



DEATH ENDS THE YEAR

By JOHNSTON McCULLLEY

*For Detective Lieutenant Larry Ogden it was D-Day
and H-Hour - with D for Danger and H for Homicide!*

DELIBERATELY he took a cigarette from the box on the table. He thumbed the lighter, inhaled the smoke. He could not be blamed because his hand shook slightly as he put the lighter back upon the table. A man could be expected to show nervousness when a sentence of death hung over him, when he had been told that he had less than three hours to live.

Detective Lieutenant Larry Ogden was no fool. He was honest enough to admit to himself that he felt a measure of fear. He knew the power of his enemies. One reason for his success in police work was that he never underestimated an antagonist, never laughed a threat aside, always took it for granted that there was a possibility of a weak adversary getting in a lucky blow.

He glanced at the clock again. It was two minutes after nine, on New Year's Eve. Two minutes less than three hours!

He glanced around the living room of his small bachelor apartment in which he had been so comfortable for three years. It was strictly a man's apartment.

He had bought every bit of furniture, every picture and book, every ash tray. He had taken time to buy them piece by piece, getting exactly what he desired.

He was sitting in an easy chair in which he always relaxed after he got home from a tour of duty. The floor lamp beside the chair was the only light burning in the room. At his elbow was a table, and on the table were a book, a couple of new magazines, a tobacco jar and a rack filled with pipes, the cigarette box almost empty, the table lighter.

He sighed as there flashed through his mind the thought that he had planned to give up all this, and gladly. In a couple of months he was going to marry Laurie Carr, whose father was a police captain, and move to a larger apartment. He smiled as he remembered how she had declared that he must have a den all for himself to which he could move his favored furnishings from this place.

LARRY OGDEN got up and paced slowly around the room and inspected his defenses.

The apartment was on the third floor, on the side of the building. No window had a fire escape landing. Every window had been locked securely and the shades were drawn. Ogden moved about the room so his body would not cast a shadow on a shade and invite a long-range shot from outside.

The front door was locked and the door chain was in position. The service door had received similar attention. Neither door had a transom. Less than two

hours before, Ogden had searched the apartment thoroughly, making sure nobody was hidden in it, that no infernal machine had been placed in readiness to blow him to bits. He was wary of poison, would not use a drinking glass or dish without washing it thoroughly first. He had even thrown away the cigarettes and tobacco that had been in the room, and got out fresh.

He seemed safe enough. But Judge Burley, who had sentenced Eddie Hill to the electric chair, had seemed safe enough, and he had been killed. John Doane, the foreman of the jury that had convicted Eddie Hill, frightened at the message he had received, had been killed also, though the police had tried in every way to protect him.

Ogden paced back to the easy chair and settled himself in it. From his pocket he took the note he had received a month before, smoothed it out on a knee, and read it for perhaps the hundredth time.

Judge Burley and John Doane had received similar notes, written in longhand and signed by Monk Stenner, and they were dead. The note said:

I am back in town, and the cops can't find me. You wouldn't know me if you saw me. I have changed a lot in a year, thanks to plastic surgery. Because Eddie Hill died, you are to die. Before this year dies, you will be dead—the judge, the jury foreman, the cop who sent Eddie to the chair.

Monk Stenner

When those notes had been received, the police thought some crank or practical joker was at work, but they took precautions. Within two weeks, Judge Burley had been assassinated while making a speech at a banquet of the Bar Association—shot through an open

window from a building across the street.

Only a week ago, John Doane, who had been foreman of the jury that convicted Eddie Hill, had died while cringing behind a screen of police protection. Doane had taken a drink of milk from a bottle left at his doorstep as usual on the regular morning delivery, and the milk had held a quick-acting poison.

Larry Ogden had taken every precaution. And he had received a second note which said he had been saved for the last, but that he was to die before midnight of the last day of the year.

Eddie Hill had been one of the Monk Stenner gang. Report had it that he had been Stenner's favorite, his trigger man. But Eddie had made a mistake while exterminating a man who had incurred Monk Stenner's displeasure, and he had been caught under circumstances that made him a lively suspect.

Ogden, in command of the homicide squad, had gone to work to pin the murder on Eddie Hill, and had succeeded. In sudden fright, the Monk Stenner gang had disbanded and scattered. But for Ogden, another murder by them might have gone unsolved.

