

Notes
from a

PRIVATE EYE

BY JAMES BARKER

MY OFFICE tells me I'll be off to Miami next week and I like the idea fine. I don't yet know who I'll be tailing but that's not an important detail. What appeals to me is the getting back to Miami for a spell. Miami's a place where, as a shadowman for a New York detective agency, I'm completely at home. I don't mean that I have a lot of friends there; my particular line doesn't allow for that. It's simply that I've got the general layout of Miami down very pat and can be pretty

relaxed there. The same holds for any of the old-timers at our agency. They all know their way around Miami and the reason is that our agency is the kind of outfit that deals mostly with the kind of people who spend a lot of their time at beach resorts. In short, they are people with plenty of money, as are the people they hire us to tail. Which means that the trail frequently leads to the resorts, to Miami — a circumstance that is perfectly all right with those of us who do the shadowing.

The office hasn't told me how I'll be going to Miami, but I'm hoping the assignment will call for travel by car. I've made the trip South in various ways — by train, by car, and by plane — but going down by car is the way I've always liked best. It makes for a very pleasant few days. It does, that is, if the subject (our word for whoever we're tailing) isn't in any hurry. And usually he (or she) isn't; usually the subject, like myself, has nothing very oppressive on his mind. The chances are he's headed toward Miami for extra-marital reasons. (More than fifty per-cent of our agency's business is divorce and custody stuff.) En route, he has nothing special in view, so he dawdles. As a result, it is a pleased and well-rested shadow who even-

tually rolls into Miami.

I make a point of this — the restful few days I'm anticipating — because I don't get too many of them. I know that Hollywood tells quite a different story; according to the fabulously paid dreamers out there, a shadowman is almost always at rest — most often in a hotel lobby. Hollywood has it just about half right. We do spend much of our time hanging around here and there, but we benefit very little from the loitering. The reason is that we're nearly always in a pretty anxious state and what we fear is that the subject will escape us. (Incidentally, I've never known a shadow to use the movie expression "give us the slip.") This makes, literally, for poor digestion.

The occupational disease of shadowmen happens to be ulcers. I think it's understandable; following people is, after all, our livelihood and to lose whomever we're tailing means to do a poor job. And that can mean — if it happens often enough — no job at all. So we look forward to trips like the one I've got coming up. It's fairly easy to keep track of someone on U. S. I. Especially when you know where he's headed. A lot easier, for example, than in Manhattan, where there are an awful lot of

traffic lights, an awful lot of taxis, and an awful lot of places — bars, restaurants, office buildings — that have more than one entrance.

There'll be two of us making the Miami trip — this is the standard arrangement. All good agencies put two men on a job of any size. Sometimes, if the job seems to call for it, they put on a mixed pair, a male and a female agent. This is supposed to make for better results, and I'm not prepared to say that it never does. What it most certainly does make for, and pretty often at that, is romance — shadows being for the most part fairly young people. I must admit, though, that I've never heard of a marriage between a male and a female shadow.

In any case, I don't expect romance to be a feature of this trip. The job doesn't call for a woman shadow, which means that my working partner will be a fellow agent. I don't know who he'll be, but I do know what he'll look like. He'll look like myself. Like me, he'll be of average size and, also like me, he'll be dressed in a manner calculated to make you forget him. He'll be in his middle thirties. He will have gotten into investigative work by way of the Army, where during the last war he did counter-intelligence work.

In short, my companion will be the standard type investigator, a fellow of whom it might be said that you wouldn't know him anywhere.

THAT WILL BE all right with me. A week or two spent in the company of such a fellow, though it may not be very exciting, will at least be a lot less boring than the same period spent in the company of one of the misfits who very often finds his way into investigative work. I've been on jobs with the misfits and I know. They come straight from the movies. They come to the job with high expectations and higher blood pressure. It's murder they're after and when they learn that divorce, rather than murder, is the shadow's daily business — then they run away from the job. I don't know where they go, but it's always been my guess that they drift back into the double-feature houses, where they originated. The only thing they ever leave behind them (they aren't regretted by the regulars at an agency, believe me), is what attracted them to investigative work in the first place — those precious credentials identifying them as private investigators.

