

thought nothing of it until the next day when he learned that the bookie had dropped dead . . . while talking on the telephone . . . at just about the time of their conversation.

This gave Larry Snell food for thought.

He was not an uneducated man; he knew what a whammy was. In fact, he'd tried whammies before, but they'd never worked for him. Had something changed? It was worth trying. Carefully he made out a list of twenty people whom, for one reason or another, he hated. He telephoned them one at a time — spacing the calls over the course of a week — and told each of them to drop dead.

They did. All of them.

It was not until the end of that week that he discovered that what he had was not simply the whammy, but the Power. He was talking to a dame, a top dame, a stripteuse working in a top nightclub and making twenty or forty times his own income, and he had said, "Honey, come up to my room after the last show, huh?"

She did.

It staggered him, because he'd been kidding. Rich men and handsome playboys were after her, and she'd fallen for a casual, not even seriously intended, proposition from Larry Snell.

Did he have the Power? He tried it the next morning, before

she left him. He asked her how much money she had with her, and then told her to give it to him. She did, and it was several hundred dollars.

He was in business.

By the end of the next week he was rich. He had made himself that way by borrowing money from everyone he knew — including slight acquaintances who were fairly high in the hierarchy of the underworld and therefore quite solvent — and then telling them to forget it. He moved from his fleabag pad to a penthouse apartment atop the swankiest hotel in town. It was a bachelor apartment, but he slept there alone only seldom, and then only for purposes of recuperation.

IT was a nice life. Even so it took a few weeks of it to make Snell realize that he was wasting the Power. Why shouldn't he really use what he had? Why not take things over — the country first and then the world — make himself the most powerful dictator in history? Why shouldn't he have and own everything, including a harem instead of a dame a night? Why shouldn't he have an army to enforce the fact that his slightest wish would be everyone else's highest law? If his commands were obeyed over the telephone, certainly they would be obeyed if he used radio and television.

All he had to do was pay for (pay for? Simply demand!) a universal TV network that would let him be heard by everyone everywhere. Or almost everyone. He could take over when he had only a simple majority behind him. The others would come in line later.

But this would be a Big Deal, the biggest one ever swung, and he decided to take his time planning it so there would be no possibility of his making a careless mistake.

He decided to spend a few days alone, out of town and away from everybody. He had planning to do.

He chartered a plane to take him to a relatively uncrowded part of the Catskills, and from an inn (which he took over simply by telling the other guests to leave) he started taking long walks alone, thinking and dreaming. He found

a favorite spot. It was a small hill in a valley surrounded by mountains. The scenery was magnificent. He did most of his thinking there, and found himself becoming more and more elated and euphoric as he began to see that it could and would work.

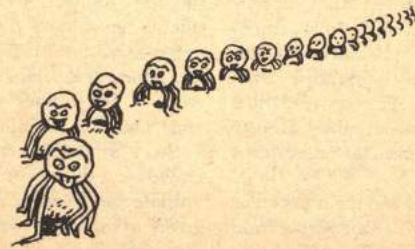
Dictator, hell! He'd have himself crowned Emperor. Emperor of the World! Why not? Who could defy a man with the Power? The Power to make anyone obey any command that he gave them, up to and including—

"Drop dead!" he shouted from the hilltop, in sheer vicious exuberance, not caring whether or not anyone or anything was within range of his voice . . .

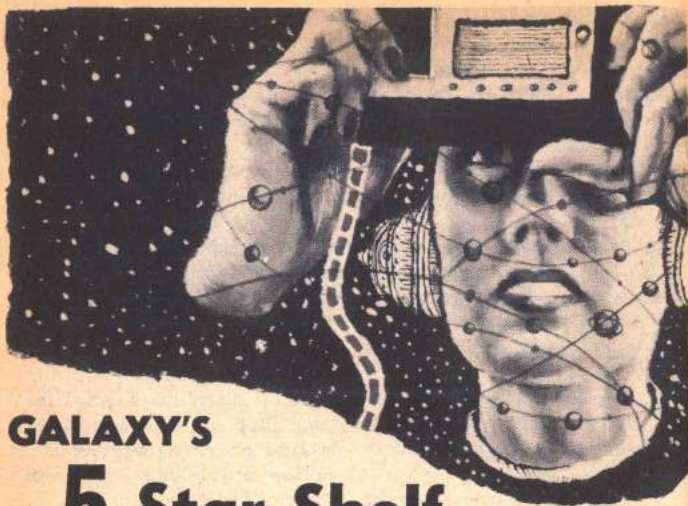
A teenage boy and a teenage girl found him there the next day.

They hurried back to report the dead man they had found on the top of Echo Hill.

— FREDRIC BROWN







## GALAXY'S 5 Star Shelf

**ACROSS THE SEA OF STARS** by Arthur C. Clarke. Harcourt, Brace & Co., Inc., N. Y., \$3.95

WHEN CLARKE'S collection, *The Other Side of the Sky*, appeared, I remarked that practically all of the Clarke shorts worth reprinting in an all-Clarke anthology have been so honored. I never reckoned that Harcourt, Brace would issue an omnibus Clarke and knock my pat statement for a loop.

