

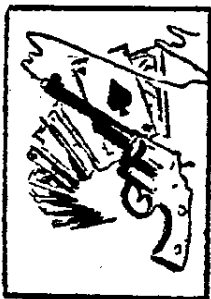
# Phantom Getaway

By  
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*"One peep out of you—"*

*A jewel king, a jewel knave, and a jewel jester all learned that it takes two birds to kill one stone.*



**W**HEN THE Diamond Building was erected it was said that the day of the jewel robbery was over. In each office, wherever an important desk was placed, there was, under

that desk, a button that could be reached by a man sitting in front of it.

All a man had to do, if he suspected the intentions of a visitor, was to place his foot on that button and push once, ever so lightly. A bell would ring downstairs, and two private guards, heavily armed, would jump into a private elevator that was kept ready day and night for the purpose. Instantly they would be

shot up to the office indicated by the figure that jumped into view when the button had been pressed anywhere in the building.

It worked beautifully. And then came the affair in the office of Marsden & Marsden, diamond merchants.

It was a fine spring day. Outside the door of the office of Marsden & Marsden, on the thirty-second floor, a young man paused for a moment. He was not too well dressed—in fact, his coat hung on him baggily and his slouch hat had seen better years. He could have stood a shave with no great damage to his appearance.

One glance up and down the public hall, and he pushed the door open and entered. In the outer office sat the reception clerk and stenographer, Miss Wormser, and two clerks, to say nothing of an office boy who was engaged in doing a crossword puzzle. The young man paused in front of Miss Wormser's desk.

"I'd like to see Mr. Marsden," he said.

She looked up. His appearance was not too affluent, but many came in to buy diamonds who did not look as though they could buy food. He looked straight at her, without lowering his eyes. The others looked up once and went on with their work.

"Which Mr. Marsden?" asked Miss Wormser.

He hesitated, then consulted a card. "Sol Marsden," he said finally.

Sol Marsden was the head of the firm. The entrance to his office lay right behind Miss Wormser's desk.

"What did you wish to see him about?" she asked politely.

"I'm from Cleveland," the visitor answered. "Saxton is my name. I wanted to see him about buying some diamonds."

"Just a minute, Mr. Saxton," said Miss Wormser, rising from her post. "I'll see if he's free at the moment. Won't you take a seat?"

SAXTON sat down in a comfortable leather chair, and the stenographer disappeared into Sol Marsden's private office, where she found her employer engaged in going over the firm's books with Smithers, the bookkeeper. Mr. Marsden, a middle-aged man with small, rather dark eyes and a single lock of straight black hair which he vainly tried to brush over a tremendous bald spot on his head, glanced up at her irritably.

"I thought I told you I wasn't to be bothered?" he snapped at her.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Marsden. But there's a Mr. Saxton outside. He says he's from Cleveland and he wants to buy some diamonds."

Mr. Marsden laid down his pencil and stared at her uncertainly.

"Er—ah—well, perhaps you'd better let him come in." The bookkeeper, a spare, graying man of perhaps fifty-five, made as though to leave the room. "No, you better stay, Smithers. I'll go on with those cutters' accounts as soon as I get through here."

The stenographer ushered Saxton in and closed the door behind him.

"You wanted to see me," said the diamond merchant. "What can I do for you?"

Saxton swept the office with his swift gaze. Marsden was sitting at his desk. Across from him sat Smithers, the bookkeeper. At one side was an open safe, and in the corner away from the window which looked out thirty-two stories above Maiden Lane, was an old-fashioned wardrobe that stood against the wall.

"Do for me?" repeated Saxton, parrotlike. "You can stick up your hands and keep your traps closed," he said in a low voice, his right hand dipping into his side pocket like a snake's head and coming out with a very violent-looking revolver.

The hands of the two occupants of the office went up instantly, and the foot of Sol Marsden went forward warily, seeking for the bell.

