverted from routine duties to a line of interception and two fighters are scrambled up from a strip near Fort Fairfield, Maine.

It is now four hours since the--UFO?--was first sighted over Novaya Zemlya, and so far it has covered a little more than nine hundred miles, having passed west of Franz Josef Land on what now seems a beeline for Ellesmere Island. Which is where the Migs draw level with it, except that doesn't quite show the whole picture. Geographically they've caught up with it, but they're at max. headroom and the UFO is two miles higher! Then ... apparently they see it--and at the same time it sees them.

What happens then isn't known for a certainty, for the Kirovsk base has ordered radio silence, but on the basis of what will be seen to happen later we can take a broad stab at it. The object descends, puts on speed, attacks! The Migs probably open fire on it in the seconds before they are reduced to so much confetti. Their debris is lost in snow and ice some six hundred miles from the Pole and a like distance short of Ellesmere ... And now the intruder really is intruding! Its speed has accelerated to around three hundred and fifty miles per hour and its course is straight as an arrow. The AWACS has reported the Migs lost from its screens, presumed down, but a hotline call from Washington to Moscow fails to produce anything but the usual ambiguities: "What Migs? What intruder?"

The USA is a little peeved: "This aircraft came out of your airspace into ours. It has no right being there. If it sticks to its present course it will be intercepted, forced to land. If it fails to comply or acts in any way hostile, there's a chance it will be shot down, destroyed ..."

And unexpectedly: "Good!" from the Russians. "Whatever it is you have on your screens, it is nothing of ours. We renounce it utterly. Do with it as you see fit!"

Far more detailed Norwegian reports are now in from the Hammerfest listening station: the object is believed to originate from a region in the Urals near Labytnangi right on the Arctic Circle, give or take a hundred miles or so. If they had given or taken three hundred miles south, then the reports would have been more nearly correct; for the Perchorsk Pass was just that far away from the source they'd quoted. Alas, in the other direction, north of Labytnangi, lay Vorkuta, the USSR's most northerly missile site, supplied by rail from Ukhta. And now the Americans go from mildly irritated to extremely narrow-eyed. Just what in hell are the Reds up to? Have they loosed some sort of experimental missile from Vorkuta and lost it? If so, does it have a warhead?

How many warheads?

Alert classifications go up two notches and Moscow comes under fire in some very heated hotline exchanges. Still the Soviets deny all knowledge, however nervously.

Better, clearer reports are coming in. We now have the thing on satellite, on ground radar, on AWACS. No physical, human sightings as yet but everything else. The spysats say it could be a dense flock of birds--but what sort of birds fly in excess of three hundred mph five miles high across the Arctic Circle? Collision with birds *could* have taken out the Migs, of course, but ... The top-secret high-tech radar sites along the older DEW-line say it's either a large airplane or ... a space-platform fallen out of orbit? Also that it's impossibly low on metal content--namely, it doesn't have any! But intelligence won't admit of any aircraft (not to mention space-stations) two hundred and some feet long and constructed of canvas. AWACS says that the thing is flying in a series of spurts or jets, like some vast aerial octopus. And AWACS is more or less right. It is now one hour since the American interceptors scrambled. Flying at close to Mach II, they have crossed the Hudson Bay from the Belcher Islands to a point about two hundred miles north of Churchill. In so doing they've just overtaken the AWACS and left it a few minutes behind. The AWACS has told them that their target is dead ahead, and that he's come down to 10,000 feet. And now, finally, just like the Migs before them, they spot the intruder.

That had been the narrative, the scenario that the CIA and MI6 had set for Simonov before showing him the AWACS film; and as the Briefing Officer had spoken those last three words, "spot the intruder," so the film had started to roll. All very dramatic, and deservedly so ...

"Spot the intruder," thought Simonov now, the words bitter on his tongue so that he almost spat them out loud. By God, yes! For that was the name of the game, wasn't it? In security, intelligence, spying: *Spot the Intruder*. And all sides playing it expertly, some a little better than others. Right here and now he was the intruder: Michael J. Simmons, alias Mikhail Simonov. Except he hadn't been spotted yet.

