The Piece Of Soap

The young man was tall, dark brown, goateed, and there was something ascetic about his large, staring eyes.

He had an air of bored assurance, like a true cosmopolite, and the hometown folks who had once looked upon him as Andy White, had a hard time associating that Andy with Andre Blanche, the daring fashion designer whose contributions to milady's fashions marked him as real competition for Fath, and the eternal Schiaparelli, Christian Dior....

But withal, the people of "Possum Falls were proud of Andy White — even though he was spelling in French these days.

After all, there were certain concessions one had to make to get along in the professional world.

Hadn't Dagmar done it? Hadn't Robert Taylor done it?

And how many people knew Jack Benny as Benjamin Kubelsky?

As a matter of fact, Possum Falls took special pride in Andy and his brother Chuck, because both had been orphaned so long that only Andy remembered his mother throwing him out the window to the firemen.

Chuck, two years his junior, remembered nothing about it.

They Chipped In

So when, both of the White Brothers showed unusual aptitude in art, the good townspeople, white and colored, chipped in to provide for art educations for them.

Chuck exhibited real genius in the plastic arts, and, equipped with an uncanny memory, he could view a subject for only several minutes, and — without viewing him again — turn out a faithful reproduction in clay or soap, or whatever plastic material came to hand.

Andy was the abstractionist, the determined enemy of symmetry and balance, the advocate of the unconventional — and now it was paying off.

In tam and tunic (he always wore them, he said, to put him in the proper creative mood), he was busily arranging voluminous folds of benedictine satin on the svelte, ivory figure of Marie Dijon, a French-Canadian model, who had been sent down by Paul Himber, of Himber International Enterprises, to work with Andy.

He liked Marie because she was docile, taciturn, and didn't have the martyr complex of some models who have to work overtime and suffer inadvertent jabbing with pins. Commenting on her disposition one evening he said:

"Miss Dijon, I've never known a model quite like you. You have to come all the way up here to this isolated spot every day; you stand for hours, turning, sitting, getting stuck, going without meals, and yet—" He left it hanging there, shrugged.

She Wore Heels

Marie was tall, nearly as tall as Andy, when she wore heels, and she had the bright young freshness of an ingenue. Only her eyes were mature — deep, fawn-colored pools of understanding — and something else Andy could never quite fathom. She spoke French and English equally well.

"I like the isolation of Graybeard Summit," she said. "I believe in your work, Andre—just as you do. Besides that, you're a gentleman. I wonder about you sometimes."

It was his turn to remark. "Wonder—how?"

She sat facing him, folding her long legs under her on one of the rattan settees, apparently considering the proper verbal approach. "Oh, I don't know, Andre. It's just—just that — well—you've been up here, in Le Chat Noir Lodge for about six months. You've been down to the county just once or twice in all that time — and then just for provisions." She averted her eyes at this point. "Not — long enough even, for a date with a girl..."

Andy smiled, and fingered his goatee. His teeth flashed like pearls. "I see. Maybe you've been reading Freud or Krafft-Ebbing, too."

"And Havelock Ellis," she confessed, "but somehow I don't place you as a deviate." She smiled her prettiest. "I have wondered, though."

There Was A Girl Once

The smile left his face, to be replaced by a mask of sadness. "There was a girl once—in Devonshire—a pert little brunette with a turned-up nose, who could do magical things with a violin. Anne Pruitt." He sighed. "A buzz-bomb took her away from me—one hour before we were to be wed."

Marie was sorry for him. Her commiseration brought her up out of the seat and across the room to him. She touched his hand, sat on the arm of his chair. "Does it still hurt so very badly?"

It's Getting Late

"I suppose not. I guess there's no feeling at all. Just a numbness." He looked up at her. "It's getting late, Marie. The road leading to the main highway is bad enough in broad daylight. Besides, you must be hungry."

She surprised him with: "Why do you work for Paul Himber at all? You're the biggest asset in Himber International Enterprises, and you don't need Paul's reputation to get along."

Andy shrugged. "But I owe a great debt of gratitude to the Himbers. It was Ira, Paul's father, who picked me up from a sidewalk artist in the Montmartre, right after the Germans surrendered. It was Ira who supplied me with the money to start a fashion-designing business."

"But Ira's dead now. Paul has frittered away almost all of the Himber fortune. He plays while you work and make more money for him to play with. Why do you do it?"

"You're wrong, Marie. He only fritters away his share. We're in a partnership. In a few years I'll be able to retire, though I won't really. Just the same, I'll be able to."

