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Title: Henry Horn's X-Ray Eye Glasses

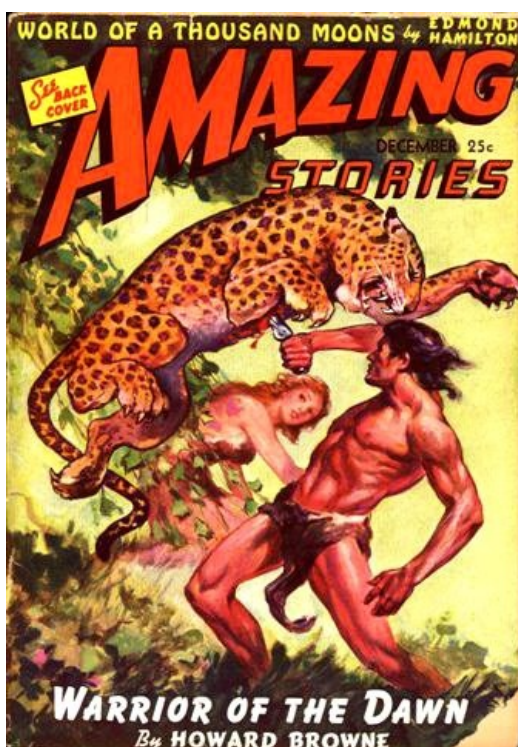
Author: Dwight V. Swain

Release Date: May 30, 2010 [EBook #32591]

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Greg Weeks, Mary Meehan and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at <https://www.pgdp.net>

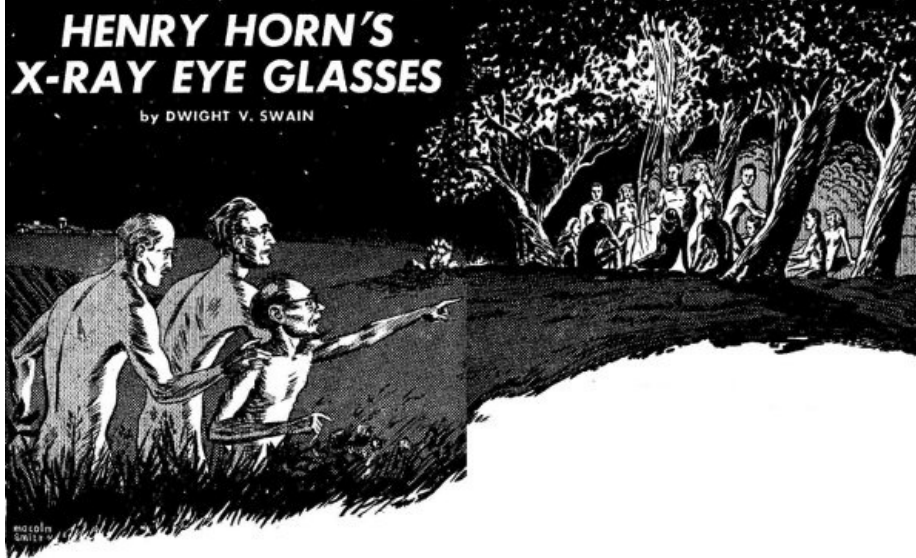
*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK HENRY HORN'S X-RAY EYE GLASSES ***



HENRY HORN'S X-RAY EYE GLASSES

by DWIGHT V. SWAIN

[Transcriber Note: This etext was produced from Amazing Stories December 1942. Extensive research did not uncover any evidence that the U.S. copyright on this publication was renewed.]



"Look!" said Henry Horn with a gasp. "Here, you look at the camp through the glasses!"

"It's not enough to have a nudist colony move in next door!" fumed Professor Paulsen. "No, indeed! That wouldn't disrupt things enough. Now, in addition, every ne'er-do-well in the county comes prowling over our farm in order to spy on the naked numbskulls!"

Scowling ferociously, the gaunt scientist stamped violently back across the meadow's lush verdure toward the little country home he shared with his partner, Henry Horn. Beside him, matching his own long strides, came the savant's old friend, Major Ray Coggleston of Army Intelligence.

Henry Horn had a new invention; a pair of glasses that worked on the x-ray principle. But he didn't expect them to reveal Nazi secret agents and their works of sabotage!