"Sit still!" commanded Saxton. "Where's

the diamonds?"

They did not answer, but he followed Marsden's gaze to the open safe. "In there, eh?"

Marsden started to say something, his lips moving slowly in his gray face.

"Shut up, you!" the holdup man snapped at him. "Here, get up from that desk! And you, too." He waved his gun menacingly at the bookkeeper.

They got up. He herded them along the wall nervously. "Get into that closet, the two of you," he ordered, throwing open the door of the large wardrobe. They would have demurred, but a look at the face of Saxton was enough to make them act quickly. They got into the wardrobe, and he turned the key on them.

"One peep out of either of you and I'll make this door look like a porch screen, get me?" he remarked. All this had taken much less time than takes to tell. To the men in the closet there came the sound of a man moving swiftly around the room and in a moment, silence.

And a moment later the outer office door opened violently and the two guards, guns in hand, dashed in.

"Where is he?" demanded Moriarty.

The office force sprang to its feet. "Who?" shrilled Miss Wormser.

"We dunno," said Cassidy. "The alarm sounded from this office. From in there, I guess." He motioned to the door of Sol Marsden's room.

At that instant there came to them the sound of a commotion behind the closed door of the diamond merchant's room. There was a sound of pounding on wood, and the smothered cries of men. The two guards crashed through the door and into the room. The room was vacant. The safe was open, and one of the drawers, emptied of its contents, lay on the floor.

"Let us out! Let us out!" came from the wardrobe in the corner. The office force

swarmed in after the guards.

"It's Mr. Marsden!" screamed the stenographer. "He's in that closet there!"

"Open the door!" came the voice of the dealer in diamonds.

Instantly the door was opened and Sol Marsden and the bookkeeper, Smithers, tumbled out into the room, pale and excited.

"Where is he?" demanded Marsden, rushing to his safe and examining the contents of the drawers.

"Where is who, Mr. Marsden?" asked Moriarty.

"The feller that held me up," screamed Marsden.

They looked around. There was no one in the room except the office force and the guards. A smothered scream went up from Hiss Wormser.

"Gracious! That Mr. Saxton from Cleveland!"

"Where is he?" demanded her employer. "Did you let him out?"

"No one came out," she replied. "He went in but he didn't come out."

"That's funny," said her employer. "There's no other way out of this room .... and there's a hundred thousand dollars in unset stones missing."

**U**PON INVESTIGATION it appeared that this was the strict truth. No man had come through the outer office. And yet a man had been there, and with him had vanished a hundred thousand dollars in uncut stones.

There was no other entrance or exit to this room. On one side, the door that led to the outer office, where four people sat who had seen no one come back; and on the other, the window, several hundred feet above Maiden Lane. The guards looked through the window. No one could have got through that—there was no place to go.

The window of the office next door, a few feet away, was closed.

"Is that your brother's office?" asked

Cassidy.

“Which—that window there? Yes, that’s my brother’s private office. We took it a month ago, and there’s no door from this room to that. You have to go out to the reception room if you want to get into it,” he answered the unasked question.

The door opened and Sol Marsden’s brother, Morton, came in, drawn by the noise that now pervaded the whole suite.

“What’s the matter?” he asked, his eyes taking in the whole scene. Morton Marsden was younger than his brother, and dressed rather well and carefully.

“Matter! We been robbed, that’s what’s the matter. A hundred thousand dollars in unset stones. That’s all.”

By that time the police came, the station house alarm having been sounded at the same time as it had been sounded on the main floor of the Diamond Building.

An investigation was started at once, of course, but it led to very little. Miss Wormser and the others in the outer office were cross-examined as to the appearance of the crook. Saxton had come in, but he had not gone out. That was all.

Very little was to be gained from the stories of Sol Marsden and Smithers, his bookkeeper. They had been herded into the closet and had been able to see nothing more.