Marie frowned. "Just the same it seems like you're aiding and abetting gambling."

He smiled up warmly at her. He was tired and both of them had been working rather hard. "Marie, you'd better start for civilization." He squeezed her small hand. "It's flattering to know you've worried about me, though. Very flattering."

"I'm Going To Stay'

She startled him again with: "I'm not going into Colton tonight. I'm going to stay here — with you."

Andy's fine jaw dropped open, and for a moment he could only stare at her in utter bewilderment.

"Don't look so shocked, Andre. I'm going to sleep right over there — on that settee."

Andy's voice sounded queer, even to himself. "But what will people—?"

"I don't care a hoot about people's talk, Andre. Don't most of them know I'm up here alone with you during the day? Don't you think that their tongues have been wagging any way?" She gave a crooked little smile. "Why you should see the way my landlady looks at me — like a germ under a microscope."

Andy shook his head. "Why you poor girl . . ." He shook his head again: "People are so quick to think the worst of others . . ."

"He gazed around at his empire—the drawing-board and instruments, the busts and charts of female anatomy, the dummies, the bolts of dazzling cloth, his machines, Marie, who gave it life and substance. Come to think of it, he was becoming very attached to Marie.

"I don't mind. I live in Quebec, and their jeers can't reach me there. Besides, it's not right for you to be so alone."

Andy got up, flexed his arms. "Well it won't be for long. Chuck—that's my brother—is coming to stay with me."

Deaf And Dumb

"Really? I thought he was at Walter Reed Hospital. Permanent disability."

Lines of sadness crossed Andy's face. "True. He got it at Aachen—the Battle of the Bulge in '44. Deaf and dumb, he is —and paralyzed from the waist down..."

Marie grimaced. "Oh, how awful!" She followed him out into the kitchen. There was a refrigerator-stove-sink unit out there.

"There are compensations," Andy said philosophically. "His hands — they're still the hands of genius. Wait'll you see him make a bust of you — in less than five minutes. You'll know what I mean then."

Andy had a visitor at Le Chat Noir two days later, but it wasn't his invalided brother, Chuck. It was Paul Himber himself; and Paul was a very distraught young man. There were pouches under his eyes, which betokened lack of sleep, and there were purplish marks about those same eyes that seemed to have come from sharp collision with a doubled fist. One of his front incisors was missing, too; and his lips were swelled to twice their normal size.

He was pacing up and down before Andy, who sat on a high stool, working on his drawning-board. "I tell you Andy, it's a matter of life and death! I've got to have that money."

Four Thousand

"But four thousand dollars, Paul — that's more than my father used to make in ten years. I'll lend you a thousand, maybe two; but that's the limit."

Paul's usually bright blue eyes were cloudy, dimmed. "And you call this gratitude for all the Himber money has done for you. . . ."

But Andy was adamant. "It isn't a matter of gratitude. I owed your father a great debt; and I paid him ten times over. I owe you nothing."

"Why you — ungrateful dog! If my father hadn't picked you up in that Paris dead end you'd still be dabbling for a few francs a canvas."

"If you hadn't gambled your money away, you wouldn't be needing a loan now. What's become of our operational expense fund? I suppose that's gone, too!"

The dishevelled young man hung his head. He was a pathetic figure, despite his stalwart, athletic build. "That went—months ago."

Andy came down off the stool, took him by the lapels. "You see? Where will it end? You'll get four thousand from me this time and go out and try your luck once more — just once more; and next time you'll be needing eight thousand." He shook his head. "No Paul. A thousand—take it or leave it."

Paul sank heavily into one of the rattan chairs, clapped both hands to his head. "Then you're looking at a dead man. If I don't have that four thousand in forty-eight hours it'll be more than a beating the next time. It'll be—"

"One thousand. Take it or leave it!"

Desperation contorted Paul Himber's face, gave his battered features an even more somber look. "Make it two, Andy please. There's a longshot in the seventh at Jamaica. Twenty to one. It's the last gamble I'll ever take win or lose."

A Specialist

Andy pondered that a long moment, ran his sensitive fingers over his goatee. "I have a brother you know, who may walk again, who may talk again, if I can get enough money to the right—people a specialist in Switzerland; a neurologist in Marseille."

Paul Himber looked even more miserable. "I've heard of your brother, and you have my sympathy, Andrew." He drew a deep breath. "I hope to meet him some day. But how about it, Andy? How about the money?"

