

WOLFGANG HOHLBEIN



*DAY OF HORROR*

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BASTEI ENTERTAINMENT 

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# What is The Hexer from Salem?

The Hexer from Salem, a novel series in the vein of H.P. Lovecraft, was created and written almost entirely by Wolfgang Hohlbein. The epic began in 1984 in a pulp-fiction series: Ghost-Thrillers from Bastei Publishing and later as a stand-alone series under *The Hexer from Salem*, before it finally became available in paperback and collectors editions.

The story takes place primarily in nineteenth century London, following the chilling adventures of The Hexer, Robert Craven and, later on, his son as they encounter the Great Aged — godlike creatures hostile to humans — and their representatives on earth.

# The Author

Wolfgang Hohlbein is a phenomenon: With more than 200 books selling over 40 million copies worldwide, he is one of Germany's most prolific fantasy writers. Hohlbein is well-known for his young adult books and above all his novel series, *The Hexer from Salem*.

Wolfgang Hohlbein



Episode 8: Day of Horror

Translated by William Glucroft

**BASTEI** ENTERTAINMENT 

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Written by Wolfgang Hohlbein

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# Day of Horror

It was a scene of morbid fascination I couldn't look away from. My reflection in the mirror began to change and fall apart: My face turned brown, the skin cracking, quivering like a withered leaf in a strong, autumn wind. I couldn't grasp what I was seeing at first. I was frozen in motion, still holding the shaving brush in my shaking left hand. My mouth was gaping open as if screaming in silence. Behind my lips I watched my teeth blacken and rot. Then, ever so slowly, the dried-up skin began flaking away until I was sure I could see the bones protruding from below. At first my image seemed to grimace, then my reflection decayed into a skull, my eyes sunk into their sockets and seemed to glare back at me with satanic fury.

At the same time, a song, high-pitched and shrill, sounded from everywhere, building to a screech and climaxed with a whipping, ear-splitting pop.

The mirror burst, and I was doused in shards of silvery glass. Dozens of tiny, sharp-edged fangs nipped at my face, but I didn't even notice. I was too gripped by the horror mercilessly strangling me. The reverberation of the explosion threatened to rip my senses away with it.

My thoughts were paralyzed, but a fierce, wild emotion was rising from within me. At this moment, I was nothing more than a string being stretched to its breaking point, no matter that I knew it had only been an illusion. It *had to have* been only an illusion ...

The pain and the horrible transformation, the fear — it was all just my imagination. A perfect, deadly illusion.



My fingers ran along the frame of the mirror as if they had a mind of their own. There was suddenly another image before me: a young woman, quite nearly a girl. I stared at the face in disbelief, unable to comprehend what I was seeing. I took no notice of how similar the hair was to the shape of the skull that had petrified me just seconds before. Then ...

"Priscylla," I gasped.

Brown, expressive eyes looked me over with a coldness I knew only too well but shocked me as if it were the first time. This wasn't Priscylla, my lovely, dear Priscylla. It was Lyssa, the witch, still dormant inside of her, who had tried killing me once before.

Yet how was this possible? Howard had assured me, assured me beyond a shadow of a doubt, that she couldn't do any more harm, that his friends were caring for her and had put her in isolation. He swore to me no harm would come to her.

What I was looking at mocked those promises.

"Priscylla!"

I nearly screamed this time. The mirror's wood frame creaked under my tight grip. My hands wanted to bury themselves in her hair, but something yanked me back.

*"Robert."*

This wasn't spoken by a voice. It was rather an invisible, irresistible force that surged through the air and flung my name at me, breaking my will and causing me to stumble back like I had been punched.

*"Robert,"* the *force* repeated. I covered my ears, gasped, and struggled against the insanity reaching out its fingers for me.

*"Robert! Listen to me!"*

I stumbled further, my arms flailing about. I nearly fell. The room began spinning and blurring around me. Only the mirror and the small face of the girl were still clearly visible, though that, too, began to change.