"None of us can hope for a bed of roses all the time, Joe," Coggleston remarked, grinning at the professor's outburst. "'Into each life some rain must fall,' you know. You've got trespassers to bother you. Me, I'm responsible for protecting one of the biggest explosives laboratories in the country against Axis espionage and sabotage."

Instinctively, as he spoke, the officer's eyes sought out the long, low Ordnance experiment station, barely a mile away. Professor Paulsen, following the glance, nodded.

"You're right," he agreed. "And when you come right down to it, my worries over the nudist camp back there"—he jerked his head toward the high board fence which marked the boundary—"aren't very important. Not with a war in progress."

By now the two were in the yard and rounding the corner of the house.

The next instant they stopped dead in their tracks.

There, in the shade of the building, stood a slight, familiar figure. A figure which, at the moment, was the center of attention for a little knot of interested spectators.

"Oh, yes, gentlemen, it certainly does work!" cried Henry Horn enthusiastically, his scraggly goatee jerking spasmodically with each nod of emphasis. He waved the battered pair of binoculars he clutched in his right hand. "Yes, it's a marvelous invention. You can see everything you want to, just like you were right inside that camp. And only a dollar for a minute's look!"

The professor's face jumped to beet red, then apoplectic purple. His fists clenched, and the sound he made as he sucked in his breath closely resembled that of a cow pulling her foot out of a mudhole. He started forward.

Major Coggleston choked off an incipient frame-racking spasm of mirth barely in time. He caught the tall scientist's arm.

"See you later, Joe!" he snickered. "I've got to get back on duty. There's a new super-explosive being tested, and I'm supposed to be on hand."

"All right. Later." Professor Paulsen grated the words through clenched teeth, but it is doubtful that he was even conscious of speaking. His eyes were focussed straight at Henry in a horrible glare, and the smoke of indignation hovered about him in clouds.

"Only a dollar, gentlemen!" cried Henry, oblivious to all this new attention. "It's just like going

inside the camp. Really it is!"

"He's right, boys!" broke in a burly, red-headed character. "Those glasses of his are better than a seat on the fence." And, turning to the little man: "I'll even buy 'em from you. How much'll you take?"

"You see, gentlemen?" whooped Henry, steel-rimmed spectacles nearly sliding off the end of his nose in his excitement. "The gentleman says my invention is everything I say it is—"

"Henry!"

The little man jumped as if a red-hot flatiron had just been applied to that portion of his trousers designed for sitting.

"Urghk!" he exclaimed profoundly.

"You prying Piltown^[1]!" flamed the professor. "Is there anything you won't do for money?" A moment of thunderous silence. "I'm surprised you're not doing a fan dance yourself, if these would-be Peeping Toms are willing to pay for nakedness."

The red-headed man guffawed.

"And you!" exploded the savant, turning on the spectators. "Get out of here! Yes, all of you, you riffraff! I won't have you on the place!"

Henry's potential customers fled before the Paulsen wrath like chaff before the wind, leaving the quaking little entrepreneur to face his fate alone. He stood braced against the verbal cloud-burst, eyes squeezed tight shut behind steel-rimmed glasses, goatee sticking straight out.

"For days these snoopers have driven me half-crazy!" raged the professor. "I've tried every trick I could think of to keep them out. I've put signs forbidding trespassing on every tree. I've threatened mayhem and murder. Yet still they come!"

"But Joseph—"

"Keep quiet 'til I'm finished, you disgrace to science!" The lean scholar ran trembling fingers through his greying hair. Then:

"And now—today! Major Coggleston and I go down to the end of the meadow to drive three of the sneaking human dung beetles away from knot-holes. When we get back, what do we find?"

"Joseph, please—"

"We find you—my colleague, my partner, my friend! You—peddling the use of your binoculars to the slimy creatures!" He glared savagely at his victim. "If you were in Paris, Henry Horn, you'd be selling French postcards to tourists!"

Still purple with rage, the savant turned away. Stared dourly back toward the high board fence that surrounded the nudists.

The next instant he jerked as stiff as if an electric shock had jolted through him.

"Henry!"

"Yes, Joseph." The other's voice was meekly plaintive as he awaited a renewal of the diatribe.

"Henry, that fence is between us and the nudists! How could you see them, binoculars or not?"

Henry's face brightened. His goatee moved to a more confident angle.

