



Mightiest Mortals #12

Don Walsh

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Mightiest Mortals
#12: *By an Act of Love*
Written by Don Walsh
Cover by Roy Flinchum

Sabbac clasped his hands together high over his head as he glared down at Bulletman. The hero didn't lose a second as he saw the villain looming over him with a deathblow, instead lunging forward. He pushed his speed to his utmost, grunting in pain as he rammed his helmeted head into Sabbac's sternum and continued the charge into the air. Air rushed from the monster's lungs as he was propelled upward and backward, Bulletman lifting him through the air, his muscles straining. Without slowing, without hesitation, the grappled pair hurtled through the sky and crashed into a brick wall, rubble flying in all directions as Bulletman pressed his foe into the heart of the building, bringing it down on both of them in a horrific shriek of mortar and steel.

As smoke drifted up from the mountain of debris, silence grabbed a momentary hold of the battlefield and police observers strained to determine if the crisis had at last passed. When the tattered figure of Bulletman came tearing out of the rubble to crash like a broken doll a dozen feet away, the observers had their answer.

Sabbac smashed his way out from the destroyed building, marching in the direction of the dazed Bulletman, murderous glee in his face. Fists balled up tight and each thunderous step rattled the strained body of James Barr. He could see the demonic man moving ever closer through his cracked visor and struggled to get to his feet. An effort impaired by his difficulty drawing breath and the blood dripping down over his brow.

"Get away from him!" Susan Kent Barr cried out as she jumped out of an arriving police van. She stumbled a bit from the moving vehicle, and then raced toward her husband, heart in her mouth and skin feeling clammy and cold with fear. The two cops driving the van then

accelerated their vehicle, charging it at Sabbac like a ground-based missile. He turned his attention to the sudden noise and let out a roar of anger as the officers leaped from the van at the last minute. A powerful fireball erupted on the fiend, flaming metal tearing around Sabbac as he was lost from sight, while Susan wrapped her arms around James's chest and held him protectively.

"Jim!" she gasped when she could see his injuries more clearly. "God, Jim, you really are this Bulletman." She supported him as he hobbled away from the conflagration, fighting back tears that demanded release.

"Yeah," Jim croaked, trying to catch his breath. He wanted to stay. He wanted to keep up the battle. Even as he was led away, the helmet induced schemes and plans for battle in his brain, and he struggled to ignore them as much as he struggled to walk away. Instead, he leaned into Susan and drew a different strength from her presence than that drawn from his invention. "I'm sorry. I should have found a way to tell you. I wanted to. This isn't how it was all supposed to come out."

"How?" Susan looked at him, and noticed that the helmet was now without a single scratch or dent, now in far better shape than she thought it was when she first reached him. "Is it that goofy looking hat of yours? You mean that cockamamie theory of yours actually works?" Despite the scoffing words, Jim could detect the pride in her voice.

"Yeah. It does. The shape of the helmet, with the treated amethyst, it lets me fly, and think faster, and be strong," Jim explained before breaking into a harsh cough and staggering to a knee. "All those things the ancient people said it would."

"That's incredible! You created a flying helmet, and then became a vigilante." She smiled at him as she encouraged him back to his feet and continued their retreat. "That's my husband. Mad scientist for forces of good." She laughed to help avoid crying, and kissed his cheek.

"How touching," Sabbac sneered as he stepped out to intercept the Barrs. "Allow me to kill you both at the same time, to save us all the tiresome self-sacrifice that is sure to come otherwise."

The Barrs clutched each other, and James stepped in front of his wife as

they embraced, his enhanced mind realizing that the Murder Prophet set him up. Of course Susan would die by Sabbac. She would come for James, and so James was sent to lure her, and he grew angry at himself as he heard Sabbac's roar, and felt the heat of the flames being breathed in their direction.

Then they turned and noticed that the flames were being stopped. Clad in red shirt and white dungarees and floating several feet of the ground, the well-built, blond-haired man held himself against the evil red flames and grinned.