And those credentials are quite valuable. You don't get

them just by asking for them. They're not forthcoming until your agency, if it's a reliable one, has had a chance to run your name through the national police files. It had better not come out with a felony attached; if it does, they drop you like a hot potato.

The pre-credential shake-down usually takes about three months, which can be a long, long time for whoever is sweating it out. I know it was for me. There were times during that period when I wondered if I really wanted to be a private investigator that badly. One of these times, I remember, was while I idled one day outside a Manhattan apartment house directly opposite a bank. (I was already on the job, incidentally; most agencies send you out on small assignments pending their investigation of your right to credentials.) What happened then was that I, who was shadowing, suddenly realized that I, too, was being shadowed — and with a vengeance.

To be exact, I was being shadowed by five people: two police detectives, a brace of uniformed police in a patrol car, and a bank guard. The shadowing went on for about a half-hour and I can't say I cared very much for the sensation. And it might have gone on much longer. The only

thing that ended it was my own embarrassed departure from the scene. I lit out, as gracefully as I could, as soon as I figured out what had happened. It was this: the guard at the bank across the street had noticed my loitering and had called the police, who were gradually coming to the conclusion that I was casing the bank for a hold-up. I didn't wait for them to finish their thinking; I lit out. The moral of the story is that a shadow without his credentials can be a sorry shadow indeed. For the fully accredited shadow, the procedure in a situation like the one I suffered through is routine: you stroll up to the perturbed detective (or bank guard), lay your credentials on the line, swap about forty seconds of small talk, and return to your business. It's as simple as that.

I'll probably tell that story to my companion on the trip South. And in return he'll tell me one just about like it. It's always that way on trips of this sort — hours and hours of stories. Yarning makes for competition, of course, and that means that many of the stories that shadows tell each other are just a little better in the telling than they were in fact. Competition makes, in turn, for the composite story, for the yarn that a number of shadows have had

a hand in and that has picked up a high polish on the way. I don't think this necessarily indicates that shadows as a class take a melodramatic view of things. I'm inclined to put the "boosted" story down to the ancient human desire to please. Whatever the cause, the composite story is a steady feature of private investigating and it's sure to figure in the Miami trip.

I'M READY and loaded. When it comes my turn to take over the story-telling I plan to lead off (slipping quickly over the fact that it didn't exactly happen to me) with the one about the shadow and the "falsies." I think I'll locate it in Savannah — we'll be passing through there. There was this time, I'll say, when I was on this job in Savannah. It was a nice assignment. The subject was a good-looking New York matron, the weather in Savannah was first-class, and so was the hotel where I (and the subject) were staying. My job was to report back to the office on how the lady was spending her time. Her husband had the sly idea that she might not be passing her winter holiday in a manner becoming her marital status. I decided to work as close as possible to the subject. (Shadows usually keep their distance.)

This wasn't too hard to manage. Our hotel of the moment was intent on maintaining its reputation as a gay wintering place and the management bore down heavily on the entertainment. Guests were almost shoved into each other's laps. One of these managerial shoves soon landed me in the subject's immediate circle. There followed a very gay month, a period studded with parties and with — on my part — regular reports to the anxious husband in New York. The tone of these reports was not altogether favorable. Consequently, I was not unduly surprised when the subject suddenly announced to her little circle, of which I was by then a ranking member, that she would be off shortly to the loathed North.

They threw the customary farewell party. I was there of course, and, like everyone else, contributed my bit to the gay farewell speeches, to the giving of ridiculous parting gifts, and to the posing for silly photographs. As far as I was concerned, that was it. A day or two after the subject's departure, I, too, was on my way back to New York. But alas, that was not to be it.