"That's what I've been trying to tell you, Joseph," he explained. "It's my new invention—"

"Invention!" There was a hysterical note in the way Professor Paulsen exclaimed the word. "Please, Henry, not that! Don't tell me you've been inventing again—"

His little colleague bristled.

"And why shouldn't I be inventing, Joseph Paulsen?" he demanded querulously. "My inventions are mighty valuable. Why my new explosive—"^[2]

"—Which you ran onto quite by accident, and which turned out not to be an explosive at all," the professor cut in grimly.

"Well, the government—"

"The government doesn't have to live with you. Nor to put up with your 'inventive' ways." Henry's tall partner was fierce in his vehemence. "You've cited one of your devil's devices that turned out well. Well, now let me mention a few. Remember what happened when you decided to find the universal solvent^[3]?"

"But scientists all make mistakes sometimes, Joseph—"

"And how about that time you wiped out every peony within ten miles? Was that a mistake too?"

"Honestly, I didn't think it would kill anything but ragweed," Henry sniveled miserably.

"Of course it was all an accident when you rendered every one of our guinea pigs sterile, wasn't it?" sneered the other. "That was a nice invention, Henry. All it did was to cut off our income for months on end, and nearly destroy our reputation for reliability as breeders of laboratory guinea pigs."

"Oh, Joseph!" Henry's voice was an abject wail. His goatee hung limp and bedraggled. "You know I didn't mean any harm any of those times. Really I didn't. I just want to be a scientist—" Again he began sniveling.

Professor Paulsen, still glaring, opened his mouth to denounce his partner further. Then, thinking better of it, he relaxed and put his arm around Henry's quivering shoulders.

"Do you think I like to talk to you like this?" he asked, leading the way toward the porch. "Do you think it's pleasant for me?" Wearily, he shook his head. "I hate to be shouting at you all the time, Henry. It's just that patience will stretch only so far. Then it snaps."

A pause.

"I keep thinking you'll learn by experience, Henry. That you'll realize you can't be forever blowing the roof off the laboratory, or Lord knows what else, and quit fooling around with things you don't understand.

"But instead, you go right on. You dabble into some new branch of science, and a cloud of trouble sweeps down on us like a typhoon on Zamboanga."

Together, the friends climbed the porch steps and took seats on the ancient but comfortable wicker settee.

Henry darted a quick glance at his partner. Saw that the professor's face once more was placid; that the storm was over. Unconsciously, the little man's goatee perked up. He readjusted his steel-rimmed glasses to a more stable position.

"Honestly, Joseph, this time my invention can't do any harm," he ventured. "Really it can't."

For a moment fire flashed in the scientist's eyes. Then faded again.

"All right, Henry. What is it this time?"

Henry extended the binoculars.

"Here, Joseph. Look at the nudist camp."

"But the fence—"

"Please, Joseph. Go ahead and look."

"Oh, all right—"

The professor raised the field glasses.

The next instant he nearly dropped them.

"What on earth—!"

"See, Joseph?" shrilled Henry. "Isn't it a wonderful invention? Isn't it?"

His tall partner took down the binoculars and stared at them in blank amazement, his face a puzzled mask.

"I'd swear I saw right through that fence!" he gasped. "I looked right into the middle of a whole pack of nudists!"

"Of course!" Henry was bubbling with delight. "That's why I call them my X-ray eyeglasses. You can see through anything with them." He took the glasses from the professor. Again leveled them at the nudist colony.

Then, giggling:

"Doesn't that blonde girl have the cutest—"

"Henry!"

"Oh, all right." The little man returned the binoculars to his partner, who studied them with interest.

"Just what principle do these things work on, Henry?" he asked curiously.

Henry beamed. His goatee was at its jauntiest, most confident angle. The light of triumph played in his eyes.

"Really, Joseph, it's quite simple," he proclaimed. "There are lots of rays that go through anything, you know, except maybe lead. So I just developed a special glass that translated those rays into images, instead of just using the light rays. It was easy. The only thing you have to be careful of is to focus real close, because otherwise you'll look right through the thing you want to see—"

"Simple!" choked the scientist. "Easy! Henry, I hope you kept complete notes this once." He raised the glasses again. Studied a signboard on the nearby road.

"Oh, yes, I've got good notes, Joseph—"

"And you still need a concave eyepiece, so that the images won't reverse," Professor Paulsen interrupted. "The way it works now, pictures are all right, but 'CAMELS' are spelled 'SLEMAC'."