Some of the gang had been picked up on minor charges, but Monk Stenner had disappeared. No trace of him could be found. He was known to have ample funds, and it was supposed he had fled to some other country to hide out.

OGDEN reviewed the whole thing mentally. He had protected himself since getting the note. His superiors had taken steps to save him. But Ogden had refused to let Tim Fielding, detective sergeant who worked with him, keep at his side. He had refused to go on a vacation. He had pointed out that this might be a chance to get Monk Stenner and send him

after Eddie Hill. He had declared he would make bait of himself.

He got up and strolled around the room again, lighting a fresh cigarette. Again he glanced at the clock. If Monk Stenner had made some errorless plan to kill him before the stroke of twelve, what method would he use?

At what instant would death strike?

The telephone bell sounded. Ogden flinched at the sound. He went cautiously to the small stand upon which the phone waited. Was this a trap? Had some infernal machine been attached to the telephone, fixed to do its deadly work when he took the instrument off its cradle?

He reached out and lifted the phone. Nothing happened.

"Yes?" he said.

"Oh, Larry!" It was the frightened voice of Laurie Carr. "Are you all right?"

"Yes, I'm all right, Laurie," he told her, trying to keep the nervousness out of his voice.

"I'm so afraid for you! I—"

"Stop being afraid!" Ogden tried to laugh lightly, but made a poor showing. "You're a cop's daughter, remember? And you've promised to marry a cop. Chin up! It's all in the day's work."

"Please don't talk like that, Larry. I'm terribly afraid. Judge Burley—and Mr. Doane—"

"Stop thinking of it," he begged. "Talk to your father. Do anything to keep your mind off it."

"Oh, Larry! I—I'm almost crazy. You there alone—just waiting!"

"It's something that has to be done, Laurie. You'd think a lot less of me if I had half the department camped around my place."

"Be careful every second."

"I'll call you right after twelve, to wish you a Happy New Year," he promised.

He managed to end the conversation, and then he began pacing around the room again. Though only the floor lamp burned in the living room, he had turned on all the lights in his bedroom, in the kitchenette and tiny dinette. And now he strolled through all the rooms again to make sure nothing was changed.

As he went back into the living room, the telephone called him again. This time, he took it off the cradle without hesitation.

"Hello," he said.

"Larry? This is Tim. I'm downstairs and comin' right up."

"I told you to keep away from here, Tim."

"So you did. But I'm comin' right up and you can't stop me. I'm in on this."

The connection was broken. Ogden strolled across the room to the chained front door.

He and Tim Fielding had gone to police school together, had been fellow rookies, had worked their way up together to a certain point. Then Ogden had advanced to a lieutenantcy in the detective division, and Tim had stopped with a sergeantcy. They worked together on the homicide squad, firm friends who understood each other.

When the buzzer sounded, Ogden took his service gun out of its shoulder holster and stepped up beside the door. Even this might be a trick. Monk Stenner or one of his trigger men might have seized Tim in the hall, after he spoke through the tube.

BUT Ogden smiled at that thought. If anything like that had happened, there would have been quite a commotion out in the hall. Sergeant Tim Fielding had been in many tight corners, and could take care of himself. He wouldn't lead a murderer to his friend.

"Who is it?" Ogden asked.

"Your old pal, Tim the Great. Open the

door!"

It was Tim's jocular voice, all right. And 'Tim the Great' was an appellation Ogden had fastened on him. Ogden continued to hold the gun ready, however, as he let down the chain, turned the knob and pulled the door open. Tim came in, and Ogden promptly closed, locked and chained the door again.

"My first glance reveals that you're as nervous as a cat chased by a dozen bulldogs, and I can't blame you," Tim said. "What you mean tryin' to hide out like this all alone?"

"I told you I wanted to face it alone," Ogden replied. "It was more or less an order. Why have you come prowling around here like this? What's on your mind?"

"It's on my mind to see you live until after twelve and drink a toast with you to the New Year."

"Did the Chief send you here, or was it your own idea?"

"Strictly my own idea," he answered, crossing the room.

Tim Fielding flopped down in a chair and tossed his hat aside. He was short and chunky and red-faced and freckled. In times of stress, a glint came into his eyes, which meant that he was about to go on the warpath. Ogden looked down at him, and he looked up at Ogden.

The lieutenant was tall, slender, alert in manner. In physical appearance they were dissimilar, but they thought alike. They had solved many knotty problems by exchanging helpful ideas with each other.