"Captain Triumph," James said with a gasp. "It's... it's Captain Triumph."

Indeed, Captain Triumph now stared at Sabbac, his face knit with determination as the villain's incendiary cascade ended. "Glad to see I'm not forgotten," Captain Triumph said softly. "You've done a great job, Bulletman. Get out of here now. I've got the situation in hand."

"Do you?" Sabbac snarled as he stepped in close and backhanded Triumph, the muscled, brick-red forearm catching the hovering hero full in the chest and sending him skittering over the broken streets as the Barrs began their retreat anew.

"The reports don't do that monster justice," Susan said softly, voice laced with fear as she and James continued to leave the area.

"I've read all about Captain Triumph back when he was Fawcett's hero in the Forties," Bulletman said. "I modeled my look after him and everything. He's not much stronger than I am, but at least he's invulnerable."

"So he can stop Sabbac?"

James thought it over, everything that he'd seen and read on the war-time hero racing through his brain, compared to the empirical data he'd just now gained about Sabbac. His chest tightened and he shook his head.

"No. I don't think so."

Shazam's Cavern

Five figures seemed momentarily frozen in place, the surreal scene heavy with tension as Kit Freeman's ghost faced off with his spiritual guide, Mister Keeper, the spectral wizard Shazam watching the tableau unfold. Captain Marvel looked down on his broken friend, greatly concerned and repeated his words at Kit's urging.

"Frederick Freeman, speak my name!" he insisted, incanting the spell just as his Wisdom recalled the Wizard do a year earlier.

Freddy's eyes looked up into his friend's, his mouth opened, and he croaked, "**Marvel?**"

A blue-tinged bolt of lightning smashed down from on high, sweeping over Freddy's prone body and replacing it. Slowly, the black-haired youth stood, unsteady on his new, powerful legs, his body whole and untouched, clad in sky-blue. The golden lightning symbol crossed his chest like his patron as he gazed down on his body. "I'm... fine. Better than fine. This is... oh wow!" He gazed at the golden cuffs striping his wrists, the golden boots and sash. He slowly lifted off the floor and spun, catching sight of the scarlet cloak trimmed in more gold as he looked at Captain Marvel. "This is amazing!"

"You have been gifted with the powers of six gods, Captain Marvel, Junior," Shazam explained. "Wisdom, strength, courage, power, stamina and speed, for the protection of others. Speak your patron's name to call down the lightning and return to Frederick Freeman. Use these gifts well, make us proud."

"I will," Freddy replied sincerely as he spun around slowly to face Shazam's ghost, "but no offense... I'm putting the big no to 'Junior'. I'll be... Kid Marvel. For now!" He grinned as he flexed his arms again.

"You didn't stop the spell," Kit said to Mister Keeper, taking a step toward him. "Thanks. Thank you."

"I was never going to do that," Keeper replied with a mischievous smile. "It was a test, Christopher Freeman. To see if you deserved what I have

to offer you."

All four faces turned to watch Mister Keeper's round, beaming face, no prouder than if he were Kit's father. "We needed to know that you could think of others, and you did. You should have lived until you were seventy-five years of age. So until such time as you truly should have died, you will be granted the powers of Eternity. You will have to accept being a ghost, but that comes with some perks... flight, intangibility, no need to worry about breathing, or eating or sleeping anymore. I'll accompany you as a guide, though I'll remain beyond the senses of most people. And you will have the power of Eternity, the gift to call upon any legendary figure of history or fiction to help you. Just say the word, and summon the helper you require. If you wish to accept the offer. Or you can pass on to a true and just final reward."

"There's no choice there," Kit replied without a pause, glancing back at his cousin with a delighted smile. "We've got some heroing to do back in the Fawcett! Right, cuz?"