Then, as he re-directed all of his concentration back down onto the scene in the ravine, he sensed or heard something that didn't belong. From somewhere behind and below him had come the *chink* of a dislodged pebble, then lesser clatterings as the tumbling stone picked up smaller cousins on its way down the side of the mountain. The last leg of the climb had been along a steep, terraced ridge of rock, more a scramble than a real climb, and there had been plenty of loose scree and stony debris littered about. It could be that in his passing he'd left a pebble precariously balanced on some ledge, and that a strong gust had dislodged it. Simonov fancied that was all there was to it, but--

What if it was something else? He'd had this feeling recently--a sort of uneasy, half-formed suspicion--that someone, somehow, was aware of him. Someone he'd rather was not aware of him. He supposed this was a feeling spies learned to live with. Maybe it was just that everything had seemed to be going so smoothly, so that now he'd started to invent difficulties. He hoped that was all it was. But just to be sure ...

Without looking back or changing his position, he unzipped his anorak, reached inside and came out with a blocky, wicked-looking short-barrelled automatic, its stubby silencer already attached. He checked the magazine, and silently eased it up again into the grip. And all of this done one-handed, with practiced ease, without pausing in the filming of the trucks in the ravine. Maybe the last couple of frames would be a bit off-centre. No big deal. Simonov was satisfied with what he'd got.

The tiny camera attached to Simonov's nite-lite clicked one last time and gave a warning *whir*, signalling that the sequence was complete. He unclipped the camera and put it away. Then he wedged his binoculars securely in the base of a boulder, carefully cocked his pistol, squirmed about face and got to his knees. Still concealed, he peered cautiously through the V formed where the tops of two rounded boulders leaned together. Nothing back there. Nothing he could see, anyway. Steep cliffs falling away for a thousand feet, with spurs extending here and there, and thinly drifted snow lying white and gleaming on all flat surfaces. And way down there, obscured by the night, the tree-line and gentling lower slopes. Everything motionless and monochrome in dim starshine and occasional moonlight, where only the thin wind scattered little flurries of snow from the spurs and high ledges. There were plenty of places where men could hide themselves, of

course--no one knew that better than Simonov, himself an expert in concealment--but on the other hand, *if* he'd been followed, why would they want to come up here? Easier to wait for him below, surely? Yet still the feeling persisted that he was not alone, that feeling which had grown in him increasingly over his last two or three visits to this place.

This place, this spawning ground for utterly alien monsters ...

He got back down into his original position, recovered the nite-lites and brought them to his eyes. In the ravine, where the steep road hugged the face of the defile down to the towering twin walls of the dam and the curved lead surface between them, a cavernous opening in the cliff blazed with light. The last truck turned left off the road onto a level staging area, then passed in through huge, wheeled, steel-framed lead doors. A gang of yellow-clad traffic controllers flagged the truck rumbling inside and out of sight, then followed it into the blaze of illumination under the cliff. Other men came hurrying down the road, gathering up flashing beacons. The great doors had clanged shut by the time they reached them, but a wicket-gate thick as the door of a vault had been left open, issuing a square beam of yellow light. It swallowed up the men with the traffic beacons, then was closed. The floodlights over the pass snapped out and left stark blackness in their wake. Only the dammed watercourse and the great lead shield were left to reflect the starshine.

But all of that lead down there. And these poisoned heights, a little more than mildly radioactive. And that *Thing* filmed by the AWACS as it did battle with the USAF jet fighters. Simonov couldn't suppress a small shudder, which this time wasn't due to the intense cold. He folded his nite-lites into a flat, leather-cased shape which he slipped inside his anorak with the strap still round his neck. Then for a moment longer he just lay there, his eyes staring into the enigmatic gulf below, his mind superimposing on the darkness the sequence of events he'd witnessed in London, recorded on that flickering AWACS film ...

But even remembering it, he cringed away from it. Bad enough that he still occasionally saw it in his dreams! But could that ... that ... whatever it had been, could it really have come from here? A monstrous mutation? A gigantic, hideous warrior clone conjured in some crazed geneticist's incredible experiment? A "biological" weapon outside all of man's previous experience and understanding? That was what he was here to find out. Or rather, it was what he was here to prove conclusively: that indeed this was where that *Thing* had been born--or made. That seething, pulsing, writhing--

Snow crunched softly, compacted by a stealthy footfall!

Simonov thrust himself to his feet, turning as he rose, and saw a head and staring eyes outlined briefly above the low jumble of rocks. His automatic was in his hand as he launched himself into a dive to the left of the boulders, his right arm outstretched, ready to target his weapon. A man in a pure white parka was crouched behind the boulders, with a gun in his hand which he even now lifted to point at Simonov. In the instant before Simonov came down on his side in the snow he snapped off two shots; the first one struck the man in the shoulder, snatching him upright, and the second slammed into his chest, flinging him backwards and down onto the patchy snow.

