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Hand of Blood

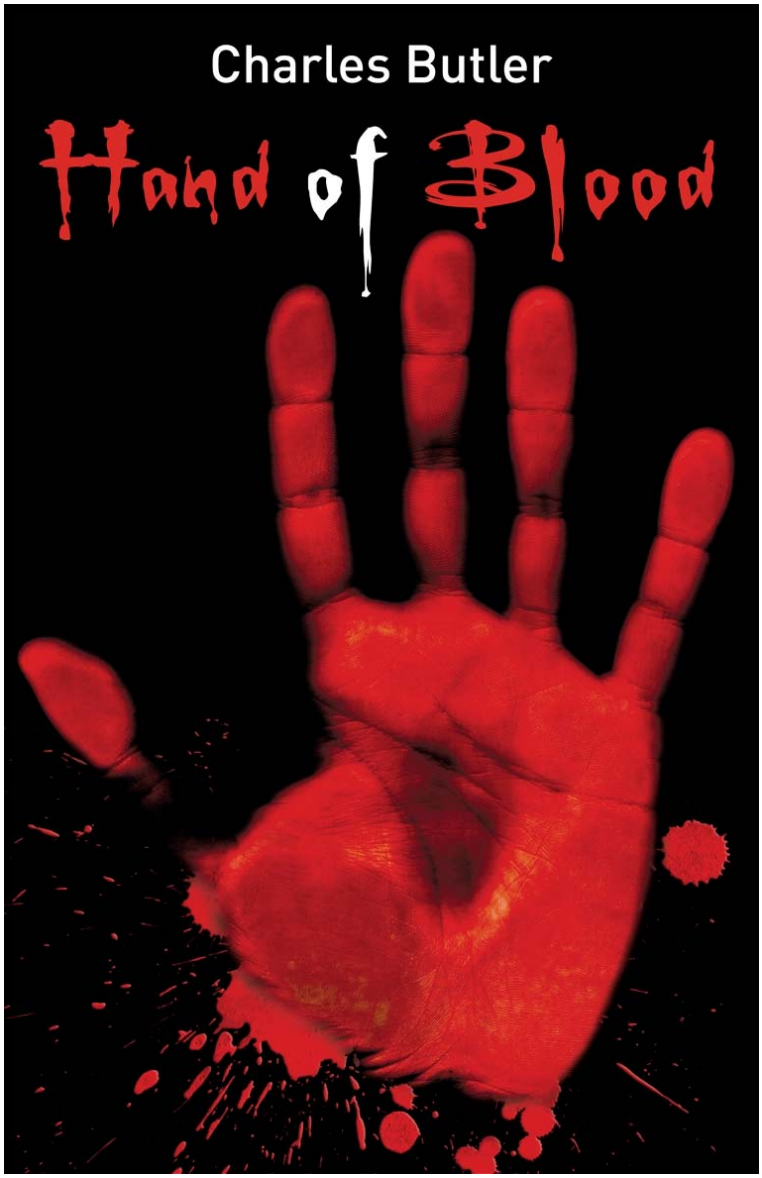
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Charles Butler
Hand of Blood

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by

Charles Butler

Gr8reads

Chapter 1

Jet

“Blast! No milk!”

That was my Dad, shouting from the kitchen. He was making pancakes, like he did every Sunday. Like most Sundays, he had run out of milk.

“Meg, can you run and get some?” he called.

“OK, Dad,” I said from the sofa.

“Take Jenny,” he added. “You know she likes to go.”

So Jenny and I went to the shop at the end of the street. I’m 17, but Jenny is only 6, and she held my hand tight.

Halfway to the shop was Kidd’s Yard. It was just an empty bit of ground, really, with a shed along one side. There was always a radio playing, and a car up on bricks. Some days Mr Kidd was working on the car. You’d see his legs sticking out from under it. Then there were his two dogs. One was OK – a dizzy yellow mutt called Amber. The other was Jet. Jet was a brute. He flung himself against the fence when people walked past, barking like mad. Jet scared me. I was glad there was a bolted gate between Jet and me.

We didn’t spot Mr Kidd that day. But he wasn’t far away. His tools were by the car, and the radio was loud. Amber and Jet were sniffing around on the far side of the yard. They didn’t see us go by.

It was a hot, hot day. Too hot for pancakes. When we got to the shop we bought ice-cream.

“Dad won’t mind,” I said. But we took our time coming back, just in case.

We were almost past Kidd’s Yard again when Jenny tugged at my hand. She said softly: “Meg, look – the gate’s not locked.”

Most days the gate was shut with a bolt, but today it was hanging open. We hadn’t seen that when we passed before.

Maybe the dogs heard us talking. Jet looked up and saw us.

He saw the open gate.

I try not to think about what happened next. Jet raced across the yard, faster than I have ever seen an animal move. He jumped at

Jenny, and knocked her over like a skittle. I heard her scream, and then Jet was on top of her, and the scream stopped.

I just sprang at them. I was yelling, kicking Jet’s ribs. Everything was a mess of fur and teeth. Jet made this rasping noise at the back of his throat, not like a dog at all. I pulled at his legs – and then he let go of Jenny and went for me. I grabbed his collar, but he twisted and I felt his teeth bite deep into my hand.



I tried to pull my hand back, but Jet's jaw was strong and his teeth were sharp. I felt them dig in as I tried to get away. I felt them tear into my flesh. Amber was whimpering and barking close by, as if she was scared too.

Mr Kidd came running out of the shed. "Jet! Jet! Back off!" He swore at Jet, but Jet took no notice.

I think I fainted, then. I know I fell, and struck my head on a stone step as I hit the ground. Something went *CRACK*. The last thing I remember was the sticky taste of my own blood.