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RETRIBUTION

By GEORGE T. SPILLMAN

MIGHTY is the storm that rages in the sky; but it is as nothing to the storm that rages in the heart of the murderer. As he stumbles through the wet underbrush, every vivid flash of lightning is a searchlight spying him out; every dead limb that bars his path is the hand of justice outstretched to stay his flight; every roll of thunder is the gun in his pursuer's hand. The rain has drenched him, and his wet clothes chafe his body painfully, but he is not conscious of this. In stark-blind, unthinking terror, pursued by nothing save the gnawings of his own guilty conscience, he plunges deeper and deeper into the treacherous forest. Suddenly his foot drops into a hole, and his body crashes heavily to the ground. A single, agonizing pain in his leg—then blackness . . .

His consciousness returns. He sits up—he can not stand. The leg—perhaps it is broken.

It is dark, but a sickly moon casts milky shafts of light down through the foliage. The shadows are thick, but—horrors of hell! What is this? A white transparent shape is hovering over him. It is visible—yet invisible. He sees through it like a film, but still it is there—it is something! To his terror-crazed eyes it takes the shape of a grisly specter. It is the man whom he killed but a few hours ago. The face—ever so faint—is leering at him with hate and triumph. The murderer closes his eyes. With a trembling hand, he raises the revolver and places the cold barrel between his eyes. He pulls the trigger.

Who will tell him that the ghost was only a wet spider's web, glistening in the moonlight? Once more has destiny played her card. The revolver, still smoking, lies on the damp ground, but now *two* bullets are missing from the clip. The retribution is complete.