"I wish you'd go away, Tim," Ogden said. "Thanks for coming, but—"

"We'll see the New Year in together," Tim interrupted.

"But I want to be bait," Ogden persisted. "I'm ready for Monk Stenner and his men, if they make a try at me. A couple of our men are supposed to be on

watch down in the street—”

“Yeah, and there’s one in the lobby watchin’ the elevators, and one in the alley and maybe one on the roof. So what? John Doane had half the force campin’ around him, and Stenner got him.”

“If he pulls something that might—well, if he got me and you at the same I time—?” Ogden hinted.

“Don’t know any other man I’d rather die with,” Tim broke in. “Why not pour a drink and show your hospitality? Give me a cigarette. Any grub in the ice box?”

“Cigarettes on the table,” Ogden pointed out. “I’ve got a bottle of bourbon I bought on my way home, unopened. I’ll sterilize a couple of glasses—”

“You’re sure careful, but under the circumstances I’m not blamin’ you. To heck with glasses. We can drink out of the bottle.”

OGDEN managed a grin. He got the bottle and drew the cork and Tim took a drink and passed the bottle back. Ogden took a deep drink, feeling the need of one.

The telephone sounded again. Tim got up quickly and started for it.

“If that’s Laurie, cheer her up,” Ogden said. “She called a few minutes ago. You know how.”

Tim answered the phone, then turned to Ogden.

“Some gent wants you. Don’t know the voice.”

Ogden took the phone. “Yes?” he asked.

“It’s about ten, Ogden. Less than two hours to go.”

“Who’s this?”

“Monk Stenner. Wanted to hear your voice again before the end. You can’t dodge it, Ogden. I’m balancing the books for Eddie Hill.”

“Hill was a cold-blooded murderer and paid the penalty,” Ogden said, sternly. “As you’ll pay it!”

“Oh, I think not!” Monk Stenner replied. “I’ve planned this for a long time, and my plans are perfect. Doing it with only one man to help. We didn’t fail with Judge Burley and Doane.”

“What man is fool enough to help you?”

Stenner’s laugh came over the wire. “Ordinarily, that’d be a fool question. But under the circumstances I don’t mind telling you. You’ll never be able to pass the word along. He’s Gus Yost. We’ve been back in town for three months. We’ve walked right past a lot of you coppers, grinning.”

“It’ll take more than you and Gus Yost to get me,” Ogden declared.

“And it’ll take more than your pal, Tim Fielding, to save you,” Stenner replied. “Oh, I know he’s there! Knew when you let him in. Heard you talking to your girl too. Good-by, lieutenant!”

The connection was broken. Ogden replaced the phone with a trembling hand. He hurried to Tim and spoke in whispers: “That was Monk Stenner. He knew you’re here. Said he heard me talking to Laurie.”

“Then he’s right close,” Tim suggested. “He or one of his men must have seen me come in. Maybe your phone line has been tapped.”

“Could be. He told me that Gus Yost is helping him.”

“We had a report last week that Yost had been seen. Remember? But we never got a line on him.”

“Reports like that every day,” Ogden said.

“Look at things, Larry! How can they get you between now and midnight? How can they get in here? Two of us ready to shoot it out with them—”

“They got Judge Burley and John Doane.”

“Neither of ‘em was a copper used to watchin’ out for himself. How could they get you? They shot the judge through a window and fed Doane poisoned milk, yeah! But you’re keepin’ away from the windows and not drinkin’ milk. You’ve searched the place and haven’t found any time bombs. The phone didn’t blow up in your face. Who lives around you?”

“Across the hall, an old couple who’ve been here for years; he’s a retired merchant. In front, an elderly woman who plays the radio all the time. Back of me, two old bachelor pals who read books and talk world politics. I’ve checked on them all.”

“Under you?” Tim questioned.

“A big linen room where they work all night getting fresh linen ready for morning. I’ve checked that, too. No newcomers, and all the old employees can be trusted.”

“And above you?”

“Two career girls. One’s a secretary and the other a buyer for a department store. Been living here for more than a year. Seem like nice girls. They’re probably out to some New Year’s Eve party tonight.”

“Then I repeat—how can they get at you?”

OGDEN gestured that it was beyond him, and reached for the bourbon bottle again. He passed it to Tim, who drank and returned it, then took a drink himself.