A year or so later I was subpoenaed to show up as a witness at a divorce proceeding, whose

central figure, I noted without surprise, was the lady from Daytona. It seemed that her husband had finally had enough. Summonses of that kind are routine with us and I didn't expect anything special when I appeared in court. The lady's lawyer quickly put an end to my calm. He did it by confronting me with a photograph taken at that farewell party in Daytona. I didn't appear to advantage. Party photography being what it is, I had come out looking not altogether sober. The photograph made me out a roisterer, a man whose word ought to be discounted by sensible people — which was the precise point the lady's lawyer was intent on making with the Court. He was successful and the lady stood off her husband's suit.

My expression in the photograph was a big help to her, but what really wiped out my credibility as a witness against the lady was, even more than my expression, what I happened to be doing at the time the photograph was taken. As the shutter clicked, I was transfixed for the ages in the act of showing off the gay little parting gift I had brought to the party for presentation to the departing lady — a pair of falsies.

As I say, I'm counting on that

story to win points for me in the yarning sweepstakes that's bound to develop between my traveling companion and me. Nevertheless, I'm holding an ace in reserve — just in case my *vis-à-vis* turns out to be unusually deft with the investigative anecdote. This reserve anecdote of mine is also a divorce-spa story and the thing about this one is the fact that it's not a composite job. It really happened, and it happened to me.

To be exact, it happened in Fort Meyers, on the Gulf Coast of Florida. The time, as in the composite story, was midwinter. The subject, however, was not a wayward matron. There was a matron in the case, but this time she was the client and what she wanted to know was what her husband was up to in Fort Meyers in February. He said business. His wife claimed romance. To settle the issue, another shadow and myself, equipped with the customary photographs of the subject, took a night plane to Fort Meyers. In addition to the pictures, we had with us a list of the principal hotels at Fort Meyers. The subject's wife, who had compiled the list (she said she knew the place fairly well), assured us that we would find the subject bunked down at one of them. She was correct. We lo-

cated our man at the second hotel we tried — and by the usual method. That is, we didn't wander into the hotel and inquire if the subject was registered. Nothing so gauche as that.

What a shadow does is to telephone the hotel and ask for someone with a name like the subject's. "Have you a Mr. Werner staying in the hotel?" you inquire. There is a pause while the desk clerk checks the register. Then: "We haven't a Mr. Werner," the clerk says, "But there's a Mr. Wormser here." You say no, you're afraid that's not your man, thank the clerk for his trouble, and hang up. Wormser is, of course, your man. You're ready to go to work.

IN THE FORT MEYERS case, the I name was, let's say, Glynn. For the first two days, all appeared bona fide with Mr. Glynn. He didn't appear to be doing any business, but neither did he seem up to anything irregular. Then came the third day — and a major change in his doings. On that day, he was up early and off to the airport, where he picked up a fair arrival who was clearly not his niece. That was all we needed; we telephoned New York and suggested that Mrs. Glynn fly

down to Fort Meyers for a confrontation. The idea appealed to Mrs. Glynn and the next morning she was on hand. Mr. Glynn, however, was not. He and his friend had made off in the night. My co-worker and I were not amused. Before our eyes rose visions of a contemptuous Mrs. Glynn and an angry home office.

But we had underrated Mrs. Glynn. Informed that the birds had flown, Mrs. Glynn merely nodded and smiled. "Try the Hotel Alhambra," she said, "They'll be there." A telephone call to the Alhambra disclosed that Mrs. Glynn had never been more right; the "Glynns" were on hand. Our next move was to make plans for a midnight raid at the Alhambra, after first learning from Mrs. Glynn that she wasn't exactly psychic; she had known her husband would be at the Alhambra, she explained, because it was to the Alhambra that he had always taken her before they were married.