"You got it," Kid Marvel answered with a firm nod of his head, arms crossed over his chest now as he glanced back at Captain Marvel. "My step-brother's still running loose out there, isn't he?"

"Yes he is, and he's not going to be the only one, I suspect," Captain Marvel replied. "Come along, you two, and I'll explain on the way."

The Plaza

Mary Bromfield and Lori Zechlin picked their way across the tattered commercial district of Fawcett City as the sounds of battle heated up again. Hearts pounded in their chests, and Lori shook with fear, though Mary's blood raced with a chance to see her hero in action. As they turned a corner, they instead saw Captain Triumph, who battered at Sabbac with all the strength he had, but his blows seemed to leave little effect on the demonic villain. Instead, he found his invulnerability pressed to its utmost. Sabbac snatched his ankle and swung him through a car, and then dragged him from the hunk of metal and swung him into a lamppost, bending it in half as he then spun around to bring Captain Triumph down on a fire hydrant. Lori cringed at the sight as Mary dragged

her friend from their hiding spot, too close now to the fighting.

"We have to get out of here now!" Lori said as she followed her friend down into an exterior basement stairwell. "Whoever that is isn't the Big Red Cheese, he's nowhere in sight and Sabbac's gonna kill that guy!"

The hero was bent in half over the suddenly crushed fireplug, his flat, muscular stomach thrust up high as the back of his head cracked on the pavement. Then the Captain felt himself being flung into the air one more time, hurtling toward the police perimeter and tearing through a police car to come to rest in a group of frightened officers.

"I think that's Captain Triumph," Mary murmured. "My dad used to talk about him. He quit years and years ago though."

"Looks like he should have stayed quit," Lori muttered as she watched the hero get tossed away.

"Well, that could go better," Captain Triumph said in a weak voice as he pulled himself to his feet, helped by surrounding officers and Bulletman. "And yeah, that was even more painful than it looked. You up for a second go in tandem, Bulletman?"

"You can't!" Susan cried out, holding his arm as the police watched Sabbac draw ever closer to their position. "He'll kill you. Both of you!"

"Susan, I have to. We have to. We're stronger, we can take more punishment, we have to stop him," Jim said with a grim, tired look on his battered, bruising face. "I love you, very much." He leaned down to kiss her, and she responded, shaking in his arms. "Okay, Captain. Let's do this. And let me say now, it's an honor to fight with you."

Captain Triumph gave a grim smile and shook the offered hand. Then the two stepped forward, preparing to charge back into battle. Both were then halted by a sudden rush of wind and the arrival of the Marvels, standing tall and proud and defiant between Sabbac and the police line.

"There he is!" Mary said a little too loudly, and Lori grabbed her and pulled her down before Sabbac could see them.

"Go, Cap!" Lori hissed with her eyes closed, unable to see what was to happen next.

"Sorry to take so long, officers," Captain Marvel said to the people behind him. "Captain Triumph? Good to have you with us. You and your friend, we'll leave it to you two to keep evacuating the local area, okay? This fight could get... messier."

"Messier? You think? You think, Captain Marvel?!" Sabbac screamed as turned back to the police line, then paused to stare at Kid Marvel instead, eyes blazing with fury.

"It might get messier, but no one else is getting hurt, Tim," Kid Marvel declared, marching toward the villainous step-brother. "You can count on that. I'm bringing this all to an end, here and now!"

The girls peeked up over the edge of the sidewalk as the superhumans confronted each other. "Oooh... who's the cute boy in blue?" Mary asked with a giggle.

"Kind of scrawny for a super-hero, ain't he?" Lori teased.

"It really is you, Freddy," Sabbac snarled in confirmation, brow creasing with frustration. "A Mini-Marvel to go and bedevil me? Well, little brother, I've six devils already doing that, I don't need you too!"

"Too damn bad," Kid Marvel growled back and flew forward, blasting a hard right punch across Sabbac's face, and staggering him back. "'Cause Kid Marvel's here to stay!" Several more powerful blows struck in such a rapid succession that no one could clearly see each blow.