Andy threw up his hands. "All right. You wait right here. I'll get it for you."

Consternation drove Paul to his feet. "You mean you keep that much cash here?"

Andy nodded. "I've never had a bank account." His eyes were wary now. "You wait here."

He disappeared into his bedroom locked the door. Several minutes later he came out, gave Himber two folded bills, each of which bore an engraved portrait of President Grover Cleveland. "Here you are," Andy said. "Two thousand dollars."

Himber took the two bills, but he was absent-mindedly occupied with other thoughts. He smiled perfunctorily. "Thanks, Andy. Thanks a lot." And when he took his leave, there was still a queer jitter about on his lips.

Martha Himber

It was the very next night that both Andy and Marie received the call from Mrs. Himber. It seemed that the "Mood Benedictine" gown they had created for Sabra Van Aster, wasn't exactly to her liking; and inasmuch as she wanted to wear it to the Legation Ball the next night at the Waldorf, the last-minute alterations would have to be done immediately. Paul had always been impressed with Martha Himber's drive. It was she who sold more of his creations than anyone else in Himber International Enterprises, including Paul himself.

Andy and Marie found Martha Himber pacing restlessly as she awaited them; and both wondered how a dynamic beauty like Martha could tolerate the likes of Paul.

There were some seams to be ripped out and re-sewn; some furbelows to be changed; the decolletage altered, a froth of amber lace added at the waist — all of which took time. It was two a.m. when Andy dropped Marie off at her rooming house in Colton. Thirty minutes later he arrived at Le Chat Noir. It had been a trying day indeed.

First of all, he had gone to the station to meet Chuck; there had been two creations that had to be finished today with Marie; and then the rush call to the Himber House in Connecticut....

There was a light on in the studio, though Andy didn't remember leaving one. He couldn't have been sure, though, because he and Marie had left in a hurry. He had fed Chuck, and left him sitting in his wheel-chair reading near the fireplace.

Then he gasped in horror.

Chuck Dead

Chuck lay sprawled on the floor in a pool of blood near the bedroom doorway. Cold reason told Andy that his brother was dead even before he rolled the body over. Then, out of a corner of his eye, he saw the shambles in his bedroom. Some-one had literally torn it apart. Three bullet-holes in the cripple's chest and his room turned upside down.

"Himber," he said to the walls. "He knew I didn't keep the money in a bank." He started to cry softly as he knelt beside the still figure of his brother. "And I can't prove a thing. Martha must have been in on it." There was no need to look for the bulk of his savings. He saw that the windowsill had been torn away. He kept it hinged and locked, with the lock concealed, but the thief had discovered his hiding place. He had only one thing — the serial numbers of all of the bills. He would take them to the sheriff right away—tonight.

It was then, while he was putting his hat back on to report the murder and theft that he saw the lump of soap near Chuck's crumpled body. He picked it up carefully, put it into his pocket.

Paul Himber was very outraged when the officer produced the writ. Why he had barely gotten home from a business trip, and he certainly had no intention of going to Colton tonight. He went though, after grumbling protest, and his face was contorted with anger when he faced Andy and Sheriff McKeever.

"I'll sue," he cried. "Going to the trouble of getting extradition papers; having me sent up here to answer some ridiculous charges."

Marie walked in then, bleary-eyed, and took a seat beside Andy. McKeever said: "Ever see White's brother, Chuck?"

Himber shook his head. "This is ridiculous."

The Piece Of Soap

McKeever stretched his full six-feet-three. "Now look, Himber, you killed that man and you robbed your partner, and I happen to know you owe a certain bookie a lot of money. Andy White has it figured right. You didn't think any one'd be home; but Andy's a pretty methodical feller. He gave me the serial numbers of all those bills. I'm gonna wire those numbers to 'Cash' Beckler, the bookie. He won't touch 'em with a ten-foot pole."

Paul's face blanched. He loosened a collar which was suddenly becoming too tight. He saw the contempt in Marie's eyes; the hatred in Andy's "I— I want a lawyer," he said.