Morton Marsden, the partner, was questioned. He occupied the adjoining room, but the walls were thick, and he had heard nothing. No, he was not alone in the room. His secretary was with him—she was in and out of the room, as a matter of fact. She had heard nothing, either.

It looked like a dead end, and the authorities were frankly stumped. A robbery had plainly been committed. That much was certain. But having gained entrance, how had the robber made his exit?

In cases of this kind insurance companies are amazingly quick to be on the job. Ten minutes after the police were on the scene,

Marty Durand sauntered in. Marty, light haired, blue of eye and irrelevant of speech, was inspector for the Universal Insurance Company, the concern that had insured the stock in trade of Marsden & Marsden. He came in to see what there was to be seen, since a hundred thousand dollars in diamonds, fully covered by his company, must not disappear without a thorough investigation.

He found there the office force, the two guards of the building, the sergeant of detectives, Higgins and his aide, Martucci, and the two members of the firm. He was quiet as he covered the ground that had been covered by everyone there already, and he wandered about the office in what seemed an aimless fashion, as though he had a certain duty to perform and as though that duty was simply a nominal one, and did not call for any real effort.

“I don’t know,” said Sergeant Higgins finally to him. “It’s a funny one, and you can stick that in your hat. That bird came in here, and he didn’t come out.”

“You mean no one saw him come out,” said Marty. “You’d be surprised how many cockeyed men there are in the diamond business.”

“What do you mean, young feller?” growled Higgins.

Marty Durand shrugged his shoulders. “Oh, nothing.”

**S**ERGEANT HIGGINS left him and went, with the rest, to the outer office, where he pursued his investigation and questioning. It appeared that the entrance downstairs had been well guarded, and a careful check had been taken of those who had left the building after the alarm bell.

But even that might not be conclusive, because the Diamond Building was a teaming beehive housing thousands of workers and visitors, and they came and went in large, eddying crowds.

Marty Durand found himself alone with

Sol Marsden.

“Well, Mr. Durand, you and your company got a tough one this time, ain’t you?” said Marsden.

Durand nodded. “You’re fully covered?”

“Yes,” said Marsden. “But that ain’t the point. Money won’t pay for these stones—they were carefully matched, and it took lots of time and trouble to get them together. I’d rather have the diamonds, because I’ll have to do it all over again, anyway. It was for a necklace.”

“For whom?” asked Durand.

“Mrs. Mollie Service, that’s all,” replied the merchant

Durand whistled through a fine set of teeth. “The oil man’s wife?”

That’s her. She was in a hurry, too,” said Marsden.

Durand wandered about the room and paused at the window. He tried to look out through the top window and found his vision blurred. “It’s a wonder they wouldn’t clean these windows once in a while, in a swell building like this,” he offered.

“Oh, they clean them often enough,” said the diamond merchant “We had a rainstorm yesterday, that’s why they’re so dirty. Why?”

Durand did not answer, but bent over the sill and looked out. After a moment he straightened up and made for the door.

“Finished?” asked Marsden.

“Nearly,” said Durand. “I’m going to take a look in your brother’s room.”

He went into the reception room and knocked on the door of the adjoining office. The voice of Morton Marsden permitted him to enter.

Morton was seated at his desk, going over some books. “Excuse me if I try to get this done,” said Morton. “This is a special rush—”

“Quite all right,” said Durand. “Don’t mind me.”

He looked around the room in an offhand manner. From a side door one entered from the reception room. Another door on the other

side of the long and narrow room gave, as he determined, on a filing room; and the door on the small end, the third side, led right out on the public hall. Through the ground glass he could see the outlines of the firm’s name, backwards.

The fourth side was the window side, and there was one large window there. A man could go from this room into the public hall without being seen in the rooms on either side. At a typewriter desk sat a stenographer, Morton Marsden’s secretary. While Durand was there, she got up several times to go to the files, and returned to her desk. He gathered that this was ordinary procedure, and that she was not in the room at every moment.