All the stories are from previous volumes — eight from *Expedition to Earth*, five from *Tales from the*

*White Hart* and five from *Reach for Tomorrow*, along with two excellent novels, *Childhood's End* and *Earthlight*.

As is usual with most Clarke short stories, the last sentence carries the stunner that virtually certifies a ten minute digestive pause between yarns. Prime examples of this shock treatment are "Inheritance," "Encounter at Dawn," and "The Fires Within."

So, although an anthology culled exclusively from previous anthologies perhaps should not be given a separate rating, this bargain giant merits: \*\*\*\*\*

**THE DUPLICATED MAN** by James Blish and Robert Lowndes. Avalon Books, N. Y., \$2.95

"I'LL BE looked upon as the ultimate in military plagues," says the man who is to be duplicated five-fold, "the latest achievement in biological weapons."

Later, a key character says, "Is there a real hero? I can find none — or too many." Actually, the multiplicity of prime movers is the aim of the authors.

Venus, colonized by self-exiled revolutionaries and hiding behind a screen that deflects atomic missiles, has been pasting Earth haphazardly with chemical warheads for two generations. Earth, at uneasy peace under Security Council rule, is too civilized to take punitive measures against the aggressors. Hence the intricate plot of infiltration involving the Duplicated Man.

Deviousness of plotting and many thumbnail character sketches enliven the book.

Rating: \*\*\*\*½

**WE COME FROM THE SEA**, by Hans Hass. Doubleday & Co., Inc., N. Y., \$6.50

THOUGH MANY tides have waned and waxed since *Reefs of Taprobane*, our last undersea book, Hass makes up for the long calm.

Hass is one of the world's top

authorities on diving with closed-circuit oxygen apparatus. The big advantage of this technique is the freedom from the exhalation bubbles of compressed-air gear that complicate observation. But, regardless of breathing methods, Hass's book is a breathtaking account of several expeditions into exotic waters.

His text and photographs of his encounter with a gigantic whale shark in the Red Sea almost defy belief, as do the equally startling undersea photos obtained of the harpooning of a monstrous sperm whale in the Azores.

The Great Barrier Reef of Australia and Darwin's famed Galapagos Islands also contribute to word and picture.

**WHEN THE SLEEPER WAKES** by H. G. Wells. Ace Books, N. Y., 35¢

ONE OF the greatest of the true SF classics, this book has been out of print for so long that it is either a nostalgic memory to the older reader or a bare legend to the younger. In my case, thirty years between readings left little recallable detail.

*Sleeper* is a prime example of the short life of the gadget story. Wells' energy to sustain his complex culture comes from batteries of huge wind vanes. His airplanes are flimsy powered gliders, his



autos ridiculous toys. His guesses at science to come were so outstripped by reality that today, half a century later, they seem impossibly timid.

The worth of his story lies in its human values. The social problems of the far-from-Brave New World, though based on the black and white concepts of 19th century Victorianism, make the story the classic that it still is. This is "Young Wells" at his non-Utopian best.

**MAN'S JOURNEY THROUGH TIME** by L. S. Palmer. *Philosophical Library, N. Y.*

THE DATE of the beginning of man's inhumanity to man is being constantly pushed further back into antiquity. In explanation: some of the richest finds of human remains have been the gruesome relics of antediluvian cannibal brain feasts.

Palmer's book is not meant for light reading. His purpose is to chart statistically against the backdrop of time the subtle changes, physical and cultural, that gradually led to the first true *Homo sapiens*. Unfortunately, the evolutionary chart is still full of blank spaces. However, as a resumé of current knowledge, the catchily titled volume is exceptional and possibly unique.

A question arises: How far

along are we, if we still resort to cracking our neighbor's skull to win an argument?

**SCIENCE FICTION SHOW-CASE**, edited by Mary Kornbluth. *Doubleday & Co., Inc., N. Y., \$3.95*

A SAD fact it is, as Frederik Pohl states in his introduction, that this is one of the very few SF anthologies that does not contain a yarn by the late C. M. Kornbluth. But this volume, compiled by his widow and written by his friends, is a sort of memorial.

The roster, fittingly, is strictly big league: Knight, Pohl, Sturgeon, Davidson, Anderson, Bradbury, Dick, Blish, Williamson, Leinster, Matheson and Bloch.

"The Long Remembering" by Anderson and "Mantage" by Matheson, Pohl's "Man Who Ate the World" and Knight's "Ticket to Anywhere" are genuine memory grabbers.