The dull *phut, phut*, of Simonov's silenced weapon had caused no echoes, but he'd scarcely caught his breath when there came a hoarse, gasping grunt from close at hand and silver glinted in a sudden flood of moonlight. The snow on Simonov's left-hand side, not eighteen inches away, erupted in a spray of frantic activity. "Bastard!" a voice snarled in Russian as a massive hand reached out to grasp Simonov's hair and an ice-axe came arcing down, its spike impaling his gun-hand through the wrist and almost nailing it to the stony ground.

The Russian had been lying in a snow-filled depression, waiting. Now he sprawled forward, trying to hurl his bulk on top of Simonov. The agent saw a dark face, a white bar of snarling teeth framed in a beard and a ruff of white fur, and drove his left elbow into it with as much force as he could muster. Teeth and bone crunched and the Russian gave a gurgling shriek, but he didn't release his grip on Simonov's hair. Then, cursing through blood and snot, the massive Soviet drew back his ice-axe for a second swipe.

Simonov tried to bring his gun to bear. Useless--there was no feeling in his hand, which flopped like a speared fish. The Russian hunched over him, dripped blood on him, changed his grip to Simonov's throat and drew back his axe menacingly.

"Karl!" came a voice from the shadows of other boulders. "We want him alive!"

"How *much* alive?" Karl choked the words out, spitting blood. But in the next moment he dropped the axe and instead drove a fist hard as iron to Simonov's forehead. The spy went out like a light, almost gladly. A third Russian figure came out of the night, went to his knees beside Simonov's prone form. He felt the unconscious man's pulse, said: "Are you all right, Karl? If so, please see to Boris. I think this one put a couple of bullets into him!"

"Think? Well, I was closer than you, and I can assure you he did!" Karl growled. gingerly touching his broken face with trembling fingertips, he went to where Boris lay spreadeagled.

"Dead?" the man on his knees beside Simonov inquired, his voice low.

"As a side of beef," Karl grunted. "Dead as that one should be," he pointed an accusing finger at Simonov.

"He's killed Boris, messed up my face--you should let me twist his fucking head off!"

"Hardly original, Karl," the other tut-tutted. He stood up.

He was tall, this leader, but slender as a rod even in his bulky parka. His face was pale and thin-lipped, sardonic in the moonlight, but his sunken eyes were bright as dark jewels. His name was Chingiz Khuv and he was a Major--but in his specialized branch of the KGB the wearing of uniforms and the use of titles and rank were to be avoided. Anonymity increased productivity, ensured longevity. Khuv forgot who'd said that, but he agreed wholeheartedly: anonymity did both of those things. But at the same time one must make sure it did not detract from authority.

"He's an enemy, isn't he?" Karl growled.

"Oh, yes, he's that all right--but he's only one and our enemies are many. I agree it would be very satisfying to squeeze his throat, and who knows but that you'll get your chance--but not until I've squeezed his brain."

"I need attention." Karl held snow tenderly to his face.

"So does he," Khuv nodded at Simonov. "And so does poor Boris." He went back to his hiding place in the rocks and brought out a pocket radio. Extending its aerial, he spoke into the mouthpiece, saying: "Zero, this is Khuv. Get the rescue chopper up here at once. We're a kilometer up river from the Projekt, on top of the eastern ridge. The pilot will see my torch ... Over."

"Zero: at once, Comrade--out," came back the answer, tinny and with a touch of static. Khuv took out a heavy-duty torch and switched it on, stood it upright on the ground and packed snow around its base. Then he unzipped Simonov's anorak and began to turn out his pockets. There wasn't much: the nite-lites, spare clips for the automatic, Russian cigarettes, the slightly crumpled photograph of a slim peasant girl sitting in a field of daisies, a pencil and tiny pad of paper, half a dozen loose matches, an "official" Soviet Citizen's ID, and a curved strip of rubber half an inch thick by two inches long. Khuv stared at the block of black rubber for long moments. It had indentations that looked like--

"Teeth marks!" Khuv nodded.

"Eh?" Karl mumbled. He had come to see what Khuv was doing. He spoke through a handful of bloody snow with which he staunched the wounds to his nose and lips. "What? Did you say teeth marks?"

Khuv showed him the rubber. "It's a makeshift gumshield," he informed. "I'd guess he puts it in at night--to keep from grinding his teeth!"

