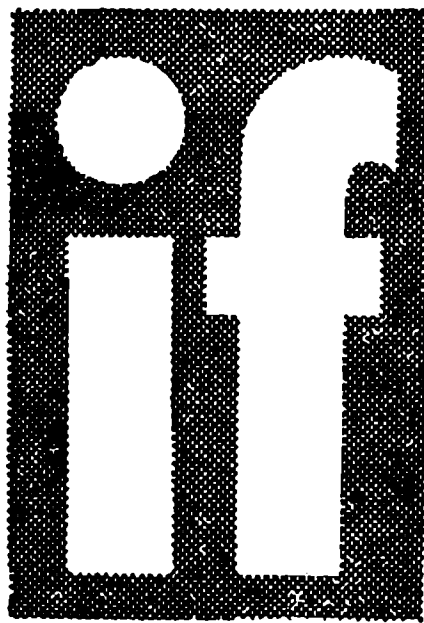


**worlds
of**



MARCH 1962
*All Stories New
and Complete*

**science
fiction**

Vol. 12, Number 1

Robert M. Guinn, *Publisher*
Sam Ravidich, *Art Director*
Frederik Pohl, *Managing Editor*
Theodore Sturgeon, *Feature Editor*

NOVELETTES

Kings Who Die by *Poul Anderson* 8

Tybalt by *Stephen Barr* 58

The Madman From Earth by *Keith Laumer* 99

SHORT STORIES

Dangerous Quarry by *Jim Harmon* 37

The Happy Homicide by *Frank Banta* 82

E Being by *James Stammers* 89

Seven-Day Terror by *R. A. Lafferty* 123

SPECIAL FEATURES

Who Else But You? (*Editorial*) 6

Alexander Graham Bell & Me by *Theodore Sturgeon* 50

Science Briefs 86

Hue and Cry 129

COVER by *Pederson* from "Kings Who Die"

Next issue (May) on sale March 15th

IF published bi-monthly by Digest Productions Corporation, Vol. 12, No. 1
Main Office: 421 Hudson Street, New York 14, New York 35c per copy.
Subscriptions 12 issues \$3.00 in the United States, Canada, Mexico, South
and Central America and U. S. possessions, elsewhere \$4.00. Second-class
postage paid at New York, New York, and at additional mailing offices.
Copyright by Digest Productions Corporation, 1962. All rights including
translations reserved. All material submitted must be accompanied by
self-addressed stamped envelopes. The publisher assumes no responsibility
for unsolicited material. All stories printed in this magazine are fic-
tion, and any similarity between characters and actual persons is coinciden-
tal. Printed in the U. S. A. by the Guinn Company, Inc., New York
14, N. Y.

★ SEVEN DAY ★ ★ TERROR ★

Things just vanished. It was simple. As a matter of fact, it was child's play!

BY R. A. LAFFERTY

“IS there anything you want to make disappear?” Clarence Willoughby asked his mother.

“A sink full of dishes is all I can think of. How will you do it?”

“I just built a disappearer. All you do is cut the other end out of a beer can. Then you take two pieces of red cardboard with peepholes in the middle and fit them in the ends. You look through the peepholes and blink. Whatever you look at will disappear.”

“Oh.”

“But I don't know if I can make them come back. We'd better try it on something else. Dishes cost money.”

As always, Myra Willoughby had to admire the wisdom of her nine-year-old son. She would not have had such fore-

sight herself. He always did.

“You can try it on Blanche Manners' cat outside there. Nobody will care if it disappears except Blanche Manners.”

“All right.”

He put the disappearer to his eye and blinked. The cat disappeared from the sidewalk outside.

His mother was interested. “I wonder how it works. Do you know how it works?”

“Yes. You take a beer can with both ends cut out and put in two pieces of cardboard. Then you blink.”

“Never mind. Take it outside and play with it. You hadn't better make anything disappear in here till I think about this.”

But when he had gone his mother was oddly disturbed.

“I wonder if I have a pre-

cocious child. Why, there's lots of grown people who wouldn't know how to make a disappearer that would work. I wonder if Blanche Manners will miss her cat very much?"

Clarence went down to the Plugged Nickel, a pot house on the corner.

"Do you have anything you want to make disappear, Nokomis?"

"Only my paunch."

"If I make it disappear it'll leave a hole in you and you'll bleed to death."

"That's right, I would. Why don't you try it on the fire plug outside?"

THIS in a way was one of the happiest afternoons ever in the neighborhood. The children came from blocks around to play in the flooded streets and gutters, and if some of them drowned (and we don't say that they *did* drown) in the flood (and brother! it was a flood), why, you have to expect things like that. The fire engines (whoever heard of calling fire engines to put out a flood?) were apparatus-deep in the water. The policemen and ambulance men wandered around wet and bewildered.