Rating: \*\*\*\*

**THE GOLDEN APE** by Adam Chase. *Avalon Books, N. Y., \$2.95*

CHASE'S ADVENTURESOME romp is in the rare tradition of the old John Carter tales of Burroughs — at first. The archaically romantic dialogue, the cliff-hanging chapter endings and the monochrome characterizations pour nostalgia by the bucketful over the anes-

thetized reader. But the clunk of a hero can't begin to measure up to the Burroughs giants.

By the time page 75 rolls around, it is obvious that ERB, wherever he may be, can RIP, certain that his laurels are still intact.

Rating: \*\*

**THE EXPLORATION OF SPACE** by Arthur C. Clarke. *Harper & Brothers, N. Y., \$4.50*

CLARKE'S AUTHORITATIVE 1951 volume is revised to include the very latest information.

Concerning "Luniks," the difficulty of orbiting around the Moon is explained: "It is impossible for the Moon to trap a rocket. It must either crash, or head on out into space. Only if the vehicle is slowed by the use of braking rockets can it remain captive."

The ion drive is explained and a new one, the plasma jet, is outlined. A plasma is a superheated gas such as might derive directly from fusion reactions. It could be the means of harnessing the hydrogen atom.

**THE NEW SCHOOL** by Howard William Ray. *Exposition Press, N. Y., \$2.50*

THIS UTOPIAN fantasy by a novelist is at once naive and shocking, earthy and sublime, occasionally expert but more fre-

quently awkward. Author Ray seems aware of the lack of narrative interest in his philosophical talkiness and intersperses his only action scenes, laid in bed, between regular periods of continence. It is not enough.

His "New School" is hardly that. Rather, it resembles the Good Life teachings of the founders of most of our modern religions.

Rating: \*\*½

**THE BEAST MASTERS** by Andre Norton. *Harcourt, Brace & Co., N. Y., \$3.00*

MISS NORTON draws mainly on the American Southwest as a background prototype in her latest juvenile, even though Earth has been obliterated in an interstellar war.

Her young hero, a Navajo youth named Hosteen Storm, is Beast Master of a commando team composed of a hybrid dune cat, an African eagle and two small acquisitive and inquisitive meerkats. At war's end, he and his team settle on the planet Arzor, mainly to collect a tribal debt of vengeance against a rancher formerly of Earth.

Miss Norton writes so skillfully on the two operative levels of horse and space that her young readers are sure to enjoy complete enthrallment.

Rating for youngsters: \*\*\*\*



**DANNY DUNN AND THE WEATHER MACHINE** by Jay Williams and Raymond Abrashkin. Whittlesey House, N. Y., \$2.95

DANNY, OF *Anti-Gravity Paint* and *Homework Machine* misadventures, is back again, misusing the marvelous inventions of the Dr. Doolittleish Professor Bullfinch. This time, an ionic transmitter, sort of a wireless power source, is the demon-ex-machina for, along with energy, it also creates room-size thunderstorms.

The authors reap plenty of humor from this promising situation, meanwhile sowing a considerable amount of meteorological knowledge in the process.

Rating for youngsters: \*\*\*\*

**JUNIOR EDUCATION CORNER**

**MR. WIZARD'S EXPERIMENTS FOR YOUNG SCIENTISTS** by Don Herbert. Doubleday & Co., Inc., N. Y., \$2.95

MR. WIZARD, the creation of Don Herbert, is the famous TV

scientific savant who stimulates scientific curiosity in his youthful viewers with his provocative experiments. The above book is equally thought-provoking and well planned, each chapter of experiments being written with a particular branch of science in mind.

**ELEMENTS OF THE UNIVERSE** by Glenn T. Seaborg. E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., N. Y., \$3.95

DESPITE THEIR seeming dissimilarity, this and *Man's Journey Through Time* both chart Man's progress through the ages. The story of civilization is the discovery of the building blocks of nature, and Man's laborious efforts to put them to his use.

Seaborg is truly qualified to teach — he is a Nobel Laureate, co-discover of nine elements, and the only man since Mendeleev to make a major change in the Periodic Table. His TV lectures are here presented in easily assimilable doses.