They got down on their knees beside Simonov where Karl could work on his jaws. The unconscious man groaned and twitched a little but finally succumbed to the pressure of the Russian's huge hands. Karl forced his mouth wide open, said: "There's a pencil torch in my top pocket." Khuv fumbled the torch out of the other's pocket, shone it into Simonov's mouth. Lower left, at the back, second forward from the wisdom tooth--there it was. A capped tooth at first glance, but on closer inspection a hollow tooth containing a tiny cylinder: Part of the enamel had worn away, showing bright metal underneath.

"Cyanide?" Karl wondered.

"No, they've got a lot better stuff than that these days," Khuv answered. "Instantaneous, totally painless.

We'd better get it out before he wakes up. You never know, he might just want to be a hero!"

"Turn his face left-side down on the ground," Karl grunted. He had put both Simonov's and Boris's guns in a huge pocket; now he took them out and used the butt of Simonov's weapon as a wedge between his jaws. His

dead comrade's gun had a barrel that was long and slender. "This is *not* going to hurt me more than it hurts him!" Karl grunted. "I think Boris would like it that I'm using his gun."

"What?" Khuv almost shouted. "You'd shoot it out? You'll ruin his face and the shock might kill him!"

"I would *love* to shoot it out," Karl answered, "but that isn't my intention." He poised the heel of his free hand over the weapon's butt.

Khuv looked away. This part of it was for such as Karl. Khuv liked to think he stood a little above sheer animal brutality. He looked out over the rim of the ridge, gritted his own teeth in a sort of morbid empathy as he heard Karl's hammer hand come down with a smack on the butt of the gun. And:

"There!" said Karl with some satisfaction. "Done!" In fact he'd got two teeth, whole, the one with the cylinder and its neighbour. Now he used a grimy finger to hook them out of Simonov's bloody mouth. "All done," Karl said again, "and I didn't break the cylinder. See, the cap's still secure on the top. He was just about to wake up, I think, but that bit of additional pain should keep him under."

"Well done," said Khuv with a small shudder. "Pack some snow in his mouth--but not too much!" He inclined his head, added, "Here they come."

Dim, artificial light washed up from the gorge like the pulse of a far false dawn. It brightened rapidly. With it came the slicing *whup, whup, whup*, of a helicopter's rotors ...

Jazz Simmons was falling, falling, falling. He'd been on top of a mountain and had somehow fallen off. It was a very high mountain and it was taking him a long time to hit the bottom. Indeed, he'd been falling for so long that the motion now seemed like floating. Floating in air, frog-shaped, free-falling like an expert parachutist waiting for the right moment to open his chute. Except Jazz had no chute. Also, he must have hit his face on something as he fell, for his mouth was full of blood.

Nausea and vomiting woke him up from nightmare to nightmarish reality. He *was* falling! In the next moment, remembering everything, the thought flashed through his mind:

God! They've tossed me into the ravine!

But he wasn't falling, only floating. At least that part of his dream was real. And now as his brain got in gear and shock receded a little, so he felt the tight grip of his harness and the down-draft of the helicopter's great fan overhead. He craned his neck and twisted his body, and somehow managed to look up. Way up there a chopper, its spotlights probing the depths of the ravine, but directly overhead ...

Directly overhead a dead man twirled slowly on a second line, a hook through his belt, his arms and legs loosely dangling. His dead eyes were open and each time he came round they stared into Jazz's eyes. From the splashes of crimson on his white parka Jazz supposed it was the man he'd shot.

Then--

Shock returned with a vengeance, weightlessness and vertigo and cold, blasting air and noise combining to put him down a second time. The last thing he remembered as he fell into another ravine, the night black pit of merciful oblivion, was to wonder why his mouth was full of blood and what had happened to his teeth. Mere moments after he'd passed out the helicopter lowered him to the flat top of the upper dam wall and yellow-jacketted men removed him and his harness complete from his hook. They took Boris Dudko down, too, a heroic son of Mother Russia. After that ... their handling of Jazz Simmons wasn't too gentle, but he neither knew nor cared.

Nor did he know that he was about to experience the dream of every intelligence boss in the western world: he was about to be taken inside the Perchorsk Projekt.

Getting out again would be a different thing entirely ...

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Bernard Woodley:

Have you spare time to get a day? What do you do when you have far more or little spare time? Yes, you can choose the suitable activity for spend your time. Any person spent their own spare time to take a wander, shopping, or went to the particular Mall. How about open or perhaps read a book entitled Necroscope III: The Source? Maybe it is to become best activity for you. You realize beside you can spend your time along with your favorite's book, you can wiser than before. Do you agree with it is opinion or you have some other opinion?

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