

pointment on the Ewing Road? Second, how long—"

Fisher had gripped the arms of his chair. His face was deathly.

"How long," pursued the mystic, inexorably, "is it since you fell in love with Clara Clavering?" Macpherson had bounded to his feet. He compressed his Scottish mouth with all his Scottish will. Simon Iff went on imperturbably. "I think perhaps you do not realize how critical was that failure of the doctor to materialize. Knowing the moment of Fraser's murder, everything becomes clear."

"I suppose this is what you call the third degree!" sneered Fisher. "I'm not to be bluffed."

"So you won't talk, my friend? I think you will when we apply this white-hot poker here to your bare abdomen."

Fisher faltered. "That was terrible!" It was the cry of a damned soul. "*Was* terrible, you'll note, Mr. Macpherson, cried Simon Iff," not *will be*. Come, Mr. Fisher, you see I know the whole story."

"Then you had better tell it."

"I will. You'll remember, Macpherson, I told you that I saw in this whole plot the workings of a creative mind of high color and phantasy; possibly on the border of madness. So I began to look for such a mind. I did not need to look for clues; once I found the right kind of mind, the rest would fit. I began to suspect Mr. Fisher here on account of his rose-growing activities; but I soon saw that he had too many alibis. Fraser, with a mind like a Babbage calculating machine, was out of the question from the start, although he had just fallen in love—which sometimes works some pretty fine miracles in a man!

"The only other person in the circle was Miss Clavering herself, and I made an opportunity to see her. I saw, too, that she was not very much in the circle; she appeared accidentally and quite naturally. I thought that such an apparent comet might be the Sun of the system of deception.

"I was delighted when I was given an exact time, not a round hour or half hour, for the interview; it suggested an intricacy.

"I arrive at the house; I see a perfect stage picture; an undeniable swollen ankle, which is also an undeniable alibi; and, in case any one did doubt the ankle, there was a witness above all suspicion, Sir Bray Clinton, on his way to see it. Could I doubt that Miss Clavering was awake when Macpherson first telephoned, and used the interval to make a date with Clinton and the doctor? Only we must not be there for the interview; Clinton would ask when the accident happened. It would not do to tell him "Friday," when the other doctor had deliberately dislocated the foot, as I was sure, on Monday, after Vision Number Ten of poor Fraser.

"But how does it happen that Fraser writes and telephones just as Miss Clavering dictates? Here we touch the darkest moment of the drama. He was evidently a puppet throughout. It is clear to me that Miss Clavering, disguised as Fraser, hired the big racing car; that she met him on Friday night, chloroformed him, took him to the house of Fisher here, and kept him in durance.

"On the Saturday she and Fisher play their appointed roles. Vision Number Two is devised to make it appear that Saturday noon is the moment of the robbery, when in reality the parcels had been exchanged long before."

"I never packed the notes," said Fisher. "I put

them away in my bag and took them home with me on Friday night."

"Good boy! now we're being sensible. Well, to continue with Saturday. Miss Clavering has a corpse in her car—and this made me suspect a medical accomplice—goes through her tricks, and returns to Fisher's house. They then proceed to put pressure on Fraser. He resists. Miss Clavering resorts to the white-hot poker. How do I know? Because care was taken to destroy the abdomen. Under this torture Fraser wrote the telegram which was later handed in by Clara; then he was set to telephone to you, Macpherson, with the implement of torture ready in case he should make a mistake. Yet he kicked; they had to ring off, and have a second orgie of devilment before he would give the answer you required. It was useless for him to give a false answer; his best chance of help (as they probably showed him) was to convince you that it was he.

"Directly this is over, Fraser is murdered. It would really have been safer to wait till the last moment—"

"Of course it would. You don't know all, though you must be the devil to know what you do. But Fraser had aortic regurgitation; he died while still speaking to you. We had meant him to say a great deal more. That was where our plan broke down."

"Still, it was a good plan," returned Simon Iff cordially. "And the rest is simple. The car is left on a lonely road, with Fraser in it, an evident suicide. And the doctor was to drive past; he was in waiting, after firing the shot into Fraser's abdomen, for the lights of the patrol or whoever should come up; and he was to certify that the shot had caused death. Why should anyone suspect anything else? Perhaps the doctor would offer to take it away in his car, and lose time in various ways, until the hour of death was no longer certain. Now, Fisher, why didn't he do as arranged?"

"Clara was full of morphia up to the neck. She did it all, plan and execution, on morphine and hysteria. Oh, you don't know her! But she broke down at that moment. She was in the car with Leslie; she had a fit of tearing off her clothes and screaming, and he had to struggle with her for an hour. When she came to, it was too late and too dangerous to do anything. When I heard it, an hour later, I knew the game was up. I knew that Fate was hunting us, even as we had thought we were hunting Fate! The two accidents—Fraser's death and her insanity—were the ruin of all! God help me!"

"So she took morphia!" cried Macpherson. "Then was that what you meant about the Chinaman?"

"Good, Macpherson! You're beginning to bring your Shakespeare into the bank!"

"But you—how do you know about it?"

"I was ten years in China. I've smoked opium as hard as anybody. I recognized the drama from the first as a mixture of opium-visions and sex-hysteria."

"But I still don't see why they should play this mad and dangerous game, when it would have been so simple just to steal the money and get away."

"Well, first, there was the love of the thing. Secondly, it was exceedingly shrewd. The important point was to cover the one uncoverable thing, the theft of the money. Left alone, your business routine would have worked with its usual efficiency. You would have traced the Paris package minute by