— FLOYD C. GALE



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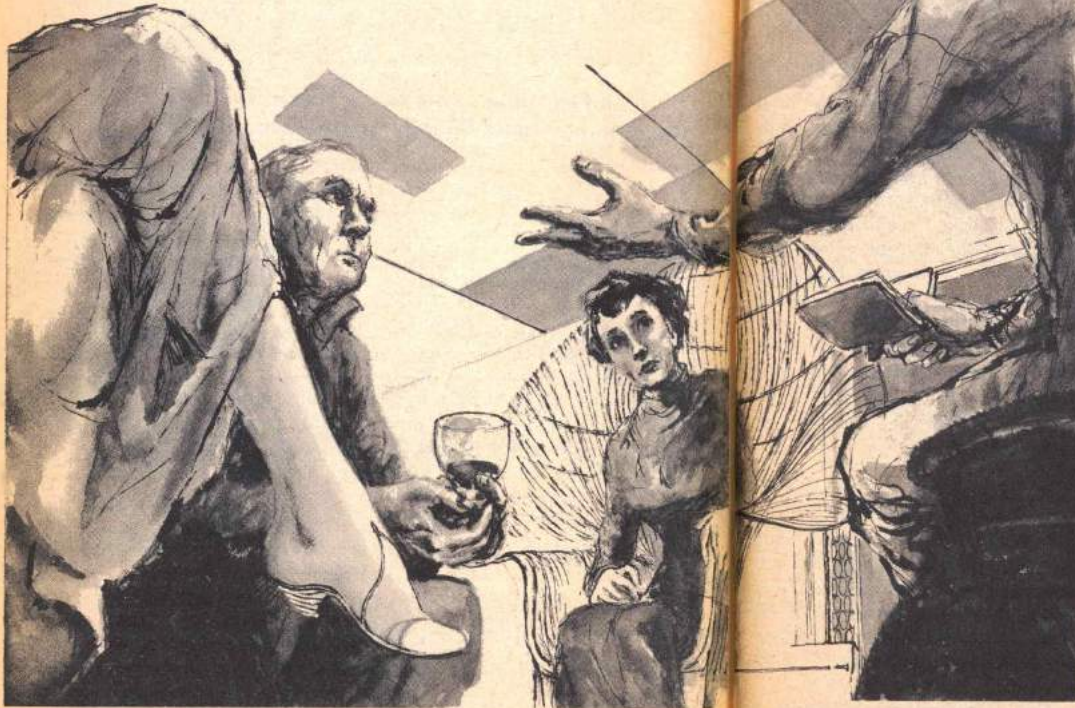
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# THE TROUBLEMAKERS

*What did Genetics and Hansen's Folly have in common? Why, everything . . . Genetics was statistical and Hansen's Folly impossible!*

Illustrated by DICK FRANCIS



148

GALAXY

By GEORGE O. SMITH

I

**T**HE living room reflected wealth, position, good taste. In size it was a full ten feet by fourteen, with nearly an eight-foot ceiling. Light was furnished by glow panels precisely balanced in color to produce light's most flattering tint for the woman who sat in a delicate chair of authentic, golden-veined blackwood.

The chair itself must have cost a fortune to ship from Tau Ceti Five. It was an ostentation in the eyes of the visitor, who viewed it as evidence of a self-indulgent attitude that would certainly make his job more difficult.

The air in the room was fresh and very faintly aromatic, pleasing. It came draftlessly refreshed at a temperature of seventy-six degrees and a relative humidity of fifty per cent and permitted the entry of no more than one foreign particle (dust) per cubic foot.

The coffee table was another ostentation, but for a different reason than the imported chair of blackwood. The coffee table was of mahogany — terrestrial mahogany — and therefore either antique, heirloom, or both, and in any combination of cases it was priceless. It gave the visitor some dark pleasure to sit before it with his comparison microscope parked on the polished mahogany surface, with the ease of one who always parked his tools on

THE TROUBLEMAKERS

149



tables and stands made of treasure woods.

There were four persons. Paul Hanford swirled brandy in a snifter with a series of nervous gestures. Mrs. Hanford sat in the blackwood chair unhappily, despite the flattering glow of the wall-panels. Their daughter, Gloria, sat in such a way as to distract the visitor by presenting a target that his eyes could not avoid. Try as he would, his gaze kept straying to the slender, exposed bare ankle and the delicate, high-arched foot visible beneath the hem of the girl's dress.

NORMAN Ross, GSch, was the visitor, and he subvocalized his tenth self-indictment as he tore his gaze away from Gloria Hanford's ankle to look into Paul Hanford's face. Ross was the Scholar of Genetics for the local division of the Department of Domestic Tranquility and he should have known all about such things, but he obviously did not.

He said, "You can hardly blame yourselves, you know," although he did not really believe it.

"But what have we done wrong?" asked Mrs. Hanford in a plaintive voice.

Scholar Ross shook his head and caught his gaze in mid-stray before it returned all the way to that alluring ankle. "Genetics, my dear Mrs. Hanford, is a statistical science, not a precise science." He

waved vaguely at the comparison microscope. "There are your backgrounds for seven generations. No one — and I repeat, *no one* — could have foreseen the issue of a headstrong, difficult offspring from the mating of characteristics such as these. I checked most carefully, most minutely, just to be certain that some obscure but important conflict had not been overlooked by the signing doctor. Doctors, however, do make mistakes."

Gloria Hanford dandled her calf provocatively and caused the hem of her skirt to rise another half-inch. The scholar's eyes swung, clung, and were jerked away again.

"What's wrong with me, Scholar Ross?" she asked in a throaty voice.

"You are headstrong, self-willed, wild, and —" his voice failed because he wanted to lash out at her for her brazen and deliberate display of her bare ankle; he struggled to find a drawing-room word for her that would not wholly offend the hapless parents and ultimately came up with — "meretricious."