Henry sniffed contemptuously.

"That's nothing," he retorted. "I've got it figured out already. Only it'll take a special lens, not just a concave one. Because now it doesn't just reverse letters like a mirror; it transposes them—"

"All right, all right!" The professor threw up his hands in despair. "This is one time you've invented something worth while, and you seem to have some kind of notion of how it works, for a change."

"How you talk!" Henry was suddenly cocky. He sneered. "I always know how my inventions work —"

His gaunt friend glowered.

"I was afraid of this," he grunted. "Give you half a compliment and there's no living with you." Then: "However, I won't waste time and energy bringing you down to earth right now. The main thing is, get your notes together. I want you to show them to Major Coggleston tonight; I think maybe the army can use this invention of yours."

And, as Henry again raised the glasses in the direction of the nudist camp:

"But get rid of those glasses for now. I don't want to catch you ogling blonde beauties, or any other kind. Those people in that camp put up that fence because they wanted privacy. So put those binoculars away right now. Do you understand?"

"Oh, all right," fretted Henry. "I'll get rid of them."

Dinner was a thing of the past, and Major Coggleston, Professor Paulsen and Henry were settled comfortably on the front porch, enjoying the quiet of the summer evening.

"If these glasses of yours work as well as you say they do, the Army certainly can use them," commented the major thoughtfully. "Such an invention would completely revolutionize espionage and its counter-measures. Nothing would be safe! Why, a spy could stand half-a-mile from the laboratory I'm supposed to be protecting, look through the walls to the records room, and steal the formulae for our latest explosives right from under our noses, with none of us the wiser."

"Yes." The professor nodded. "I can see how much it would mean. That's why I had you over tonight—wanted you to have a chance to investigate." A pause. "By the way, how's the work coming at the laboratory?"

"Better than we'd hoped for, Joe. We've got a young fellow in charge who's a genius on explosives." The major hesitated for a moment, then continued: "Confidentially, I understand he's just developed a new powder that makes TNT look like something to use for loading firecrackers. It's the greatest thing in years. The Nazis and Japs would give their eye-teeth for it. It's simpler to make than gunpowder, even—"

Brrrning!

"I'll answer," said Henry. He skittered inside to the telephone.

A minute later he was back.

"It's for you, Major Coggleston."

The officer hurried to answer. When he returned, his face was tense with worry.

"Something's wrong!" he rapped. "It looks like the Nazis have made a play for that formula already! I've got to get right back to the laboratory!"

Henry and the professor still were excitedly discussing this news when, half an hour later, the 'phone rang again. This time the tall scientist answered. He returned to the porch frowning.

"That was Coggleston," he reported. "Apparently the spy didn't get the formula, but he made a clean getaway, and he killed a sentry to do it."

"Oh, that's terrible!" Henry was afire with indignation. "Of all things! Killing a sentry—"

"Yes." The professor nodded. "The trouble is, Coggleston says they don't have much to go on. No description, except that he was big and had red hair—"

"Red hair!"

"Yes. Red hair." The savant eyed Henry suspiciously. "Why does that surprise you so?"

"Why ... er ... oh, it doesn't. I mean—"

"What do you mean?"

"Really, Joseph, it's nothing." The little man squirmed nervously, his goatee hanging guiltily to one side. "I'm not surprised at all. Really I'm not!"

"Oh, you're not, aren't you?" Professor Paulsen started across the room with grim determination, his eyes sharp. "Well, then—"

"Joseph—"

The scientist reached for his colleague's shoulder. But the shoulder slipped away. Henry dived frantically for the doorway.

"Oh, no, you don't!"

Spinning about with surprising agility, the professor's hand speared out. It stabbed home to its goal on Henry's chin with deadly aim. Caught the little man's goatee in a grip that stopped his headlong rush dead still.

"Joseph!" screamed Henry, his eyes filling with tears. "Stop it! You're hurting!"

"And I intend to keep right on hurting until I get the truth out of you, you amoeba-brained atom!" thundered the other. "I can smell your lies a block away—and this is one time you're not going to get away with it! Now: tell me who the red-headed man was."

"I don't know, Joseph! Really—"

Professor Paulsen gave his colleague's chin-whiskers a savage jerk.

"I want the truth!" he rapped. "Hurry up! Tell me!" He jerked again.

