

eyeing his nephew in amazement. "Why aren't you at Sparrow Lake with your aunt? Get my wire? Eh? They told me you left this morning——" His voice was hoarse and it trailed away as if the situation embarrassed him and he was not quite sure how to handle it. He stared uncertainly, drumming nervously with his fingers.

Phil nodded as he sat down in the nearest chair and stared back. The surprise of finding his uncle there was overridden by the new discovery of his evident diffidence, his flushed face, a lack of that self-contained bearing which always had marked him as a man of large affairs. It was his uncle's strict rule, he recalled, never to take a second drink; it was an axiom of the Honorable Milton's that the second drink drew the cork on indiscretion and eventual inebriety. That something had happened which must have disturbed him greatly to make him break this rule was a deduction as simple as the evidence that he had broken it.

"What about you, Uncle Milt?" suggested Kendrick after a brief explanation of his change of plans—a recital which carefully avoided mention of McCorquodale or the mysterious woman of the fog. "If I had known that Aunt Dolly was going to be alone I wouldn't have let Thorpe persuade me to stay over a day."

"I was called in unexpectedly—important business——" He pushed uneasily at the papers