Gloria said, "I'm all that just because I enjoy a little fun?"

"You may call it fun to scare people to death by flying your air-car below roof level along the city streets, but the Department of Air Traffic says that it is both dangerous and illegal."

"Pooh!"

Paul Hanford said, "Gloria, it

isn't that you don't know better."

Mrs. Hanford said, "Paul, how have we failed as parents?"

Scholar Ross shook his head. "You haven't failed. You can't help it if your daughter is a throwback —"

"Throwback!" exclaimed Gloria.

"— to an earlier, more violent age when uncontrolled groups of headstrong youths formed gangs of New York and conducted open warfare upon one another for the control of Tammany Hall. Those wild days were the result of unregistered, unrestricted, and uncontrolled matings. Since no attempt was made to prevent the unfit from mating with the unfit, there were many generations of wild ones — troublemakers. It is not surprising that, with such a human heritage, an occasional wild one is born today."

THE scholar took another surreptitious (he hoped) glance at the bare ankle and said, "No, you are not directly to blame. We know you wouldn't spawn a troublemaker willfully and maliciously. It's just an unfortunate accident. You must not despair over the past — but you *must* spend your efforts to calm the troubled future."

"What should we do, Scholar Ross?" asked Paul Hanford.

"I have to speak bluntly. Perhaps you'd prefer the ladies to leave."

"I'll not go," said Mrs. Hanford firmly, and Gloria added, "I'm not going to let you talk about me behind my back!"

"Very well. As Scholar of Genetics, I am head of the local Division of Domestic Tranquility. I would prefer to keep my district calm and peaceful, without the attention of the punitive authorities, and I'm sure you'd all prefer this, too."

"Absolutely!" said Paul Hanford.

"Now, then," said Scholar Ross, "for the immediate problem, we'll prescribe fifty milligrams of dociline, one tablet to be taken each night before retiring. This will place our young lady's frame of mind in a receptive mood to suggestions of gentler pursuits. As soon as possible, Mr. Hanford, subscribe to *Music To Live By* and have them pipe in Program G-252 every evening, starting shortly after dinnertime and signing off shortly after breakfast. Your daughter's dinnertime and breakfast I mean, and the outlet should be in her bedroom. It is not mandatory that she heed the program material all the time, but it must be available to set her moods. Finally, upon awakening, a twenty-five milligram tablet of nitrolabe will lower the patient's capacity for anticipating excitement during the day."

He paused for a moment thoughtfully, and added as if it were an



aside, "I'd not go so far as to suggest that you — her parents — make a conscious effort to avoid listening to periods of Program G-252, but I'd definitely warn you not to fall into the habit of listening to it."

He eyed the ceiling thoughtfully, then consulted his notebook. "Come to think of it, I'll also give you a prescription for Program X-870 which you can use or not as you desire. Have this one piped into your bedroom, Mrs. Hanford, and try to strike a somewhat reasonable balance. Say no greater imbalance than about two of one to one of the other and if you, Mr. Hanford, spend any time listening to your daughter's program material, you should also counteract its effect by listening to an equal time of the program prescribed for Mrs. Hanford."

He turned back to Gloria and shook his head.

She smiled archly at him and asked, "Now what's wrong?"

"You," he told her bluntly. "If this delinquency weren't a mental disorder, I'd prescribe a ten milligram dose of micrograine to be taken at the first quickening of the pulse prior to excitement. I don't suppose you really regret your wildness, though, do you, Miss Hanford?"

SHE shook her head. "No, and I don't really enjoy the whole program you've laid out for me."

"I'd hardly expect anybody to approve of a program that is calculated to change their entire personality and character," said Scholar Ross. "But a bit of common logic will convince you that it is the better thing. Miss Hanford, you've simply got to conform."

"Why?" she demanded.

"We live in a free world, Miss Hanford, but it is a freedom diluted by our responsibility to our fellow-man. The density of population here on Earth is too high to permit rowdy behavior. Laws are not passed simply to curtail a man's freedom. They are passed to protect the innocent bystander — who is minding his own business — from the unruly, headstrong character who doesn't see anything wrong in disposing of empty beer bottles by dropping them out of his apartment window, and justifying his behavior by pointing out that it is a hundred-yard walk down the corridor to the trash chute. When we live so close together that no one can raise his voice in anger without disturbing his neighbor, then we have the right to pass laws against such a display of temper. It works both ways, Miss Hanford. By requiring people to behave themselves, we ultimately arrive at a social culture in which no one conducts himself in such a way as to anger his neighbor into violence. Have I made myself clear?"

"In other words," said Gloria, "if

it's fun, hurry up and pass a law against it!"

"Well, hardly that—" the scholar began.

"Tell me," she interrupted. "How long am I going to be on this pill-and-lullaby diet?"

"It may be for a long time. In severe cases, it is for the rest of the patient's life. On the other hand, we have quite a bit of evidence that your urge to excitement may dwindle with maturity. Oh, we do not propose to make a pariah out of you. Marriage and motherhood have settling effects, too."