"Resuscitator, resuscitator, anybody wanna resuscitator," chanted Clarissa Willoughby.

"Oh, shut up," said the ambulance attendants.

Nokomis, the bar man in the Plugged Nickel, called Clarence aside.

"I don't believe, just for the moment, I'd tell anyone what happened to that fire plug," he said.

"I won't tell if you won't tell," said Clarence.

Officer Comstock was suspicious. "There's only seven possible explanations. One of the seven Willoughby kids did it. I dunno how. It'd take a bulldozer to do it, and then there'd be something left of the plug. But however they did it, one of them did it."

Officer Comstock had a talent for getting near the truth of dark matters. This is why he was walking a beat out here in the boondocks instead of sitting in a chair downtown.

"Clarissa!" said Officer Comstock in a voice like thunder.

"Resuscitator, resuscitator, anybody wanna resuscitator?" chanted Clarissa.

"Do you know what happened to that fire plug?" asked officer C.

"I have an uncanny suspicion. As yet it is no more than that. When I am better informed I will advise you."

Clarissa was eight years old and much given to uncanny suspicions.

"Clementine, Harold, Corinne, Jimmy, Cyril," he asked the five younger Willoughby children. "Do you know what happened to that fire plug?"

"There was a man around yesterday. I bet he took it," said Clementine.

"I don't even remember a fire plug there. I think you're making a lot of fuss about nothing," said Harold.

"City hall's going to hear about this," said Corinne.

"Pretty dommed sure," said Jimmy, "but I won't tell."

"Cyril!" cried Officer Comstock in a terrible voice. Not a terrifying voice, a terrible voice. He felt terrible now.

"Great green bananas," said Cyril, "I'm only three years old. I don't see how it's even my responsibility."

"Clarence," said Officer Comstock.

Clarence gulped.

"Do you know where that fire plug went?"

Clarence brightened. "No, sir. I don't know where it went."

A bunch of smart alects from the water department came out and shut off the water for a few blocks around and put some kind of cap on in place of the fire plug. "This sure is going to be a funny-sounding report," said one of them.

Officer Comstock walked away discouraged. "Don't bother me, Miss Manners," he said. "I don't know where to look for your cat. I don't even know where to look for a fire plug."

"I have an idea," said Clarissa, "that when you find the cat you will find the fire plug the same place. As yet it is only an idea."

Ozzie Murphy wore a little

hat on top of his head. Clarence pointed his weapon and winked. The hat was no longer there, but a little trickle of blood was running down the pate.

"I don't believe I'd play with that any more," said Nokomis.

"Who's playing?" said Clarence. "This is for real."

THIS was the beginning of the seven-day terror in the heretofore obscure neighborhood. Trees disappeared from the parkings; lamp posts were as though they had never been; Wally Waldorf drove home, got out, slammed the door of his car, and there was no car. As George Mullendorf came up the walk to his house his dog Pete ran to meet him and took a flying leap to his arms. The dog left the sidewalk but something happened; the dog was gone and only a bark lingered for a moment in the puzzled air.

But the worst were the fire-plugs. The second plug was installed the morning after the disappearance of the first. In eight minutes it was gone and the flood waters returned. Another one was in by twelve o'clock. Within three minutes it had vanished. The next morning fire plug number four was installed.

The water commissioner was there, the city engineer was there, the chief of police was there with a riot squad, the president of the parent-

teachers association was there, the president of the University was there, the mayor was there, three gentlemen of the F.B.I., a newsreel photographer, eminent scientists and a crowd of honest citizens.

"Let's see it disappear now," said the city engineer.

"Let's see it disappear now," said the police chief.

"Let's see it disa—it did, didn't it?" said one of the eminent scientists.

And it was gone and everybody was very wet.

"At least I have the picture sequence of the year," said the photographer. But his camera and apparatus disappeared from the midst of them.

"Shut off the water and cap it," said the commissioner. "And don't put in another plug yet. That was the last plug in the warehouse."

"This is too big for me," said the mayor. "I wonder that Tass doesn't have it yet."

"Tass has it," said a little round man. "I am Tass."

"If all of you gentlemen will come into the Plugged Nickel," said Nokomis, "and try one of our new Fire Hydrant Highballs you will all be happier. These are made of good corn whisky, brown sugar and hydrant water from this very gutter. You can be the first to drink them."

Business was phenomenal at the Plugged Nickel, for it was in front of its very doors that the fire plugs disappeared in floods of gushing water.