Durand stood at the window and tried to look out. The window was pulled down and could have stood a cleaning. He moistened two fingers of his right hand and ran them down the pane. Now he could see outside.

“Don’t clean these windows very often, do they?” he asked.

Morton Marsden looked up. “Not as often as they need them.”

“When were they cleaned last?” asked Durand nonchalantly.

Morton shrugged his shoulders. “I don’t just know. Not lately, anyway. Why?”

“Nothing. I was just wondering. You pay so much money here that you ought to be able to see what the weather is occasionally.” He opened the window and looked out at the adjacent one. A good long distance.

“You didn’t hear anything next door?” he asked of the man at the desk.

Morton Marsden looked up and shook his head. “Not a thing. It must have been almost instantaneous.”

“Nobody came into this room?” persisted the insurance detective.

“Nobody. Did they, Miss Glidden?” Morton asked his secretary for corroboration.

“Not while I was here,” she said.

“Were you here all the time?” asked Durand.

"I think so. I must have been. You see, I'm in and out—I have to look up those files in there a great deal."

"Where would some one have come from?" asked the diamond seller. "That door to the hall is locked from the inside—you can get out but you can't get in without a key. It's that kind of a lock."

"Nobody came through the window?" asked Durand.

Morton Marsden looked at him in amazement. "Trying to kid me?"

"No," said Durand. "People do funny things, sometimes. I thought maybe some one might have been out for a walk, and decided to come back that way—you know what I mean?"

"You mean the crook could have come from my brother's window to mine, here, and escaped that way?"

"Just a crazy idea," said Durand. "But since nobody has seen anybody go out of a door, why, I thought—"

"Nonsense," said Morton. "Wouldn't I have seen anyone who came in that window—or wouldn't Miss Glidden here have seen him? And besides, how could anyone get from that window to this? You'd have to be a fly, or something."

"The world is full of pretty fly people, Mr. Marsden," smiled Marty. "But I guess you're right—you couldn't help seeing anyone who came through that window."

"I should say not. And besides, the window is closed. Miss Glidden has a sort of a cold and the draught here bothered her, so we've had it closed for a couple of days."

**W**HEN MARTY DURAND reached the hall, downstairs, he spoke to the starter. The latter was particularly busy, as it was just one o'clock and the lunch-hour rush was on, both ways.

"Look at 'em," the starter commanded, and Durand looked at the hurrying hundreds. "Could you remember anybody you seen in

that mob?"

"It would be pretty hard," agreed Durand, "unless he had something outstanding about him. How often do they clean the windows around here?"

"What's the matter, looking for a job?" asked the starter.

Durand smiled. "Maybe. There are lots of windows in a building like this."

"Too many," said the starter. "Right!" he motioned to an elevator that closed its door and started up. "Express elevators on the left," he told a questioner. "They clean them about all the time, I should say. They always have a crew around, somewhere or other."

"Did they have one today?" persisted Durand.

"Always have them," said the starter.

"Where are they now?"

The starter shrugged his shoulders. "I guess they're through for the day now. They left about noon...."

"Why, are they finished with the whole building?"

"Oh, they don't do a whole building at a time," said the starter. "They do a certain section of it, and then they go on to the next building. They got a kind of a system."

"You mean the building next door?" asked Durand.

"I guess so. They come from the Acme Window Cleaning Company, and they do this whole block. I guess you'll find some of them next door."

Next door Durand located Vladimir Weniawski, who was clinging to a sill twelve stories above the street, leaning back on a belt-strap in which he appeared to have really absurd confidence. Durand stood inside the room of the empty office and talked with Vladimir, who threw his cleaning rag over his shoulder and leaned nonchalantly and heavily against the belt-strap.

"Sure, we wuz next door," said Vladimir.

"I mean, are you through there for the day? You didn't do the whole building, did

you?"

"Naw," said Vladimir.