"My baby—!" cried Mrs. Hanford.

"Your baby," commented Paul Hanford in a very dry voice, "is a college graduate, twenty years old."

"Nobody's asked my opinion," complained Gloria, swinging her leg and hiking the hem of her skirt another half-inch above the slender ankle.

"Nobody will. However, Miss Hanford, I shall place your card in the 'eligible' file and have your characteristics checked. I'm sure that we can find a man who will be acceptable to you — and also to the department of Domestic Tranquility."

"Humph!"

"Sneer if you will, Miss Hanford. But marriage and motherhood have taken the 'hell' out of a lot of hell-raisers in the past."

THE TROUBLEMAKERS

II

JUNIOR Spaceman Howard Reed entered the commandant's office eagerly and briskly. His salute was snappy as he announced himself.

Commander Breckenridge looked up at the young spaceman without expression, nodded curtly, and then looked down at the pile of papers neatly stacked in the center of his desk. Without saying a word, the commander fingered down through the pile until he came to a thin sheaf of papers stapled together. This file he withdrew, placed atop the stack, and then he proceeded to read every word of every page as if he were refreshing his memory about some minor incident that had become important only because of the upper-level annoyance it had caused.

When he finished, he looked up and said coldly, "I presume you know why you're here, Mr. Reed?"

"I can guess, sir — because of my technical suggestion."

"You are correct."

"And it's been accepted?" cried the junior spaceman eagerly.

"It has not!" snapped the superior officer. "In fact—"

"But, sir, I don't understand—"

"Silence!" said Commander Breckenridge. Almost automatically, his right hand slipped the top drawer open to expose the vial of tri-colored capsules. His hand

153



stopped short of them, dangling into the drawer from the wrist resting on the edge. He looked down at the pills and seemed to be debating whether it would be better to conduct this painful interview as gentlemen should, or to let his righteous anger show.

"Mr. Reed," he said heavily, "your aptitudes and qualifications were reviewed most carefully by the Bureau of Personnel, and their considered judgment caused your replacement here, in the Bureau of Operations. You were *not*—and I repeat, *not*—placed in the Bureau of Research. Is this clear?"

"Yes, sir. But—"

"Mr. Reed, I cannot object to the provisions in the Regulations whereby encouragement is given both the officers and men to proffer suggestions for the betterment of the Service. However, a shoemaker should stick to his last. The benefit of this program becomes a detriment when any officer or man tries to invade other departments. This works both ways, Mr. Reed. There is not an officer in the whole Bureau of Research who can tell me a single thing about organizing my Bureau of Operations. Conversely, I would be completely stunned if any Operations officer were to come up with something that hasn't been known to the Bureau of Research for years."

"Yes, sir. I see your point, sir. But if the Bureau of Research has

known about my suggestion for years, why isn't it being used?"

"Because, Mr. Reed, it will not work!"

"But, sir, it's *got* to work!"

"And you feel so firmly convinced of this that you had the temerity to bypass my office?"

"Sir, you yourself make a point of professing to know absolutely nothing about scientific matters."

"All right, we'll table this angle for a few minutes. Just what makes this notion of yours so important, Mr. Reed?"

"SIR," said Reed, "the maximum range for our most efficient spacecraft is only a bit over seventeen light-years to the point of no return. My suggestion deals with a means of extending that range a hundred times. Perhaps more. If it were my decision, sir, anything that even hinted at extending the cruising range would receive a maximum-urgency priority."

"In other words, you feel that anything we can do to extend our operations is the most important thing in the whole Space Service?"

"Well, sir, perhaps not *the* most important, but —"

"Your modesty is gratifying. I presume this modesty would prevent you from accepting any more than the Letter of Commendation from the Office of the Secretary?"

"I don't understand, sir."

"You don't? Mr. Reed, was your desire to improve the efficiency of Operations a simple desire to improve the Service — or did you hope that this brilliant suggestion would, perhaps, provide you with a better assignment?"

"I still do not understand."

"Oh, you don't? Mr. Reed, why did you join the Space Service in the first place?"

"Because, sir, I hoped that I could be instrumental in helping mankind to spread across the Galaxy."

"Mr. Reed, have you sand in your shoes?"

"Sir?"

The commander sighed. "You hoped to go along on the voyage, didn't you?"

"Well, sir, I did have a hope that I'd become a real spaceman."

"And you're disappointed?"

Howard Reed's face was wistful, torn between a desire to confide in his commanding officer and the fear of saying what he knew to be a sharp criticism of the Space Service.

Then Reed realized that he was in a bad pinch anyway, and so he said, "Sir, I'm commissioned as a junior spaceman, but in three years I've only made one short test flight — and only to Luna! I am competent to pilot — or at least that's what the flight simulators say in my checkout tests. I'm a junior spaceman — yet every time I apply for active space duty, I'm refused!