"Oh! Ow! Joseph, please! Oh, let me go! I'll tell—"

"You bet you'll tell!" grated his friend. "It's one thing to let you get away with making a fool of me. But when it comes to tampering with the United States Army—" And then, breaking off: "All right. Why did you jump so when I mentioned the spy was believed to have red hair?"

"Well..." Henry squirmed some more. He tried hard to look dignified despite the professor's grip on his goatee, but failed miserably.

"Out with it!"

"It's really nothing, Joseph—"

"Out with it, I say!"

"Ow! Joseph, stop!" And then: "It's just ... the man who bought my X-ray glasses had red hair—"

"The man who bought your X-ray glasses!"

"Joseph! You're hurting!"

"What do you mean, 'the man who bought your X-ray glasses'?" The professor thrust his gaunt face to within an inch of Henry's, his eyes like steel gimlets. "If you tell me you've sold those glasses, you misbegotten moron—"

"But Joseph!" Henry struggled to free himself. "You told me to get rid of them. You warned me not to use them."

"I never told you to sell them! You knew I wanted to talk to Coggleston about their use to the army—"

"Yes, but you didn't tell me *not* to sell them. And I had all my notes, and knew just how to make another pair, and so when the red-headed man offered me fifty dollars for them—"

But Professor Paulsen had ceased to listen. Already he was on the telephone and calling Major Coggleston. Tersely he explained the situation.

Then:

"Could he have gotten the formula, Ray? Was it anywhere he could see it through those devil's glasses?" And, a moment later: "Oh, Coggleston, I can't tell you how sorry I am—"

"What did he say?" Henry demanded excitedly as the other hung up. "Is it all right, Joseph—"

"No." The scientist shook his head, eyes dark with worry. "Coggleston says we can be practically certain the spy got that formula. He says the man in charge was having a staff meeting of his aides, and they had it written out on a blackboard for discussion."

"Joseph—"

"Ray's on his way over now. He wants to ask you some questions about the man's description—"

Even as the words left the savant's mouth, they heard a car roar up the driveway. Major Ray Coggleston hurried in the door, a sergeant at his heels. He wasted no time on preliminaries.

"What did he look like?" he demanded.

"Well, he had red hair...."

"Yes, yes. We know that."

"He was pretty big. Almost as tall as Joseph."

"Yes. Go on."

"I guess he talked sort of loud."

"Got it."

Henry hesitated. Tugged at his goatee, his face screwed with concentration.

"Really, Major Coggleston, that's about all I can remember about him," he said at last.

The officer swore. He paced the floor in a frenzy of anxiety.

"We've nothing to go on!" he fumed. "The description's meaningless. It could fit any one of a thousand men in this area. We don't even know where to start to hunt."

"Excuse me, major—" gulped Henry.

The military man whirled on him.

"What is it? Have you thought of something else?"

"Why, about where to start to hunt—"

"Yes?"

"Why don't you try the nudist camp?"

"The nudist camp?" Professor Paulsen exploded. "Are you completely crazy, Henry? Why would a spy be in a nudist camp?"

Henry glared back at him.

"No, I'm not completely crazy," he snapped peevishly. "And I don't know what a spy is doing in a nudist camp, but that's where he was when I sold him my glasses." He sniffed. "Really, Joseph, I get awfully tired of your acting like you were the only one around here who was half smart."

But Major Coggleston interrupted.

"Let's get this straight," he pleaded. "Where did you meet this red-headed man? How'd you come to sell him the glasses?"

"Oh, that?" Henry sniffed so hard his glasses slid down his nose. "Why, he was one of the men who was out peeking at the nudists." He turned to Professor Paulsen. "You remember, Joseph. He's the one who said I was telling the truth about my X-ray eyeglasses being able to look through the fence."

"Yes, heaven preserve me, I remember!" groaned the professor. "But why didn't I think—"

"So he asked me to sell him my glasses," Henry continued. "And when Joseph told me to get rid of them, I took them over to the nudist camp and sold them to him for fifty dollars."

"But how'd you know he was in the nudist camp?"

"How?" Henry's goatee jerked with contempt. "How would I know anyone was there? I saw him. He was right behind the blonde with the cute—"

"Henry!"

"Oh, all right. Anyhow, he was right behind a blonde girl. I saw him when I looked through my glasses while I was showing Joseph how to use them."

Again Major Coggleston paced the floor. His face was lined with worry. He bit nervously at his lip.