"Well, if you didn't do the whole building," said Durand, "how come—"

"We only wuz woikin' below the twelft' floor, today," said Vladimir. "Tomorrow we woiks from the twenty-fift to de toiteent', see. Say, whaddy want to know about, anyway?"

"I'm making an investigation," said Durand. He showed his badge with a quick, lapel-turning motion.

"Oh, you're one a dem sloot's, aincha?" said Vladimir.

"Yes, I'm a sleuth," said Durand. "I want to know how many of you were working on the Diamond Building today, and what the names were."

"Dey wuz seven a' us," said Vladimir. "We always woiks in teams a' seven." He counted them off on his fingers. "Skinny Grouse, Emil Valdos, Frank Petrucelli, Sam Kennedy, Fatty Morelli, Buck Lanigan an', lemme see, oh yes, Yellow Leedom."

Durand was writing the names down on the back of an envelope as Vladimir talked. "And which one of them is you?"

"Me? I'm Vladimir Weniawski."

"Are you the foreman?" asked Durand.

"Naw. We ain't got no foreman. We just starts out frum de office an' cleans windows, see?"

"I see," said Durand. "But that makes eight names you've given me."

Vladimir stared at him uncertainly. "Does it? Dat's funny. We always woiks seven in a team. Dat's a rule a' de office."

"Then how do you account for eight of you being there?" asked Marty.

Vladimir shrugged his shoulders. "Soich me. Dey wuz all there, dough. I remember seein' dem all when we quit to eat, see? We wuz goin' out togedder."

**A**T THE OFFICE of the Acme Window Cleaning Company a few minutes later Durand spoke to the manager, after telling him

what he was looking for. It appeared that there were only seven on the job. Then how account for the fact that Durand had eight names?

"Let's see your names," demanded the manager. Durand showed his list.

"There are eight, all right," said the manager. "I wonder what Buck Lanigan was doing there?" he mused.

"So do I," added Durand.

"He gave up his job yesterday," said the manager. "A funny bird. You never could depend much on him, anyway."

Durand mused for a minute. "Maybe it was just force of habit," he offered hopefully. "You know, you get into the habit of cleaning-windows, and you have to sort of shake it off gradually, like dope, or something."

The manager stared at him.

"Can you give me his address?" Durand asked.

Upon investigation, some short time later, Durand found that the address of Buck Lanigan was a boarding-house, and that he had checked out early that morning. The landlady did not know where he had gone, but he had paid his board and she had made no embarrassing inquiries....

Back, later, at the office of Marsden & Marsden, Durand asked to see the partners together. They received him in Sol's office. He closed the door carefully behind him as he entered.

"Well?" asked Sol. "You got some good news for us, maybe?"

"That depends," said Durand, "upon what you call good news." He dropped into a chair, though he had not been invited, and lighted a cigarette.

"What I would call good news," said Morton, with a sleek smile, "would be news that you have found out who took the diamonds."

"Then I guess I can help you," said Durand. "That is, if you really want to know. Do you?"

"Sure. Sure, we want to know," said Sol,

his eyes going to his brother's in a quick glance, and back again to Durand.

"Certainly," said Morton. "A hundred thousand dollars' worth of diamonds."

"Then I'll tell you," said Durand. "But first, I think I ought to advise you not to press any claim for the insurance. You know what I mean?"

The brothers were on their feet in an instant, and the face of Sol went a pasty gray.

"Are you trying to insinuate—" began Morton, his cheeks very red.

"I'm not insinuating anything, gentlemen," said Durand calmly. "I'm telling you. I happen to know that both of you were in on this, that's all." He gazed at them quietly.

"That's a criminal insinuation," shouted Sol. "You're talking now to the firm of Marsden & Marsden, and—"

"Don't shout, Marsden & Marsden," interrupted Durand. "I can hear you perfectly."

"Don't think you can come here and insult us!" spluttered Sol.