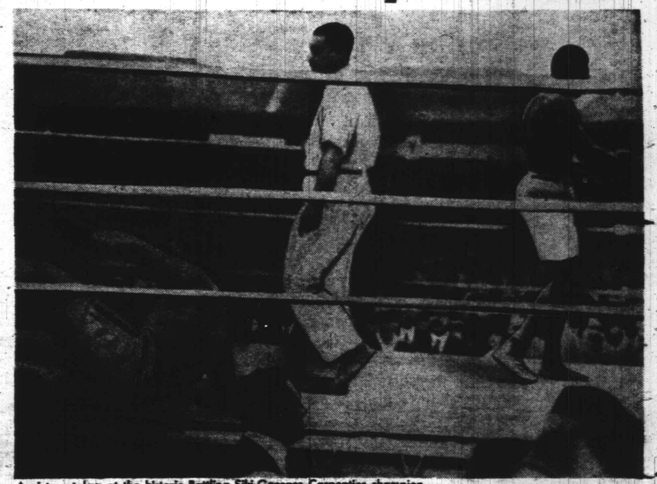
McKeever produced the piece of soap Andy had given him. "Grand larceny and murder. You went there armed. Look at this." Himber looked. The soap had been fashioned into a minature likeness of himself — even to the pouchy eyes and missing front tooth. He stared at the image transfixed, unbelieving. "But it's incredible! He only got a glimpse —" He caught himself. "I want a lawyer."

Andy grunted. "I think maybe you need a priest." He got up, took Marie by the hand. They could no longer see Himber staring at the piece of soap, and thinking about the last longshot.

THE END

The Man Who Beat Carpentier

Battling Siki, The African, Was The Toast Of Paris And New York Until One Christmas, He was Found Murdered In Hells Kitchen



A picture taken at the historic Battling Siki-Georges Carpentier championship fight, Paris, 1922. The African boxer scored an upset over the gorgeous Frenchmen in one of the greatest fights of the century.

Georges Carpentier, at 38, has a bar in Paris, just off the Champs Elysees.

In his day he was one of the fastest and most ruthless boxers in the ring.

He earned $140,000 July 2, 1921, when he fought Jack Dempsey before 80,000 spectators.

But the funds Georges made with his fists disappeared many years ago in unlucky speculations.

Carpentier won the light heavyweight title in October, 1920, on his first trip to America when he knocked out Battling Levinsky in four rounds.

Fast Right Hand

His right hand was so fast that he could strike an opponent a paralyzing blow with his right hand, then hit him a second knockout blow with the same hand before he fell.

Carpentier's biggest upset came in 1922 when he surrendered his world's light-heavyweight crown to an African boxer, Battling Siki. Siki was a former dishwasher.

It was supposed to be an easy fight for Carpentier, on a Sunday afternoon, because Siki had never met anybody in Carpentier's class.

Paris fans cheered Georges as he made his usual spectacular entrance and then sat back contentedly in anticipation of the kill.

Twice Knocked Down

Carpentier knocked the Senegalese off his feet in the opening round for a count of six, and floored him again in the next session for nine.

Siki scrambled to his feet, his face contorted with hate. He tore into Carpentier with the fury of a demon, swinging both fists and inflicting punishment that brought the blood running from cuts on Georges' handsome face.

It was plain now that Carpentier had neglected his training, or was no match for the African.

He failed to stand the mad rushes of Siki who fought with increasing ferocity and by the sixth round had his opponent battered and half blinded.

Unbelievable Climax

It was an unbelievable climax. Georges could barely stand. He reeled backward, wide open to attack and Siki, sensing victory, swung another of his shattering left hooks and sent Carpentier crashing to the ropes.

The Frenchman slid to the canvas and was lying there almost unconscious when the referee, Henry Bernstein, announced the disqualification of Siki for throwing Carpentier.

The fashionable crowd rose in immediate protest. Bernstein had gone too far. He had made an awful mistake.

The rules of the French Boxing Association require a referee to consult with the judges before any such decision and after a quick conference, Victor Breyer, president of the Federation climbed into the ring and announced that the decision had been reversed.

Siki was world champion.

Decision Reversed

It was indeed one of the century's greatest fights.

Whether it was due to too much courage or too little judgment, Siki put his title at stake against an Irishman, Mike McTigue, in Dublin, Ireland, on St. Patrick's Day, in 1923. He was declared the loser by decision in 20 rounds.

Found Murdered

Not long ago Jimmy Hicks was in New York to see the spot where Siki was found murdered after a fight a few days before Christmas in 1925. Nobody ever found out who did it and nobody cared much.

It was a tragic finish for the Senegalese who had fought through the first war with such distinction and courage that he was awarded the French Croix de Guerre.

Although humiliated and battered by Siki, Carpentier had still a few more good fights in his system.