"I'll be damned if I know what to do!" he exploded. "I've got to find that spy. But I can hardly seize a whole nudist camp just because a red-headed man bought a pair of binoculars."

"Couldn't you ask that all red-headed men be brought to the gate?" suggested Professor Paulsen.

"No." The officer shook his head. "If the man we want is there, that would tip him off."

"Excuse me, sir," broke in the sergeant who accompanied Major Coggleston, "but why not just search the whole place with the men you've got detailed for guard duty? It wouldn't be much of a job."

The major nodded.

"If I have to, that's just what I plan," he replied. "However, there are women in that camp. Nude women. And, frankly, I don't hanker after any of the kind of publicity which undoubtedly would result from such a search. So I want to avoid it if I can."

"Then what—"

"I'll go in alone! That's it!" Major Coggleston straightened, suddenly decisive. "Sergeant, go back to the laboratory and round up all but a skeleton guard. Bring them back to the nudist camp and surround it. Don't let anyone escape! Do you understand me?"

"Yes, sir. I am to surround the nudist camp with our men as soon as possible, leaving only a skeleton guard on the laboratory."

"Right. On your way."

The sergeant strode out, and a moment later the car in the driveway roared to life. And back in the house, the major drew a deep breath.

"Well, I'm off!" he snapped. "Wish me luck!"

"Wait!" bleated Henry, his goatee wagging excitedly.

"What's the matter?"

"I'm going with you!"

"You?" Major Coggleston stared. "What for?"

Henry started in indignation at the other's tone. He drew himself to his full height and thrust his chin out aggressively.

"What for?" he mimicked. "Hmmp! Let me ask you a question, Mister Officer: how are you going to identify the man who bought my glasses if I'm not along?"

The major considered this. Then, at last:

"All right. I guess you'll have to come."

"Then so do I."

It was Professor Paulsen.

"Joe, there's no need to talk like that," Major Ray Coggleston began.

"If Henry goes, I go," the savant reiterated stubbornly. "He gets in enough jams with me around to look after him. Lord knows what he'd do if he got away from me."

And so it was, ten minutes later, that the three appeared at the main gate of the Sunset Glow Nudist Colony: Let Old Sol Bring You Health. From within the fenced enclosure came the glow of firelight and the sound of festivities. A burly short-clad gateman was on duty.

"Well?" he demanded.

Major Coggleston displayed his credentials.

"You've got a man in there whom we suspect of being a spy," he explained. "We've got to come in and investigate."

The gateman hesitated and chewed his lower lip.

"O.K.," he said finally. "Ditch your clothes in the brush, over there."

"Ditch our clothes!"

"Sure." The gateman nodded determinedly. "You didn't think you could come in the way you are, did you?"

"But we represent the United States Government—"

"I don't give a damn who you represent." The gateman was adamant. "If you want to enter Sunset Glow, you'll do it in bare skin or not at all."

The three stared from one to another. At last the major broke the silence.

"All right," he snapped. "Have it your own way. I suppose we *would* stand out like sore thumbs if we wore clothes."

It took the trio but a minute to disrobe. They slipped through the gate, a strange sight: Henry, small and spindly, chin-whiskers waving animatedly; Professor Paulsen, gaunt, lean-shanked, stooped; and Major Coggleston, still strong and well-built, but with a noticeable spare tire beginning to develop around his midriff.

Inside, a great open fire was burning, with a throng of male and female nudists disporting themselves about it. Some were toasting wieners and marshmallows; other only their own epidermis. There was much laughter and good-natured raillery.

"Joseph!" exclaimed Henry tensely, his goatee quivering to a point like a setter's tail. "There! See her? That blonde girl—"

His colleague turned on him.

"Henry Horn, I'm warning you for the last time!" he clipped. "We're having a hard enough time as it is, without your calling that young lady's anatomical details to our attention. So keep quiet!"

"Oh, all right," the little man sulked. "Just because you think you're smarter than I am—"

"Joe! Henry!" Major Coggleston interrupted excitedly. "Look! That man walking off into the shadows! Hasn't he red hair?"

The two friends shot quick glances in the direction the officer pointed.

"That's him!" squealed Henry, dancing about like a monkey on a stick. "That's the man who bought my glasses!"

"Come on!" The major darted forward, looking for all the world like an oversize kewpie doll. Henry and the professor followed close on his heels.