"You bastard!" Sabbac screamed and his powerful arm swept out to crash out across Kid Marvel's slender but hard chest. The blue-clad body spun away to the side but quickly recovered as Sabbac turned to keep his attention on him. "This was all for you! Money, comfort, freedom, and all the things we deserved for the crappy way our lives were going! Do you think I wanted to bargain with Hell? Well, the other side wasn't listening to a damned thing, so I'll take what I can, and what do you do? You go and turn on me! And join up with a dead wizard?"

"Hey, not just a dead wizard, Timmy-boy," Kid Eternity said from behind the powerhouse. "There's me and Mister Keeper too." He waved at Sabbac with a smug grin, and caused the villain to pivot and roar a blast of flame at him. Not that it hurt, passing harmlessly through Kid Eternity's ghostly form. "And I'll have you know that we prefer 'breathing challenged' in this more politically correct age."

"I can't hear their names," Mary muttered in frustration. "They know each other, obviously. But I can't hear what they call each other."

"Sabbac is the big red one," Lori replied in that smart-aleck voice of hers. "Little Boy Blue is Kid Marvel."

"They're using real names, Lori, listen!"

"You're goofy. Get hit by some pavement, Mare?"

As the two Kids dueled with Sabbac, Captain Triumph and Bulletman conferred briefly with Captain Marvel, and then sped out to start clearing the air, along with the police in the area as Chief Kitchens stormed up with reinforcements.

"Stand your ground, men!" he ordered as he marched straight for Captain Marvel. "This man is wanted for questioning, and not here to boss around my police force!" All eyes turned to look at the furious Chief Kitchens as Susan Barr gave a wince recalling the bench warrant she'd arranged.

"But Chief, you have to let me help you and your men stop Sabbac," Captain Marvel said, staring a bit helplessly. He could hear the battle behind him and knew time was getting short, but just flying away from the respected chief of police would resolve nothing. "We can handle this afterward, I'll come back and let you bring me in, and work this all out. I promise."

"I've lost several good men to your earlier promise, Marvel, and I'm done relying and believing in you!" Chief Kitchens snapped back. "Now who are you going to listen to, men? Your superior, or a clown in a circus costume?"

"I'll get that warrant thrown out, Captain," Susan said as she looked back at the hero. "I'm sorry. This... this isn't the time for this, and I'll get this taken care of."

"Captain Marvel!" cried out a new voice now, a lovely young woman with blond hair trying to push up to the people gathered around the heroes. "Please, I have to talk to you, Captain!"

Kitchens and his men turned to stop the woman, with Kitchens glaring in shock. "Aren't... aren't you that woman Doherty helped to fish out of the drink just yesterday?" He blinked several times as they circled her, the woman batting her lashes and shrugging and distracting the men from another woman approaching the Captain from the side.

"Captain, please listen!" Minerva said, luxurious brown hair framing a fearful face. "This isn't the only threat! It's Ibac, he's got his men running loose in the city, it'll be bloodshed for sure!"

Captain Marvel looked down at Minerva, and then back to the woman stepping away and keeping all police eyes on her. Then he looked back at Minerva and narrowed those dark eyes. "Miss Minerva. That's you over there, too. Isn't it?" He folded his arms and looked down at her like a parent glaring at a disobedient child.

"Who's the bimbo with Cap?" Lori grumbled, refusing to listen to Mary's snicker.

"Yes," Minerva replied, unnerved by the steely gaze and swallowed uncomfortably. "I'll tell you all about it after this. But right now, you have to go to 38 Binder Avenue. Out in the Terrace. That's where you'll find Ibac, and he'll be mostly alone. All his men, they're after Sabbac's gang while he's gone nuts. This is your chance, but you have to jump on it, Captain. Please!" She put her hands on an iron-hard forearm and he blushed slightly.

