

# Amazing

Fact and Science Fiction Stories

SEPTEMBER, 1962 Vol. 36, No. 9

REG. U. S. PAT. OFF.

"FIRST IN SCIENCE FICTION SINCE 1926"

**NOVELET**

THE ICE MAN (A Classic Reprint)  
By William Withers Douglas . . . . . 86

**SHORT STORIES**

SUNFIRE!  
By Edmond Hamilton . . . . . 6

WHISTLER  
By David Rome . . . . . 81

**VIGNETTE**

APOCRYPHAL FRAGMENT  
By Edward Wellen . . . . . 21

**SERIAL**

A TRACE OF MEMORY (Conclusion)  
By Keith Laumer . . . . . 32

**FACT**

THE INEVITABILITY OF LIFE  
By Ben Bova . . . . . 23

**FEATURES**

EDITORIAL . . . . . 5  
THROUGH TIME AND SPACE WITH  
BENEDICT BREADFRUIT: VII  
By Grandall Barretton . . . . . 22  
COMING NEXT MONTH . . . . . 85  
THE SPECTROSCOPE . . . . . 122  
... OR SO YOU SAY . . . . . 126

Cover: Lloyd Birmingham

Illustrating *Sunfire*

**SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE:** All subscription correspondence should be addressed to AMAZING STORIES, Circulation Department, 434 South Wabash Avenue, Chicago 5, Illinois. Please allow at least six weeks for change of address. Include your old address, as well as new—enclosing if possible an address label from a recent issue.

**EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS** must be accompanied by return postage and will be handled with reasonable care; however publisher assumes no responsibility for return or safety of art work, photographs or manuscripts.

**ZIFF-DAVIS PUBLISHING COMPANY**

William B. Ziff, Chairman of the Board (1946-1958)

William Ziff, President

W. Bradford Briggs, Executive Vice President

Herschel B. Sarbin, Vice President and General Manager

M. T. Birmingham, Jr., Vice President and Treasurer

Robert P. Breeding, Circulation Director

Charles Housman, Financial Vice President

Stanley R. Greenfield, Vice President

**Editorial Director**  
**NORMAN M. LOBSENZ**

**Editor**  
**CELE GOLDSMITH**

Ziff-Davis Publishing Company  
Editorial and Executive Offices  
One Park Avenue  
New York 16, New York  
ORegon 9-7200  
Advertising Manager  
Martin Gluckman

Midwestern and Circulation Office  
434 South Wabash Avenue  
Chicago 5, Illinois  
WAbash 2-4911

Western Office  
9025 Wilshire Boulevard  
Beverly Hills, California  
CRestview 4-0265



Copyright © 1962 by Ziff-Davis Publishing Company. All rights reserved.



# Whistler

By DAVID ROME

Illustrated by SUMMERS

**Putting a Spacer in the engine room with Hank  
was like human sacrifice. But a Spacer  
has patience—and a certain skill.**

I KNEW we'd get trouble, with Hank and a Spacer together in the *Taros*. That Hank was the most unlikeable Chief I ever shipped with, and the whole crew knew it. But Cap Walters was Hank's contemporary, and he didn't give a cuss for aliens. So he just let it ride, and I worked out my watches in the sweatshop, and tried to keep the powder keg from blowing.

You know the way the Spacers are—the love they have for their whispering native music. They spend their lives in fashioning strange instruments—from metal scraps, from dried out skins and bones of ship rats, snared below. We used to say, during the War, that they won their fights with music, not with guns. Through all the long night watches, they'd stroke at one instrument or another. Slow, lilt-

ing tunes that tugged at something deep inside a man.

But it was here Hank found his opening. And sharp the needle was. And bitter as an acid.

*You got your brains between your legs, Spacer?  
Oh, jee-sus christ, you got no legs!*

I'D heard it in the War—the tune the Spacers loved and played most often. Hank must have picked it up somewhere along the Rim, and now he put the obscene words to it. The engine room would ring with sound, while the alien went about his work. But he never made a move, or said a word to Hank.

I used to try to let him see that most of us were different. Sometimes, in the mess, I'd pass him a drink tube, and grin while

I was doing it. But Hank would pipe up from the end of the table, with his tune.

You know the way it goes.

I sometimes think back now to the time when I was still a kid. Remember how we'd get behind a Spacer on the walkway, chanting those words at him without even knowing what they meant? That was adult talk, so it was our talk, too.

And when he'd turn around, we'd swoop in low and lift that little skirt they used to wear, and see the single, snaillike foot.

Remember?

But after the War, when the Spacers had somehow melted the last of the Invaders out of the sky for us, we didn't do that anymore. Because we were the pilots who fought alongside the Spacers in the Great Deeps, and watched their silent heroism deliver Earth from the black needships.

While men like Hank Baffour, too old to fight, rode tramp ships through the safety of hyperspace, and hung right on to their prejudices.

Hung right on, even now, as our ship plunged through the grey continuum toward Rimaway. . . .

I said one night: "You never were in the War, were you, Hank?"

Hank was wiping his hands on the sides of his coveralls. Not a

tall man, but wide through the shoulders. Even as I spoke, he began to whistle between his teeth, soft and tuneful—and carrying.

The Spacer was in his cot, taking his watch below, but I knew he'd hear all right. I stepped forward and spoke again: "You're starting to needle *me*, Hank."

