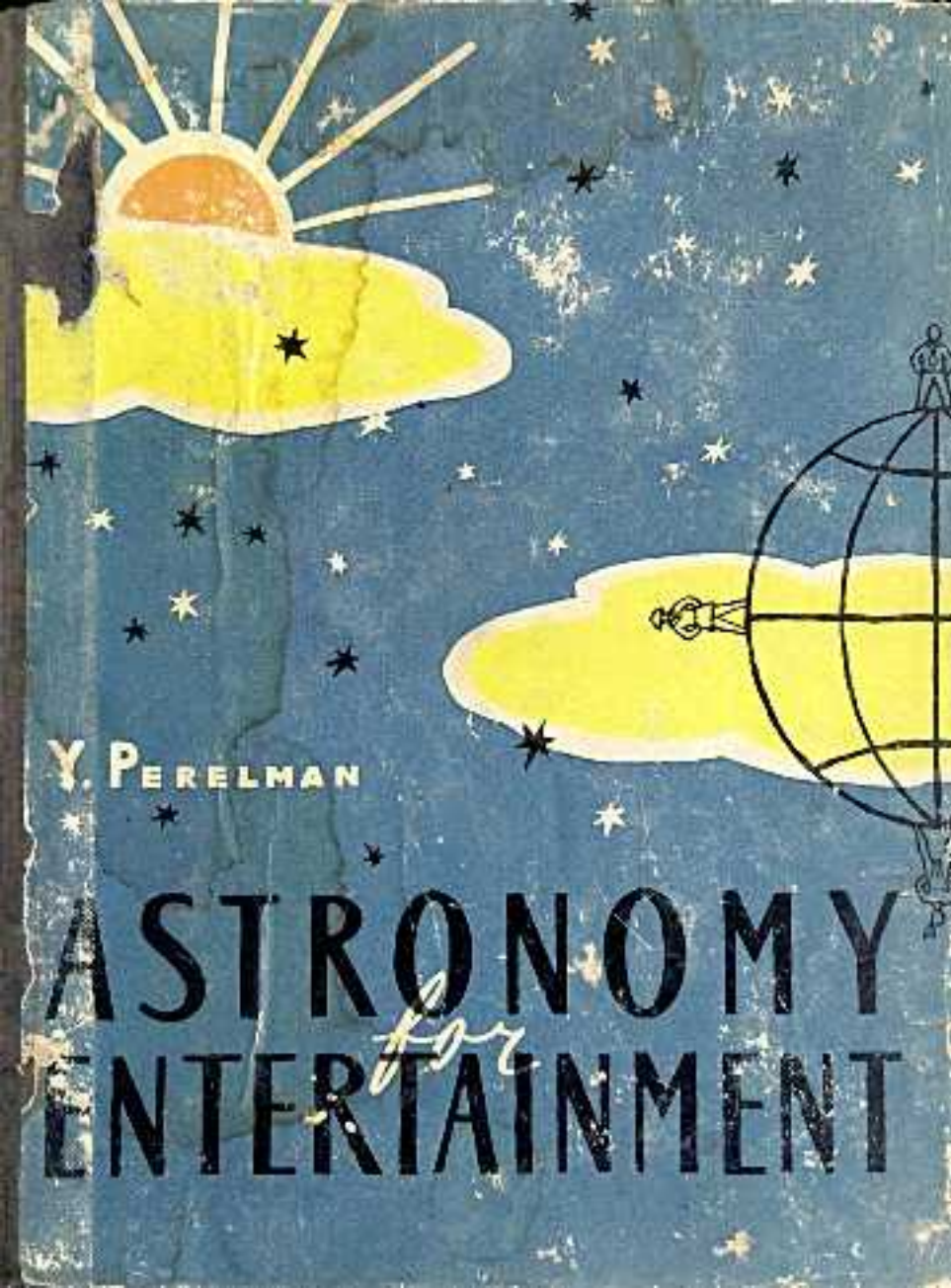


The book cover features a dark blue background speckled with white and black stars. In the upper left, a yellow sun with radiating lines is partially obscured by a dark silhouette. Below it is a large, bright yellow cloud. In the lower right, a yellow crescent moon is depicted with a small figure standing on its surface. To the right of the moon is a wireframe globe with a figure standing on its top pole. The author's name 'Y. PERELMAN' is printed in white capital letters on the left side, and the title 'ASTRONOMY' and 'ENTERTAINMENT' are in large black capital letters at the bottom, with a handwritten signature 'for' in white script between them.

Y. PERELMAN

ASTRONOMY  
*for*  
ENTERTAINMENT

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## PREFACE

Astronomy is a fortunate science; it needs no embellishments, said the French savant Arago. So fascinating are its achievements that no special effort is needed to attract attention. Nonetheless, the science of the heavens is not only a collection of astonishing revelations and daring theories. Ordinary facts, things that happen day by day, are its substance. Most laymen have, generally speaking, a rather hazy notion of this prosaic aspect of astronomy. They find it of little interest, for it is indeed hard to concentrate on what is always before the eye.

It is this daily aspect of the science of the skies, its beginnings, not later findings, that mainly—but not exclusively—form the contents of *Astronomy for Entertainment*. The purpose of the book is to initiate the reader into the *basic* facts of astronomy. But do not take it as a primer, since our presentation differs essentially from any text-book. Ordinary facts with which you may be acquainted are couched here in unexpected paradoxes, or slanted from an odd and unexpected angle, solely with a view to excite imagination and quicken interest. We have tried to free the theme as far as possible from the professional "terminology" and technical paraphernalia that so often make the reader shy of books on astronomy.

Books on popular science are often rebuked for not being sufficiently serious. In a way the rebuke is just, and support for it can be found (if one has in mind the exact natural sciences) in the tendency to avoid calculations in any shape or form. And yet the reader can really master his subject only by learning how to reckon, even though in a rudimentary fashion. Hence, both in *Astronomy for Entertainment* and in other books of this series, the author has not attempted to avoid the simplest of calculations. True, he has taken care to present them