"Okay, okay. You're right, and I was expecting this from that fiend." He glanced back to Susan. "Mrs. Barr, if you'd take care of this young woman for me?" He then looked to see his other allies already speeding around to keep the battle zone around Sabbac clear and smiled approvingly.

"Of course, Captain Marvel. Come on, dear, let's get you... did you say Binder Avenue?" She looked at Minerva in surprise, the idea that such a powerful crime boss was only two blocks from her own home left her unnerved. She felt the rush of wind as Captain Marvel streaked into the sky, the two women looking up at his vanishing form against the night sky and sounds of ferocious combat.

Kid Eternity leaped through Sabbac, passing through the massively muscled chest with nary a notice by either. Sabbac spun around again, frustrated and furious at the taunting by the ghostly hero, only to find himself suddenly eye-to-eye once more with Kid Marvel.

"Kit also wanted to make sure we had a good life," Freddy said in a low, threatening voice as he fired numerous powerful, iron-hard blows into Sabbac's face, forcing the villain to step back several times under the assault. "But the emphasis was on the good, and we didn't go looking for anyone to solve our problems for us! That's the difference! And that's why we've gotten what we have! We've earned it!" Hands clasped tight together, Kid Marvel punctuated his declaration with an uppercut that snapped Sabbac's jaw back and knocked him from his feet.

"We were family!" Sabbac roared and then unleashed a stream of fire, hotter than any he'd done before, flammable materials even only close to the path igniting as it smashed into Kid Marvel. "I loved you like we were actual brothers!"

Kid Marvel seemed unfazed by the fire and moved in to launch another flurry of blows. "You wanted me for your brother. Never once thought about the other way around, what you could offer in return. Kit on the other hand, he was just worried about what he could do for his family, not to his family! And you killed him for it! You made your bed, so now lie in it!"

Sabbac continued to be pressed back, and finally grew weary of the stinging blows. He reached out and snatched the corner of a car, swinging it up to smash into the flying boy in blue, bringing it down like a fly swatter, pressing Kid Marvel into the broken street. He got to his feet and wiped his hands. "Fine. Let's see how you like the bed I've made for myself then, you self-righteous jerk! You choose him over me, then

fine! We're no longer family! I have no reason to play nice with you!" He unleashed a stream of fire to ignite the car's gas tank, a powerful explosion tearing a hole in the street.

"It's not over yet, Timmy-boy," Kid Eternity said, concerned for his cousin buried under the blazing metal. "**ETERNITY!**" He cried out and gave a wicked looking smile. Standing before him was a twisted, bent looking man barely over five feet in height, clad in rough-hewn Victorian clothing and Kid Eternity stared down at him. "Mister Hyde? Aren't you supposed to be... taller?"

Sabbac laughed at the sight and cracked his knuckles while the evil madman looked at the ghostly hero and shook his head. "Stunted, twisted shadow of the scientist that birthed me."

As Sabbac's shadow fell over them both, and the villain casually crushed Hyde with a powerful blow, Kid Eternity stared up with wide eyes and muttered, "Gotta go and read more books."

The Terrace

The sounds of wood splintering and tearing announced the arrival of Captain Marvel, who suddenly plowed into the ornate study to find Ibac standing near a wall of weaponry.

"Greetings, Captain Marvel," Ibac said calmly, his broad, hairy back and thickly-knotted arms presented to the hero. He was clad only in simple black trousers, loose fitting, allowing for maximum movement. His shirt and suit coat were carefully hung on another wall, draped by his silk tie. He turned, a German zweihander in his grip, and gave a brief bow to the hero. "I knew you'd come. You are smart, you are clever; you had to know this would be your chance to find me without allies, without minions. I am glad you followed the script laid out for you."

"Script or not, I'm putting an end to you tonight, Ibac," Captain Marvel declared firmly. "All of this gangland business gets ended tonight, you and Sabbac. This game of yours ends, here and now!"

