



Mark of the Spirit Hand

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North American

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Andover, New Jersey, was quaint and quiet in the days before the Revolution—it is not a roaring metropolis, even yet—and as it offered few social advantages there was more gathering in taprooms and more drinking of flip than there should have been. Among those who were not averse to a cheering cup were three boon companions, Bailey, Hill, and Evans, farmers of the neighborhood. They loved the tavern better than the church, and in truth the church folk did not love them well, for they were suspected of entertaining heresies of the most forbidden character. It was while they were discussing matters of belief over their glasses that one of them proposed, in a spirit of bravado, that whichever of the trio might be first to die should come back from the grave and reveal himself to the others—if he could—thus settling the question as to whether there was a future.

Not long after this agreement—for consent was unanimous—Hill departed this life. His friends lamented his absence, especially at the tavern, but they anticipated no attempt on his part to express the distinguished consideration that he had felt for his old chums. Some weeks passed, yet there was no sign, and the two survivors of the party, as they jogged homeward to the house where both lived, had begun to think and speak less frequently of the absent one. But one night the household was alarmed by a terrible cry. Bailey got a light and hurried to the bedside of his friend, whom he found deathly white and holding his chest as if in pain. “He has been here!” gasped Evans. “He stood here just now.”

“Who?” asked Bailey, a creep passing down his spine.

“Hill! He stood there, where you are now, and touched me with a hand that was so cold—cold—” and Evans shivered violently. On turning back the collar of his shirt the impression of a hand appeared on the flesh near the shoulder: a hand in white, with one finger missing. Hill had lost a finger. There was less of taverns after that night, for Evans carried the token of that ghostly visit on his person until he, too, had gone to solve the great secret.

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