**T**HERE WAS much more of the same, and through it Durand sat still, puffing at his cigarette. Finally they lapsed into silence, one after the other, held by his immutable calm, feeling that this man knew much more than he had told.

"Are you finished, Marsden & Marsden?" asked Durand. They said nothing. "Good. If you want proof—and I don't blame you, although I think this passion for accuracy is a very dangerous thing—I might say that we have the word—or rather, I should say, words—of Signor Buck Lanigan, who was once a window cleaner and is now, it seems, a diamond merchant with a stock of one hundred thousand dollars in unset stones. Do you get me or do I have to tell you in simpler language?"

"Lanigan has confessed?" came in small tones from Morton.

Durand nodded. "We have all the dope,"

he said.

The partners collapsed into their seats, Sol mopping his brow, on which a clammy sweat had broken out, with a large white handkerchief. His face pale, Morton sat still in his seat.

Then Sol turned to his partner excitedly. "You see, you fool? I told you it would never work! Trusting a window cleaner—"

"You were willing enough to try it," came back Morton. "You're just as guilty as I am." He turned to Durand. "You people have nothing on us. We haven't made any claim for insurance yet—and we have a right to cause our own property to disappear, if we want to."

"Maybe," said Durand. "That isn't up to me. It's up to the company. I don't think you'll claim any insurance, though. At least, I certainly shouldn't advise it. In fact, I believe I'd give me a signed note, if I were you, stating that the company is not responsible for the insurance of the diamonds, and that you propose to make no claim."

"Why should we do that?" asked Morton quickly.

"Because there is such a thing as an action for conspiracy to defraud, and unless the company has such a signed note, they are apt to press the action."

"And if we give it to you, would they drop—"

"It would assist them in a decision not to do anything more about it," said Durand. A quick glance passed between the partners, and Morton drew a sheet of paper to him and wrote rapidly. He signed it, and gave it to Sol, who also signed it. Weakly, Sol passed the paper to Durand, who looked it over carefully and put it in his wallet.

"That ends our responsibility in the case," he said, "and that's about all we're interested in." He rose.

"Say," said Morton. "How'd you get on to this?"

"Obvious enough," said Durand. "You see, it was certain that the crook had come



into your office through the door, and had not come out. So he must have gone out by the only other possibility, the window, impossible as that may have seemed. So I examined the window carefully and found some disturbance in the dust on the sill.

“Now, that window is so high above the streets that it brought the thought of a window cleaner to my mind. It’s a funny thing, but you hardly think of window cleaners as people—that is, you’re apt to say no one has been around even though a man has just been cleaning your windows—get what I mean?”

“And I’ve often seen them stepping from window to window, so when I came to your office—” he turned to Morton— “I looked at the window and I found it closed. And then when I ran my finger down the dirty window, I saw that the inside was dirty, *but the outside was clean.*”

“I don’t see what that proved.”

“It proved that when the window cleaner with whom you had arranged to steal the jewels, got to your office he found your secretary was there. So, doing a quick bit of thinking, he started to clean the window. Then you sent her from the room—as I found out;

she was really quite indignant because the letter you sent her to find in the files didn’t exist—and the window cleaner came in quickly and made his exit through the hall.

“He went down the stairs, timed it exactly so that he could get out of the building with the rest of the crew, and so forth. The only dumb thing he did was to throw up his job the day before, so when I got the names of the men on the crew Buck Lanigan was one of them. Pretty trusting though, aren’t you? How’d you know you’d ever get your jewelry back?”

“Well, you got him, ain’tcha?” put in Sol. “We’ll get it back—”

Durand shook his head. “We haven’t got him. I had to invent that part. No one knows where he is. He disappeared this morning.”

“Well, what about our hundred thousand dollars in diamonds?” screamed Sol.

“That’s your problem,” said Durand, rising. “Of course, you could appeal to the police.... But somehow, I have an idea you won’t want to bother our busy police department with such trivialities, will you, Marsden & Marsden?”