"I know a way we can get rich," said Clarissa several days later to her father, Tom Willoughby. "Everybody says they're going to sell their houses for nothing and move out of the neighborhood. Go get a lot of money and buy them all. Then you can sell them again and get rich."

"I wouldn't buy them for a dollar each. Three of them have disappeared already, and all the families but us have their furniture moved out in their front yards. There might be nothing but vacant lots in the morning."

"Good, then buy the vacant lots. And you can be ready when the houses come back."

"Come back? Are the houses going to come back? Do you know anything about this, young lady?"

"I have a suspicion verging on a certainty. As of now I can say no more."

THREE eminent scientists were gathered in an untidy suite that looked as though it belonged to a drunken sultan.

"This transcends the metaphysical. It impinges on the quantum continuum. In some ways it obsoletes Boff," said Dr. Velikof Vonk.

"The contingency on the intransigence is the most mystifying aspect," said Arpad Arkabaranan.

"Yes," said Willy McGilly. "Who would have thought that you could do it with a beer can and two pieces of

cardboard? When I was a boy I used an oatmeal box and red crayola."

"I do not always follow you," said Dr. Vonk. "I wish you would speak plainer."

So far no human had been injured or disappeared—except for a little blood on the pate of Ozzie Murphy, on the lobes of Conchita when her gaudy earrings disappeared from her very ears, a clipped finger or so when a house vanished as the front door knob was touched, a lost toe when a neighborhood boy kicked at a can and the can was not; probably not more than a pint of blood and three or four ounces of flesh all together.

Now, however, Mr. Buckle the grocery man disappeared before witnesses. This was serious.

Some mean-looking investigators from downtown came out to the Willoughbys. The meanest-looking one was the mayor. In happier days he had not been a mean man, but the terror had now reigned for seven days.

"There have been ugly rumors," said one of the mean investigators, "that link certain events to this household. Do any of you know anything about them?"

"I started most of them," said Clarissa. "But I didn't consider them ugly. Cryptic, rather. But if you want to get to the bottom of this just ask me a question."

"Did you make those things disappear?" asked the investigator.

"That isn't the question," said Clarissa.

"Do you know where they have gone?" asked the investigator.

"That isn't the question either," said Clarissa.

"Can you make them come back?"

"Why, of course I can. Anybody can. Can't you?"

"I cannot. If you can, please do so at once."

"I need some stuff. Get me a gold watch and a hammer. Then go down to the drug store and get me this list of chemicals. And I need a yard of black velvet and a pound of rock candy."

"Shall we?" asked one of the investigators.

"Yes," said the mayor, "it's our only hope. Get her anything she wants."

And it was all assembled.

"WHY does she get all the attention?" asked Clarence. "I was the one that made all the things disappear. How does she know how to get them back?"

"I knew it!" cried Clarissa with hate. "I knew he was the one that did it. He read in my diary how to make a disappearer. If I was his mother I'd whip him for reading his little sister's diary. That's what happens when things like that fall into irresponsible hands."

She poised the hammer over

the gold watch of the mayor on the floor.

"I have to wait a few seconds. This can't be hurried. It'll be only a little while."

The second hand swept around to the point that was preordained for it before the world began. Clarissa suddenly brought down the hammer with all her force on the beautiful gold watch.

"That's all," she said. "Your troubles are over. See, there is Blanche Manners' cat on the sidewalk just where she was seven days ago."

And the cat was back.

"Now let's go down to the Plugged Nickel and watch the fire plug come back."

They had only a few minutes to wait. It came from nowhere and clanged into the street like a sign and a witness.

"Now I predict," said Clarissa, "that every single object will return exactly seven days from the time of its disappearance."

The seven-day terror had ended. The objects began to reappear.

"How," asked the mayor, "did you know they would come back in seven days?"

"Because it was a seven-day disappearer that Clarence made. I also know how to make a nine-day, a thirteen-day, a twenty-seven-day, and an eleven-year disappearer. I was going to make a thirteen-day one, but for that you have to color the ends with the blood from a little boy's heart, and Cyril cried every time I tried to make a good cut."

"You really know how to make all of these?"

"Yes. But I shudder if the knowledge should ever come into unauthorized hands."

"I shudder too, Clarissa. But tell me, why did you want the chemicals?"

"For my chemistry set."

"And the black velvet?"

"For doll dresses."

"And the pound of rock candy?"

"How did you ever get to be mayor of this town if you have to ask questions like that? What do you think I wanted the rock candy for?"

"One last question," said the mayor. "Why did you smash my gold watch with the hammer?"

"Oh," said Clarissa, "that was for dramatic effect."

END

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★