“If Stenner knew I came here a short time ago,” Tim continued, “he and Gus Yost must have seen me come in. That’d be easy; they may be watchin’ from some buildin’ across the street. And if he heard you talkin’ to Laurie, your phone may be tapped—”

“Wait, Tim, How could that be? The phone wires come into the building through underground conduits, and through the walls from the switchboard below into the apartments.”

“How about the switchboard?”

“Night operator is middle-aged. Been here for years. I checked on her. She’s all right. Lives with her old mother and all that.”

“Maybe Stenner’s got at her somehow.”

“Makes no difference now,” Ogden pointed out. “He couldn’t kill me over the telephone, even if he is listening in when I talk.”

“Ever stop to think,” Tim asked, “that if he doesn’t get you before midnight he’ll keep right on tryin’?”

“Yes. And I don’t care to live in terror. That’s why I wanted to be alone tonight, to give them a chance and have it out, win or lose. Light up another cigarette.”

Tim lit one, and Ogden followed his example. They got up and made another tour of the small apartment, inspecting it thoroughly.

“Everything’s all right,” Tim admitted. “Seems so, anyhow. Everything’s shut up tight. Let’s make it tighter, huh? Shut the doors to the bedroom and dinette. I’m holdin’ my own service gun ready from this second, and you do the same.”

They got out their guns. Ogden began pacing around the room again.

“What’s that infernal racket?” Tim asked, suddenly.

“That’s innocent enough, Tim. It’s the elderly woman next door, who plays her radio all the time. I suppose she’s listening to some New Year’s Eve celebration.”

As the minutes passed, Ogden felt his nerves tensing. The strain was beginning to tell on him. There was no activity to offset it. Knowing his foe, he could expect anything.

As Tim Fielding toyed with the bottle of bourbon and held his service pistol ready for instant action if it became necessary, Ogden prowled around the room again.

He looked at the few pictures he had bought. One was slightly crooked on the wall, and he stepped over to straighten it. Little things like that.

A strange odor assailed his nostrils. It seemed to come from the wall. He moved a small chest which had been placed against the wall beneath the picture. Some careless maid had knocked an apple core beneath the chest, he thought. Ogden was always eating apples, always kept a bowl of fruit on the end of a table in a corner of the room.

Nothing was on the floor, and he moved the chest back and gave his attention again to straightening the picture. The apartment had been cleaned a few days before, and he supposed the cleaners had used some nauseous liquid on the baseboard and moulding.

As he twisted the picture slightly, the hanging pin came loose, and the picture would have fallen if Ogden had not caught it. Tim Fielding got to his feet.

"You're too nervous to do things like that," he told Ogden. "You'll bust up the place. The man's threatened with violent death, and he hangs pictures!"

"It was crooked," Ogden complained. "I'll fix it."

SUDDENLY, he gripped Tim's arm fiercely and clapped a hand over his mouth for silence. Tim looked at him inquiringly. Ogden was whispering for him to be silent. He took his hand away and pointed to the moulding. A little grille had been inserted there recently, perhaps during the house-cleaning period. It was about an inch wide and four inches long and had been painted the color of the

moulding. Only a close look disclosed it.

Ogden motioned Tim again to keep silent, and spoke:

"Tim, let's go into the kitchenette and raid the refrigerator. We'll bring something to eat in here, and I'll hang the picture later."

They hurried into the kitchen, and Ogden's eyes were gleaming as he spoke to Tim again: "That was a dictograph screen hidden in the moulding. Now we know."

"And the other end of the wire?"

"Who knows? They've run it through the wall to some other apartment. They're right in this building. They know everything we say. And we haven't time to run the thing down between now and midnight. Careful with our talk!"

"You need fresh air in here," Tim complained. "The place stinks."

"Remember, I closed all the windows tight."

They got cold food out of the refrigerator, then Ogden shook his head.

"Into the garbage can with all of it!" he whispered. "We can't trust it. I have a couple of cans of stuff. I'm not running the risk of being poisoned."

"Look!" Tim whispered, and pointed.

In a corner, in the moulding, was another little grille.

"They've got dictographs all over the place," Ogden whispered. "Have to run it down later."

With some canned fish and a package of crackers Ogden was sure never had had its protecting wax wrapper removed, they left the kitchen, closed the door and returned to the living room.

"Let's look for more little grilles," Tim whispered.

Ogden nodded. Aloud, he said, "I'll hang that picture now." He went to the picture and bent to retrieve the hanging hook from where it had fallen to the floor.