Three years I've spent in the Service, sir, solving theoretical and hypothetical problems in space operations. But aside from one test flight to the Moon, I have yet to set a foot inside of a spacecraft, let alone stand on the soil of another world!"

"You must learn patience, Mr. Reed."

"Patience, sir? Look, sir, I took this sedentary duty until I'd had it up to here, and then I began to pry into the question of why we have a Space Force, complete with spacecraft, and still do so little space traveling. I found out. We're limited to a maximum range of seventeen light-years to the point of no return. Even a trip to Eden, Tau Ceti, our nearest colony, is eleven-point-eight light-years, and that takes prodigious power."

"Granted," said the commander.

"But now, sir, if we could increase our range by one hundred times, this does not necessarily mean that we must actually power the spacecraft for that point of no return. It also means that we could charge the ship with one one-hundredth of its former banks for the short trip to Eden, Tau Ceti — which would leave a *fantastic* amount of storage and cargo and passenger space. Sir, we could start real commerce!"

COMMANDER Breckenridge gave no reaction.

"And you hoped to be among them."



"Yes, sir! As a kid, I read about mankind's first exploration of space two hundred years ago, sir. Of course, I couldn't hope to set foot on a new planet, since every possible planet within the seventeen-light-year range has been looked over. But I wanted to see space myself, sir — and I did hope that I might extend Man's frontier beyond our rather small limit."

"Yes, I can understand the impatience of youth," said Commander Breckenridge. "For that, I can forgive you. But for trying to do the other man's job, I cannot."

"Sir, you're as much as saying that no one can have a good technical idea but the technical people at the Bureau of Research."

In answer, the commander flipped over several pages of the file. He said: "Mister Reed, this is what resulted in your abortive attempt to gain a scientific ear instead of forwarding your suggestion through the standard channels. I'm going to quote some pertinent parts of a letter from Commander Briggs, head of the Bureau of Research. Listen:

" — young genius has rediscovered the line of mathematical argument known here at Research as 'Hansen's Folly' because it was first exploited by young Spaceman Hansen about a hundred and fifty years ago. Hansen's Folly is probably to be expected of a young, ambitious young officer with stars in his eyes. I'd be inclined to congratulate him

— if it weren't for the fact that Hansen's Folly turns up with such regularity that we here at Research hold a regular pool against its next rediscovery. You'll be happy to know that you, your young genius, and your department have 'won' for me the great honor (?) of buying dinner for the crew at the Officers Club on Saturday next.

"Don't be too hard on young Reed; the rediscovery of Hansen's Folly takes a rather bright mind. However, Breck, I will congratulate your bright young man if he can — without any further clue — go back over his own mathematics and locate the flaw. I'll —"

"There's more of this, but it isn't germane," said Breckenridge quietly. "This is enough."

"Enough, sir?" repeated Reed blankly.

"Enough to let you know what goes on. Now, Mr. Reed, you've committed nothing but a brash act of bad taste in bypassing the standard channels. Such an indiscretion demands some form of punishment, but if I were to attempt to outline punishment officially, it would be unfortunately easy for some legal eagle to point out that your behavior was, to the best of your knowledge, intended for the betterment of the Service. And furthermore that I was wreaking vengeance upon your hapless soul for having made my name the brunt of jokes at the Officers Club."

"I'm sorry, sir."

"Being sorry is not enough, Mr. Reed. But I have a plan that will gratify everybody concerned. You want to become an active spaceman? Very well, your next tour of duty will be at the Space Force Station on the planet Eden, Tau Ceti. It will terminate when you have finally succeeded in locating the flaw in Hansen's Folly and can show the error to the satisfaction of Commander Briggs. Have I made myself clear, Mr. Reed?"

"Yes, sir, and thank you, sir. You're really doing me a favor, sir."

"Mr. Reed, despite the age-old platitude, it is wise to look the gift horse in the mouth, at least before saying thanks."

### III

SCHOLAR Norman Ross smiled at his host's statement. "Yes, indeed, Mr. Harrison! Arranging these things so that we can maintain the Norm is often a delicate and arduous task. There are restrictions, and there are many variables involved, the most sensitive of which are the feelings of the people involved."

"Your job must call for the ultimate in diplomacy," said Mrs. Harrison.

To his host's wife, Scholar Ross nodded. "Yet," he said as an afterthought, "of even greater value is a high regard for the perfect truth.

This includes the self-discipline of admitting it when one has been wrong, and being able to state precisely how, where, why, and, most important, to what degree."

"I don't understand," said his hostess.

"Mrs. Harrison, let's consider Bertram."

She cast a glance at her son. In an earlier age, he would have been called "indolent." During dinner, Bertram had employed the correct fork, plied his knife properly, conversed with his partners on both sides — yet she knew something was wrong.

"Bertram," she said, "haven't you been forgetting your pills?"

"Sorry, Mother," replied the young man tonelessly.