In 1923, he knocked out Joe Beckett in England in 15 seconds.

Hangs Up Gloves

He came back to America in 1924 and was stopped by Gene Tunney in 15 rounds.

He lost to Tommy Loughran in 1926, and to Jack Burke, then to Rocco Stragmalia. By then he realized he was at the end of the trail and hung up his gloves.

Great Equalizer

The foregoing deals with a Frenchman and a Senegalese, one born in the jungles of South Africa before the turn of the century. It is a fair example of how the fight game is, and has been, infiltrated with all nationalities.

It also proves once more that sports are perhaps life's greatest equalizer.

As you read this, Italian boxers hold the world heavyweight and light heavyweight championships, colored American fighters are kings in the middleweight, lightweight and featherweight divisions, a colored Cuban is the welterweight titlist, and the bantamweight and flyweight crowns belong to a South African and Japanese, respectively.

Jewish Champs Missing

Running one's eyes down the list, it is not easy to discern a highly unusual fact: that another minority group, the Jewish race, is today without a champion, or even an outstanding boxer.

Why is this strange? Because, in addition to boasting a stranglehold on the promotional end of the sport, the descendants of Israel have long been represented — and well—in the world of boxing.

In the not-too-distant past, the Jewish faith has produced 17 champions, stretching from the heavyweight class right down through the flyweight division.

Kid Lewis Greatest

Best known among them are: Benny Leonard, Abe Attell, Ted (Kid) Lewis, Matt Wells, Barney Ross, and Jackie (Kid) Berg.

It even has been written that the great Harry Greb was actually Hebrew; that his real name was Berg and the spelling was reversed for reasons best known to himself and his handlers.

Tops perhaps, among the acknowledged Jews of the fight game was Lewis, whose real name was Gershon Mendeloff, he the son of a cabinet-maker of East London.

The Kid, like Siki, met with disaster through poor judgment.

He, like the Senegalese star, fought Carpentier when the Frenchman was at his peak, giving away height, weight and reach. The match was held in 1922, in London.

Fatal Mistake

So furious was the pace he set against Gorgeous Georges that the latter frequently held on in the clinches to spare himself the unmerciful punishment to which he was being subjected.

At one point, referee Joe Palmer yelled out to the men to stop holding. Lewis turned to the referee to insist that he wasn't doing the holding, that it was Carpentier. And in that split second, the Frenchman shot across his devastating right flush to the Lewis jaw.

The Kid was never the same fighter after that.

BATTLING SIKI
The Senegalese boxer, as he looked in his prime.

When 'Battling Siki' was found dead in the gutter in Hell's Kitchen, N.Y., in 1925 the cartoonists had a field day. Here is how one newspaper artist's reaction looked.

ALL Africa Is Aflame

(Continued From Page 5)

other nations except through the colonial powers. This process assures the "mother country," economic control and advantage.

For example, Dr. Azikiwe told me in Lagos that about 95 per cent of the world's output of the metal used in hardening steel, columbite, is produced in his country, Nigeria.

Practically all of it is finally sold to America. But Nigeria does not sell it to America. All columbite, as with other raw materials, is sold to England at a small profit. England then sells it to America at a considerable profit to herself.

More Struggles

The African leader who seeks home rule today does not expect the colonial powers to give up such position and power without a very real struggle. In fact, they point out that it is the colonies that maintain the already dwindling standard of living in Western Europe.

One African political leader stated the problem thus: "England will not leave us. When we are strong she will be driven out. I hope that my people will use moral power to achieve freedom. I pray that they will be disciplined and non-violent when the hour comes."

This the hope and prayer of most African leaders. Dr. Kwame Nkrumah call s the method "positive action without violence." Throughout Africa most leaders reject gunk. But they also reject dumb patience and vague promises.

They feel that beneath such expressions as "colonial charter," "preparation for self government," "partnership,' etc. there lies the same rationalization, deception and exploitation that the colored American sees in the term "separate but equal."

Political Unity

In Freetown, Lagos, Accra, Kumasi, in Johnnesburg or Cairo, from one end of Africa to the other the people and most of the leaders are convinced that the only answer to the prolonged ignorance, disease and exploitation of colonialism is self-government.

Occasionally they wranle among themselves as to how and when it can come. But leaders who want the support of the masses must take a strong position for independence.

Many among this young and vital leadership have studied in the leadin colleges of Europe and America. They have observed history. They have corage. If need be they are prepared to die.

Africa is afire.