Ahead of them, the red-headed nudist hurried farther and farther out of the firelight and into the brush. Bushes began to slap against the three friends' faces.

"Damn that devil!" fumed Major Coggleston. "I can't see him. Has he lost us?"

"Ouch!" yipped Henry, close beside him. "Oh! The mosquitoes!"

Professor Paulsen slapped vigorously at his own anatomy.

"They're awful!" he agreed. Then, to his friend, the major: "Do you see him? Where is he?"

And from the darkness behind them a voice answered:

"Right here I am, gentlemen! At your service, now and always!"

As one man, the trio whirled. A burly figure loomed in the gloom.

It was the red-headed man!

"Did you buy a pair of binoculars—" the major began.

The other waved him down.

"Sure, I bought 'em. And tonight I used 'em to snag onto the most important military secret I've seen in a month of Sundays. Believe me, mister, I'll make my fortune from this job!"

"Then you admit you're a spy?" the officer rasped, starting to move forward. "You admit you're the dirty dog who murdered our sentry—"

"Sure, sure, I admit it." The burly one seemed unperturbed.

"Why, you—"

"Hold it!" There was a sharp note of command in the red-headed man's voice this time. "Don't come no closer, buddy. Not if you want to keep your health!" He held out one ham-like hand. It gripped a heavy, bottle-shaped package.

"I got a little private lab in my suitcase," the spy explained. "When I saw how simple that formula was, I just brewed me up a batch of your new powder. Now I got it right here"—he waved the package—"complete with detonator. If you guys try to jump me, all I do is let go and the whole works goes off." He chuckled unpleasantly. "I guess you know what happens when two pounds of that stuff lets go."

The three friends shrank back. Henry's teeth already were chattering like the gourds in a rumba band.

"I guess you've got us," Major Coggleston said tautly. "However, you can't go far. My men are surrounding this camp right now."

The red-headed man sneered.

"Why don't you tell me something new?" he commented caustically. "Why'd you think I grabbed you?"

"What?"

"You didn't think you guys surprised me, did you?" The burly one laughed. "Hell, I saw you the second you came in.

"The way I'd planned it, I was going to hide out in the camp, here, until the stink blew over. Then I figured on pulling a fast sneak out of the country.

"But someone caught wise. I guess it was you"—he nodded at the quaking Henry—"so I had to revise things a little. I knew you'd have support coming up—Army Intelligence officers don't walk into trouble without backing except in the movies."

"So what do you plan to do with us?" demanded the major. "You can see you haven't a chance to get away—"

"Haven't I?"

"The camp is surrounded."

"Sure." Their captor was amused. "That's why I grabbed you. The four of us are going to march out of here together. And you"—he jerked his head toward Major Coggleston—"are going to make your boys lay off. You'll go with me 'til I'm satisfied I'm in the clear. Then I'll turn you loose."

"And if we refuse?" grated the major.

The other shrugged.

"O.K. by me," he said. "We all blow up together."

There was a long moment of silence, pregnant with panic.

"You must have a great deal of confidence in your ability as a chemist, to prepare this explosive on such short notice and with limited equipment," Professor Paulsen commented at last.

The red-headed man laughed.

"Why shouldn't I have?" he demanded. "I may have been raised in Brooklyn, but I learned my business in Berlin, and they know how to teach there."

Another long silence.

"Well, make up your mind!" their captor grunted finally. "We ain't got all night, you know. Do you come quiet, or do I have to blow us all to smithereens?" He waved the package in his hand menacingly.

Major Coggleston threw up his hands in a gesture of defeat.

"You win!" he snapped. "If I were alone, I'd say blow and be damned. But my friends deserve a better fate."

"You're smart," the other reported approvingly. "Come on!"

Slowly, the trio moved forward.

"Hurry up!" grated the red-head. And then, to the professor: "You skinny, get a move on!"

For the gaunt savant was distinctly lagging. He had dropped back until he was a full yard behind Henry and the major, and only a step in front of the spy.

"Hurry up!" the Nazi repeated, his eyes suddenly cold and menacing.

"Joseph! Come on!" urged Henry, his teeth chattering. "Don't make him mad! Please, Joseph!"

"I'm coming," grunted the scientist. "I certainly can't be blamed if the pebbles and twigs hurt my feet, can I?"

And with that, he sprang.