Bertram arose and left, and Scholar Ross said, "This is what I mean, Mrs. Harrison. Genetics is not a precise science; it is statistical. We can consider highly favorable the mating of two well-balanced people, and we can predict that this union will produce well-balanced children. Unfortunately we cannot guarantee the desired results. Hence we have anomalies such as Bertram, whose problem is simply a lack of drive. Now this is no fault of yours, Mrs. Harrison, nor of yours, Mr. Harrison. It may be the fault of Genetics, but if it is our 'fault,' then the fault lies in the lack of total knowledge; but not in the misuse, or lack of use, of what



knowledge we do already have."

"I see what you mean, Scholar Ross."

"You'll also see the opposite when the Hanfords arrive. Here we have parents as stable as you two. You'll pardon me if I say that if all four of your characteristic cards were dropped at once and I had been expected to render a considered opinion as to their most favorable mating combination, I could render no preference, so equal are you. However, your union has produced Bertram. Conversely, their mating has produced a girl who is wild, headstrong, willful."

**B**ERTRAM returned, seated himself quietly, and when Scholar Ross stopped talking, Bertram said apologetically, "I took a double dose, Mother."

"Is that all right?" she asked Scholar Ross.

"Probably won't do any harm," he said.

Mr. Harrison cleared his throat. "I'm not sure that I approve of Bertram marrying a headstrong girl, Scholar Ross."

Mrs. Harrison said, "William, you know it's best."

"For Bertram?"

"Now here," said Scholar Ross, "we must cease considering the welfare of the individual alone and start thinking of him as a part of an integrated society. No man is an island, Mr. Harrison. In a less ad-

vanced culture, Bertram would have been permitted to meet contemporary personalities. Perhaps might have met someone who — as he does — lacks drive and initiative, and the result would have been a family of dull children. Had he been unlucky enough to marry a woman with drive and ambition, their children might have been normal, but the entire home life would have been an emotional battlefield. And that —"

"Isn't that what you're about to achieve?" asked Mr. Harrison.

"Not at all. We shall achieve the normal, happy children who will undoubtedly grow into fine, stable adults. To gain this end, of course, their home life must be happy and tranquil. We'll prescribe for them — allowing for the emotional change that results from marriage and —"

The doorbell interrupted the scholar's explanation. "Allow me," he said, rising and heading for the apartment door. The Harrisons followed him at a slight distance. It was the Hanfords.

There was the full round robin of introductions and small talk: "You had no trouble?" "No, the intercity beacon was running clear —" "Lovely apartment, Mrs. Harrison." "Mrs. Hanford, here in Philadelphia we feel that we're almost in the suburbs." "Got a treat for you, Hanford — been saving a bottle of natural bourbon!" "That'll be a treat, all right!" "This is a real event. Scholar

Ross." "You know, Mrs. Hanford, the vidphone hardly does you justice!" "Why, thank you!"

"Miss Hanford, may I present Bertram Harrison?" "How do you do?" "I do as I please. What's your excuse?" "Huh?" "Now, Gloria!" "Bertram, show Gloria the flower room. Go on, now!"

Scholar Ross watched the young couple walk through a French door to an outside terrace. He turned to Harrison and said, "Everything set?"

Harrison nodded. "Had a little trouble with the Music people till I used your priority. They said they'd have Program R-147 piped into the flower room. Frankly, I think R-215 is better."

**S**CHOLAR Ross laughed gently.

"Probably happy association."

"Wife and I still have it piped in for our anniversary," Mr. Harrison admitted.

"Good for you! But R-215 is for normal, happily well-balanced young people who'd probably fall in love without it. R-147 is sure-fire for emotional opposites."

"Well, we finally got the program piped in, so what do we do now?"

Scholar Ross smiled quietly. "We wait. We get acquainted, because there is a very high probability that you two families will be united through the marriage of your children. Then I shall enter a new file in the Genetics Bureau of the De-

partment of Domestic Tranquility. We shall watch through the years as your grandchildren grow, and make periodic checks, and thereby advance mankind's knowledge of genetics."

"Doesn't this sort of masterminding ever give you a God complex?" asked Mr. Hanford.

"Not at all. Were I God, I'm sure I could arrange things a lot better."

"In what way?"

"By Man's own laws, we are prevented from doing active genetic research on the human race. We apply what happens to mice and fruit flies to the human family tree. We've known for centuries how to breed blue-eyed or brown-eyed people, or, if we wanted, we could make the race predominantly fat or thin, tall or short. However, our main aim is not the ultimate purity of any physical characteristic. Our goal is to produce a stable, happy people by eliminating the lethargic personality below and the excitable types above."

The scholar thought for a moment, and then, remembering Bertram's error in forgetting to take his go-pills, said, "But we are blocked by law. I can prescribe medication and therapy, but I have no power to force the patient to take the treatment. This is a most difficult problem, believe me."

"In what way?" asked Mrs. Harrison with some interest.

"The lethargic types are very