An instant later, he reeled and would have fallen if Tim had not caught him. Ogden gagged, clawed at his collar.

Frightened, Tim Fielding half carried him across the room and into the bedroom. He snapped off the light there. As Ogden clung to the head of the bed, Tim raised the shade and then the window, slowly and cautiously so as not to make any noise. He helped Ogden to the open window, and Ogden retched and spewed.

“What is it, Larry?” Tim asked.

Ogden gulped. “Gas. . . poison gas . . . coming in through those little grilles.”

“So that’s the way.”

“Only got . . . one whiff. Turn out all lights . . . open windows . . . be quiet. . .”

They worked at the windows. In the kitchen, Ogden took a glass he had sterilized that evening, and drank water until he made himself vomit again.

“One whiff. . . and it almost got me,” he whispered. “We’ve got work to do.”

Working cautiously, they turned off the lights and got the windows open.

There was a stiff cold breeze outside, and it swept through the apartment, draining it of the lethal gas as swiftly as it poured into the rooms.

In the darkness, Ogden gripped Tim’s arm and guided him to the front door.

“It can’t come far,” he whispered. “From some room above or below or on either side of this apartment. I felt a little breeze coming from that grille. Electric fan being used to blow the gas through tubing, I suppose.”

“But how?” Tim questioned.

“Repair men and cleaners went all over this wing during the last two weeks. Monk Stenner had a couple of his boys do it then, I suppose. Not much of a job for experienced men.”

“But the acid and poison pellets?”

“Stenner could get them somewhere. They could have been smuggled in.”

“Yeah. And that means help from somebody in this buildin’.”

“It also means that Stenner and Gus Yost are probably in the building now making that gas. Come on!”

He unchained the door and glanced out into an empty hall. They stepped forth, guns held ready.

THEY went first to the apartment across the hall, where the retired merchant and his wife lived. The man opened the door when Ogden pressed the button. “Ah! Come in, Mr. Ogden,” the man invited.

A glance revealed that he and his wife had been playing cards. The elderly woman smiled at Ogden and Tim.

“You all right?” Ogden asked. “Prowler in the building, and we’re trying to find him—”

“Everything’s all right here.”

They went on, to the adjoining apartment where the two old bachelors lived. They were in, and celebrating New Year’s Eve in a convivial fashion. Ogden told them of the prowler and had a chance to investigate the closets.

So they went on to the apartment of the elderly woman who was a radio fan. She let them search and insisted they remain for tea, but they declined.

Hiding their guns, they descended the rear stairs to the huge linen room beneath, where three women and one man were working, sorting soiled linen and getting out fresh for the next day. Ogden pretended they were making the rounds wishing everyone a Happy New Year. A few glances showed him and Tim nothing was wrong there.

“We’ve checked all but the apartment above,” Ogden told Tim.

“You know the girls who live there?”

“Only by sight. Oh, I’ve been introduced and have spoken to them in the

lobby and elevator and all that. I know one is a secretary and the other a department store buyer. I think one told me they were cousins.”

“Let’s call on the girls,” Tim said.

“Sure!”

So they went on up the stairs to the floor above. They had their service pistols in their hands now, and were alert. Ogden choked back a cough frequently.

“Throat’s raw . . . chest choked up,” he whispered. “I’ll have to see a doctor soon as this is over.”

They tiptoed to the front door of the apartment and listened there. Not a sound did they hear. A faint streak of light beneath it showed that lights were burning inside. Ogden touched Tim on the arm and pointed, and they went around to the apartment’s service door.

Nobody had been in the hall to see them, and nobody could see them now. At the service door, they put their ears close to the casement. “Somebody movin’ around,” Tim whispered.

“One of the girls mixing drinks, maybe.”

“You’d think girls like them would be out on some party tonight.”

“That’s what has me wondering,” Ogden confessed. “Listen!”

More movement, and then a cautious voice: “We’ll fan a little more of the stuff through the tubes, Gus. No sounds from below lately. Maybe they’ve got it by this time. All the windows closed—”

Ogden gripped Tim’s arm. “Hear that? They’re in there—Monk Stenner and Gus Yost.”

“We’ll blast ‘em out!”

“Wait! Listen!”

They heard another cautious voice: “How about the girls, Monk?”

“Tied and gagged, they’re helpless.”

“Yeah, I know. But if they talk afterward?”