Like a human octopus, all long arms and legs, he launched himself at the spy. His hands clutched at the red-head's throat. His legs wrapped around the man's waist and dashed him backward to the ground.

"Help!" screamed the spy. With a wild motion he hurled the package from him in a long arch.

Bang!

But the explosion was the crack of a detonating cap, not the thunderous roar of a heavy charge of powder.

Major Coggleston lunged forward. His fists beat a meaty tattoo on the spy's face.

The next instant the crackle of military commands and the thud of footsteps burst upon them. The four—Professor Paulsen, Major Coggleston and the spy, in a heap on the ground; and Henry Horn, wide-eyed and trembling, standing near at hand—were illumined in a powerful flashlight's beam. Half a dozen soldiers rushed up.

"Major! We heard that shot! Are you all right?"

The officer struggled to his feet, trying hard to preserve the dignity of his rank despite his nudity. In the light of the flash he looked even more than before like an overgrown kewpie doll.

"Of course I'm all right!" he puffed. "What's more, that red-headed rat on the ground is the spy and murderer we've been looking for. Take him away, men!"

He turned to Professor Paulsen.

"Joe, this is one time I don't know what to say. If it hadn't been for you that devil would have made a clean getaway."

"Forget it," retorted the gaunt scientist. "It's little enough I can do for my country at my age."

"Honestly, Joseph, I can't see how you got the nerve to do it!" marveled Henry, still wide-eyed. "Just think, we might all have been killed—"

The professor glared.

"What do you mean, we might all have been killed?"

"Why, the explosive in that package, and the detonator—really, Joseph, it was terribly dangerous —"

"Dangerous!" snorted the savant. "The only dangerous part was that he might have hit me over the head with it."

"But—the explosive—"

"Explosive, my eye!" And, again glaring: "Do you mean to tell me you can't understand why that stuff he had in the package didn't go off, you abbreviated atom?"

Henry's goatee waggled uncertainly. He adjusted the steel-rimmed spectacles which were his only garment.

"Well ... really, Joseph..."

"I'll admit right out I don't get it," broke in Major Coggleston. "You mean there wasn't any danger of that stuff going off?"

"Of course not." Professor Paulsen was distinctly snappish.

"But why—"

The scientist turned back to Henry. "Don't you remember what I said to you this morning about those devil's glasses of yours transposing letters instead of just reversing them? And that you told me it would take a special lens to straighten them out?"

"You mean—"

"Take any formula and transpose the symbols all the way through, and see what you get. Trinitrocresol, for instance. The formula is $C_7H_5N_3O_7$. Transpose it all the way through, and you have ${}_7O_3N_5H_7C$. In that particular case, it wouldn't even make sense. But when our red-headed spy said he was a chemist and hadn't had any trouble compounding this new explosive, I figured the formula must be one that would be at least half-way logical, no matter which way you wrote it. Only the odds were a million to one that one way it would equal an explosive; the other, nothing at all. So I didn't hesitate to attack him."

"Joe," said Major Coggleston admiringly, "that's a lot faster thinking than I've ever done. And I don't need to tell you how grateful the Army will be."

"Really, Joseph, it was awfully clever!" Henry chimed in. "I'd never have thought of it—"

And then, changing thought in mid-sentence:

"Look! There's that pretty blonde girl with the—"

"Henry!" exploded Professor Paulsen. "You're old enough to behave like a grown man, not an inspectionistic schoolboy!" His hand shot out to grip his little partner's goatee and jerk his eyes

from the luscious creature now parading her charms before them.

"Ouch!" squealed Henry, his face screwing up with pain. "Joseph, you're hurting!"

"Then will you be good? Will you behave yourself?"

"Of course, Joseph. Just let me go!" Then, sulkily, as the tall scientist released him: "Though I still think you're mighty finicky, Joseph Paulsen. After all, what's wrong with my liking the cute way that girl wears the bangs across her forehead?"

[1] The Piltdown Man was a species of prehistoric being (*Eoanthropus dawsoni*), long since extinct, with a retreating, apelike chin and thick cranial bones, but a human-type cranium.—ED.

[2] See "Henry Horn's Blitz Bomb," *AMAZING STORIES*, June, '42.—ED.

[3] See "Henry Horn's Super-Solvent," *Fantastic Adventures*, November, '41.—ED.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK HENRY HORN'S X-RAY EYE GLASSES ***

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