

CHAPTER II

BLIND MAN'S BUFF

WITH difficulty Phil Kendrick restrained a desire to laugh outright. The totally unexpected situation in which he found himself paralyzed his speech and by the time he had recovered from the first shock of it a further development held him silent. With senses sharpened he listened in the dark to approaching footsteps and a murmur of voices, his wonder growing as he recognized the unmistakable accents of Stinson, his uncle's personal servant—Stinson who, by all the rules of valet service, should be up at Sparrow Lake at that very moment with the Honorable Milton Waring.

A key was being fitted into the padlock of the Waring boathouse. The planking creaked as the strangers tip-toed inside. There appeared to be several of them. A sloshing of water as they boarded the big launch, then the first fitful rustlings of the engine as it was turned over. Soon its loud staccatto rose above the wail of the fog-horn.

Had the house been robbed? Phil dismissed this idea at once. No valuables likely to invite burglary were kept at the Island residence, even had Stinson's long and faithful service not placed him beyond suspicion. Probably the valet had