“It’d pin another murder on us, that’s all. The little dopes have come in handy. I learned that one was the sister of a man we’ve got dope on, and threatened to turn him over to the cops if they didn’t let us do as we pleased in their apartment.”

“And the other wren is engaged to marry the rat, huh?”

“Yep. Do anything to save him, those two. It’s been a tough job, Gus—worse than the other two. But I wanted to send Larry Ogden out in style. Maybe he knows by this time whether the hot seat or sad gas is easiest. Maybe he’s comparing notes with Eddie Hill by now.”

“How did you fix all this?” Gus asked.

“With two of our boys working on the repair job, that wasn’t hard. A few holes in the walls, some tubing. We smuggled in the pellets and acid and the other stuff easily enough. Give that fan a little more juice, Gus, and do the same for the one in the bedroom closet. A little more, and we’ll get out of here.”

“The girls—?”

“Maybe you’re right, Gus. Might as well close their pretty mouths. We’ll be nice and give each of them a drink of water—with a pill in it. They know we’re up to something, but don’t know exactly what.”

THE listeners heard one of the men inside walk away. Ogden pulled Tim back from the door.

“You take the front door, Tim, in case they split and try to get out two ways,” he whispered. “I’ll take the service door. Alive if we can—but get ‘em.”

Tim slipped out of the service hall and got to the front door. Ogden waited a minute, and then rapped sharply on the door with the barrel of his pistol.

There was silence inside a moment, and then, “Who is it? What do you want?” a man’s voice demanded.

“Open Up! Police!”

“Police? Why—why, you must be making a mistake. If you’ll go to the front door—”

“Open up!” Ogden repeated. “Make it quick, or we’ll smash down the door and shoot our way in. We’re after you and Gus Yost, Stenner. Your game’s up!”

Quick steps sounded inside. Ogden yelled to Tim: “Watch it in the main hall, boys!”

Ogden darted to where the service hall joined the wider corridor, so he could go into action in either direction. There was no long wait. The front door of the apartment was jerked open. Gus Yost came out shooting, bent almost double. Tim blasted away in reply, continued firing as he reeled back against the wall with a slug in his left arm.

The door of the service room opened as the firing began. Ogden had been expecting that. Monk Stenner dashed out and charged at him, gun flaming. Ogden heard a bullet whistle past his head. Calmly, deliberately, he was working his service pistol. He shot to wound badly, but not to kill. He sprang forward as the other fell and kicked his weapon away.

“All right here, Tim!” he shouted.

“Mine is a cold turkey,” Tim answered. “He nicked me, the cuss.”

People were coming into the hall from various apartments, men shouting and women screaming as they whiffed pistol smoke and saw Gus Yost’s body.

“Hey, you!” Ogden yelled at the man nearest him. “I’m Ogden, of the police. Call the switchboard and tell them to get headquarters. I want the homicide squad here. It’s all over. Go back to your rooms!”

He ran back into the kitchenette of the apartment. The poison gas was cooking there and being fanned into tubing that ran through the floor. Ogden smashed the

windows and went on into the living room as Tim joined him.

“Got it in the arm,” Tim reported. “Nothin’ bad.”

In the living room, the two girls were bound and gagged and stretched on the floor, twisting and squirming and plainly enough badly frightened. Ogden shouted to them that the police were there and that they would be released soon. He and Tim finally found another dish of poison cooking in a closet.

“Open all the windows,” Ogden ordered, starting on one himself.

When that had been done, the girls were untied and had their gags removed.

“Sit up and be thankful you’re alive,” Ogden told them. “No questions now! We’ll talk to you later.”

Tim had gone to the front door, to see heads of the curious sticking out of other apartment doors. The elevator stopped at the floor and disgorged policemen who had been stationed in front of the building and in the lobby.

“Take over!” Ogden ordered them. “Keep everybody quiet until the squad arrives. Tim, let the medical examiner have a quick look at your arm. Then he can give me what I need.”

He broke off to go to the telephone and put a call through the switchboard below. A man answered—Laurie Carr’s father. “This is Larry,” Ogden told him. “Everything’s all right. We got Monk Stenner and his pal, Gus Yost.”

“Laurie was afraid to answer the phone. Afraid it might be bad news. Here she is!”

“Larry, oh, Larry!” she cried into the phone. “I’ve been so terribly afraid. What—”

“No time to tell you now,” he broke in. “But I’ll be there in an hour or so. We’ll drink a toast to the New Year.”