Hank was still a handsome man for his age. But handsome in a way I didn't like. His features were too strong, his grey hair too carefully crinkled. He just kept whistling and looking at me, but he never answered.

WHEN I turned away, the centres of my palms were moist. I picked up a jackwrench and knew I was trembling. I chewed at my lip and thought: *The hell with it.* But I was hating myself for considering my career, and Jimmy, back home, and the pension I'd lose if I backhanded Hank.

I never heard him move up on me. I was bending over a pressure feed, wrench in hand, when he spoke very softly, right behind me:

"What were you in the War, hero?"

I didn't turn. I knew if I turned we would be at each other's throat. I said quietly: "Not a hero, Hank. Just a pilot, like a lot of other guys."

I kept on working, and all the time I could feel Hank bunched up right at my back. And then, so close I could feel the cold touch of air on my face, he started whistling. Soft and low, just for me. Begging me to turn. Wound up and ready for trouble.

I said steadily: "A real fine whistler, aren't you, Hank?" and I actually set myself for the blow. But it didn't come, and the whistling stopped. And when I turned, I saw why.

Hank had swung full circle, his head snapping round. His neck was scarlet, and throbbing, and I could see the little hairs at his nape bristling with rage.

He was looking across the engine room, straight into the eyes of the Spacer.

The ship seemed to draw in breath. I clearly heard my heart hammering as Hank took one pace—two paces—forward.

Even as he moved, his hand scooped down and came up with a heavy pipe fitting. He held it close to his body, level with his waist, and now he started whistling again, soft and vicious.

*You got your brains between your legs, Spacer?  
Oh, jee-sus christ, you got no legs!*

And the Spacer just stood there, motionless, a part-finished musical instrument in his hands.

I don't remember moving. I was standing with the jack-wrench in my fist, thinking of Jimmy, my career. . . .

And then, quite suddenly, I was up behind Hank, and he was going down with blood coming out of his head. And there was blood on the wrench. . . .

CAPTAIN Walters listened to both sides of the story; but I knew I didn't have a chance. Hank spoke too long and too well, and the Captain nodded too often at what he was saying.

The Spacer spoke up for me, of course; but the Captain was one of the old school from the start, and behind Hank all the way.

I got my marching orders right after we blew out of hyperspace over Rimaway. I could ship back to Earth, or I could debark here, with full pay, and go my own way.

But I took one look at Hank's face, and I knew he would kill me if I ever sailed aboard that ship again. So I packed my bag and collected my pay, and left the *Taros* for good.

The Spacer left just after me. . . . But I didn't know that.

\* \* \*

The year that followed is hazy in my memory, even now. I drank pretty solid for a month, and then I was taking work

here, and work there, just to keep myself alive.

The big ships that whispered down from the stars could never offer me a berth. I used to go into Mainport regularly, but there were star tramps like me on every world in the Galaxy, all looking for the way home, and I never got work.

And around that time, the colonies became bad with fever, and I was caught up in it. I was delirious some of the time, I know, but I stayed on my feet for a week, because I knew if I didn't get out of Rimaway, I was going to die.

I forced myself down to Mainport every day now. I tried for work aboard a dozen ships, but never found it. Only once. And then I got as far as the Medic. He looked at me without even getting up from behind his desk, and just shook his head.

I remember how hot it was that morning, as I stumbled out of his office. My head was making bright circles where the walkway should have been, and I had to stop and lean my back hard up against the terminal wall.

And then, directly overhead, far up, with a sound like thunder, a big ship materialized out of hyperspace. I watched it falling down, and saw its retros stab fire into the blueness. And then it was close overhead, filling the

sky, and I saw that it was my old ship, *Taros*.

And that was all I knew.

The walkway hit my face just as the time the big ship touched. I felt pain, and sharp surprise, and then nothing.

Nothing but more pain, shot with fire for a long time. And then the slow passing of what might have been days, or weeks, or years. . . .

UNTIL, one morning, I woke. Really woke, for the first time.

And the Spacer was bending over me.

Delirium?

I wasn't sure.

I reached up a hand, touched his face—and it felt like a face. Then the Spacer smiled at me the only way he could, by hooking his fingers into each side of his mouth and pulling it wide.

I smiled back, and the Spacer began to nod his head. I was looking around now. I was in a hospital in Mainport. Outside, I could hear the muted drum-roll of a ship going into hyperspace.

I said: "How did you find me?"

The Spacer stirred, and smiled you where ships come in. It was again. "Each day I looked for you where ships come in. It was not easy with so many people, but I found you."

And I relaxed then, thanking

God; and like the voice of music in my ears, I heard the Spacer say:

*"Now, I can help you to go home. . . ."*

There's not much more to tell. This should have been the story's end. Perhaps it is.

But I'm not sure.

For the ship that took me back to Earth was *Taros*, and I sailed with her engine room crew.

Because Hank Baffour, her Chief, had deserted in Mainport that last trip out. Just walked off the ship. And never seen again.

The Spacer got his berth back, too; and all the way home, on his off-duty watches, he played a newly fashioned instrument I'd never seen before. Its shape was familiar though, somehow; and its tune came out softly, like a man whistling between his teeth through the dark reaches of the night.

*You got your brains between your legs, Spacer?*

*Oh, jee-sus christ, you got no legs!*

And you were a real fine whistler, Hank.

**THE END**