The raid is the one feature of shadowing that most agents don't care for. I know I'm one who doesn't like it. For one thing, it's a fairly sordid bit of business. Only a semi-degenerate could actually relish the experience of bursting into strange bedrooms. For another

thing, raiding can be dangerous; there's always the possibility that the trapped husband will have a gun and will use it. Or he may be moved to throw things — shoes, lamps, ash trays. For my part, I've never been shot at, but I've been cut up by some heavy ash trays. In general, however, the only thing the cornered husbands fling at us are curses, which usually come at us fastest when the subject notes that he and his surprised amorata are being photographed.

In the case of Mr. Glynn, his wife assured us that he would be the cursing type, and again she proved correct. Mr. Glynn swore furiously, but the last word in the confrontation, despite his shouts, went to Mrs. Glynn. Herewith her memorable exit line, delivered to the man with whom she had herself once shared an occasional illicit bower in the Hotel Alhambra: "Creature of habit!"

The chances are that Mr. Glynn never learned how our party managed to get into his room. Few victims of a raid ever do. Well, it's not done by magic; it's usually done by cash. Take the case of Mr. Glynn. We gained entree to his room by the simple and direct method of paying a bellhop at the Alhambra to give us a pass key.

The transaction involved a bit of decor, of course; our story to the bellhop was that Mr. Glynn was a honeymooning brother whom we wanted to surprise. The bellhop probably didn't believe the story, but it provided him, in the event of any consequent unpleasantness, with a winsome alibi for his part in the raid.

This is not to say that all bellhops are corrupt. On the contrary, a surprising number of them shy away from anything that looks like the set-up for a raid. An unapproachable hotel staff can throw a monkey wrench into the best laid private investigative plans. Under such conditions, a raid can become a pretty difficult operation. The by-word then becomes ingenuity.

It would be nice to say that this — a situation demanding a display of ingenuity — is the very thing private investigators hanker after. But no. To the professional shadow, ingenuity is a haunt, a bogey that fore-shadows a botched job. When he gets into a spot like this, the private investigator not infrequently flees. The bellhops refuse to cooperate? Very well — we'll back off and wait for another opportunity, for a more accommodating hotel.

There are times, nonetheless,

when we take the plunge, when we try to do Hollywood proud. Thus, a raiding party (and this is straight from the movies) sometimes sets up a raid by luring the misbehaving subject to the door of his bedroom on the pretext of delivering a telegram. The success of this blatant device usually depends on the number of detective movies the subject has seen and on the time of night when the raid is attempted; before midnight, the subject usually catches on and suggests that the alleged telegram be slipped under the door. Then there is a bolder method, one that applies only to Florida, where most hotel rooms have light secondary wicker doors. This method involves what might be called the approach supremely direct — lifting the latch on the wicker door. It's a simple enough operation, and we use it a good deal, despite its troubling resemblance to a felony known as breaking and entering. Indeed, maybe that's just what it amounts to. I know I wouldn't want to argue that the latch-lifting we do absolutely isn't breaking and entering. Let's just say it's a moot point.

For that matter, perhaps private investigating is itself a moot point. Admittedly, there's something not very nice, some-

thing sort of illegal, about it. What it comes to, at a minimum, is the invasion of privacy. But we aren't moralists, we shadows. We're people earning a living, and the ethics of private investigating is something we give very little thought to. We're much more concerned with the aspects of our job that really count. The pay, for example. Private investigators spend hour after loitering hour discussing their pay — almost as much time, I think, as they spend yarning.

WE'RE PAID by the hour. To be honest, we get, in Manhattan, twelve dollars for an eight-hour day. On the face of it, not very exciting money. It sounds more interesting, however, when one adds to it an agent's daily expense account, which usually raises the eight-hour take to eighteen or twenty dollars. The next question is, of course: How many eight-hour days does the average shadow put in per month? Very briefly — not enough, and that's what most of our pay talk is about.

