

keep your promise. You've wrecked two lives and now you have the hardihood to come here and accuse your wife—why, you're so low and vile and worthless—'

"'Cut that out!' Collins broke in. 'I want an explanation of this letter!'

"Collins waved the letter which he had intercepted, but Mr. Whitmore tried to dismiss him with a shrug of disgust. Finally Collins repeated the vile epithet which he had called my employer. Then he hurled another epithet at his wife. That enraged Mr. Whitmore and he leaped for Collins. Collins jumped back and whipped out a pistol. At the same instant Ward hurled himself at Collins. In order to prevent a tragedy I switched out the light. There was a short scuffle in the darkness, then a shot rang out. I heard Mr. Whitmore groan.

"Instantly I switched on the light. Mr. Whitmore was leaning against a table, one hand pressed against his abdomen. Collins was cowering against the opposite wall.

"The pistol was in Ward's hand."

Beard paused, overcome by the crushing pain of the memories that crowded on his brain. The fact that all but one of the participants in