As it happens, I'm one of those who do get enough work. I do because I'm an old-timer at our agency. There are six or seven of us in that happy category. The rest — and there are

about twenty of them — are part-timers who sit at home waiting for the agency to ring them up and send them out on a job. Sometimes the phone rings frequently and sometimes it's silent for days and days. I've always noted, though, that in most cases the telephone rings just often enough to keep the shadow from straying to other employment. Apparently the work has just enough bite and attraction to hold most of them; apparently they prefer grouching about their situation to pushing off into something more stable.

Take the agency I work for. Until recently, the practice there had been for those of us who didn't happen to be on a job to spend our time idling about the premises. The agency preferred us to be on the spot — so much so, in fact, that a room had been set aside for us to wait around in. But that's a thing of the past now. Now we wait out our assignments in our homes. The atmosphere in the waiting room grew to be just too damned nasty. The bickering over assignments got so ferocious that our efficiency was on the decline.

It'll be interesting to get my traveling companion's slant on the waiting room situation. And I'll be interested, too, to

hear what he has to say about woman shadows, which is another subject we'll be sure to get going on. For my part, I'm for the ladies, and I've never had any trouble holding my own in a set-to with one of the many agents who thinks the ladies should be bounced out of the investigating field. Their arguments are always the same. They point out that the ladies are too dependent on powder rooms, which is true. And it's also a fact, as they insist, that a loitering woman shadow attracts much more attention than a loitering man. Nevertheless, there remains the fact that the ladies deliver. This is especially true in industrial cases — and we're getting more and more industrial cases these days. To break a case of this sort — a situation, let's say, involving internal theft — the best and surest method is to plant a woman shadow in the infected factory. Usually, the lady needs no more than a week to identify the thief. So my answer to my traveling companion is: Vive woman shadows!

But maybe I'm being premature; perhaps my co-worker will turn out to see eye to eye with me on the subject of woman investigators, as well

as on most of the other controversial aspects of our work. In that case, we'll have a wonderfully smooth and non-abrasive trip. Which means that the subject of our tailing, whoever he may prove to be, will be in for very tight and cautious shadowing.

We'll be careful to change our license plates, for example, and we may even go so far as to periodically alter minor items on our car, such as the headlamps and the grill. The same will be true of our behavior in Miami. Once there, we'll do everything possible to avoid being "made," which is our word for being spotted by the subject. We'll be conscientious about changing our suits. We'll be careful to have always with us the prescribed casual-appearing newspaper or magazine. Both of us will work constantly — one on each side of the street. We'll be careful never to violate the primary rule for shadowing on buses and streetcars — never sit directly opposite the subject. In sum, we might very well give this fellow a very close looking over. If he's up to anything, he'd better hope that my co-worker and I get to hating each other by the time we hit Trenton.

WAR BONDS:

More Delusions of Security

BY CHRISTOPHER BLISS

THERE IS something ironic about the present government of the United States urging us to be thrifty. It is like an Old Soak delivering a temperance lecture. This is the same government which has devoted twenty years to cutting every little lifetime savings in half; and which, by its policies, has rendered thrift rather pointless if, indeed, not suspect.

Now, from the pages of newspapers and magazines, bright, soap-scrubbed faces are advising us to be thrifty and buy war bonds so that in the future we can eat beefsteak, own a new tractor, take our ease on beaches, and send Little Willie to college. This sort of advertising may be proper for reactionary old institutions like banks and insurance companies, but is it proper for a great, progressive government for which Mr. Harold Ickes once explained: Government

spending don't mean nothing; we're just taking money out of one pocket and putting it into another?

Exactly ten years ago this government began selling war bonds. And the clever soap salesmen of the New Deal decided that something new should be added to the sales pitch. The bonds for the First War were sold on patriotism: **HELP YOUR UNCLE SAM MAKE THE WORLD SAFE FOR DEMOCRACY.** But so much cynicism had been injected by 1941 that the salesmen decided to lure us with "the selfish point of view."

Here are samples from the *farm announcements* of 1941:

"A growing nest egg of savings is a fine thing for everyone to have. You can add that room onto the house after the war is over. Or you can get that tractor you want. Or maybe you will