The heavy, long two-handed sword came whirling down to smash into

Captain Marvel's chest, bending slightly but not breaking. The force staggered Marvel to the side and into the heavy wood paneling. "So you've learned the truth of the matter. I'm impressed, Marvel. Your Wisdom of Solomon was everything Master Shaitan said it would be!" The blade spun around quickly again, expertly thrust into the Captain's short ribs and Marvel stepped back from the force of the thrust that snapped the tip off.

"Your weapons can't hurt me," Marvel said as his hand caught the blade in its third attack, snapping the metal in half and tossing his part to the side angrily. He was lying, somehow that last thrust actually made him lose some of the air from his lungs.

"Your bravado is as impressive as the rest of you, my boy," Ibac replied, snapping a mace and chain down next, and then stepping to the side to avoid a sudden lunge by his opponent. "But I have the Prowess of Attila, and I know that I can find that weak spot in your Courage of Achilles. Couldn't be the heel could it?" He swung the spiked ball hard, but it smashed to pieces against Marvel's foot. It did knock the surprised hero off his feet though.

"How... ?" Marvel started to ask, but was cut off as he watched Ibac snap a hidden lever disguised as a candlestick on the fireplace mantle and a massive block of metal plunged down from the ceiling, and tearing through the floor into the basement below.

"Heh. Oh I agree, Marvel. This ends tonight." He snatched up a length of spiked chain and a spear and leaped into the hole just made.

The Plaza

The flaming ruined car smashed into Sabbac from behind and then Kid Marvel flew into him, a hard shoulder tackle that sent the villain bouncing away from Kid Eternity.

"Okay, so Hyde was a let-down," Kit said as he watched Sabbac stand back up and fly back toward Kid Marvel. "We have to out think him, cuz. You two will just fight on forever at this point."

Sabbac smashed back into Kid Marvel, the massive bulk sending Freddy's slighter form hurtling away and through a stone staircase and into a building. But Kid Marvel shook off the dust and rubble and flew back to the fight, dropping down feet first to press Sabbac into the sewers below.

"You're the thinker then, Kit, come up with something, I'll keep this guy occupied in the meantime." He flew down after Sabbac, only to suddenly reappear, flung back into the sky helplessly as Sabbac flew up after his enemy.

Kid Eternity looked up into the sky and his forehead was creased up in frustrated thought. "Okay, think. Think. Who's good at thinking?" He snapped his fingers and cried out, "**Eternity!**"

"Wow! That ghost kid is smart," Mary said with admiration, watching the literary references appear at his beck and call. "And he's cute."

"For a ghost, you mean?" Lori teased Mary further, though she couldn't deny that if the kid had a pulse, she'd want to kiss him.

"Good evening, young sir," Sherlock Holmes said as he appeared next to Kid Eternity and then followed the hero's gaze up into the sky, to witness the brutal battle. Evenly matched, Kid Marvel's speed allowing him to pummel him with a dozen blows, but Sabbac's Behemoth-fueled massive blows countered the more numerous strikes. "You don't want a detective, you need an exorcist, I daresay."

"I need to figure out a way to stop that monster," Kid Eternity said. "I need someone smart, to figure out how to stop Sabbac. He's powered by the six devils that make up his name. My cousin's got the power of Shazam's patrons, but they're too evenly matched. That fight could go on forever if we can't figure out another solution."

"Devils, you say?" Holmes stroked his jaw thoughtfully, as he looked up at the fight. "And this boy up there, your cousin... how did he come to have these powers of his? This Shazam fellow?"

"No. Our friend, Captain Marvel, granted him the power to call down a lightning bolt," Kid Eternity explained. "To save his life. Sabbac tried to

kill him, like he'd killed me earlier." He felt odd saying those words and shuddered.

"Ah. An act of kindness. Dare I say, of love?"

"Yeah." The two people stared up as the two warriors crashed into the ground, setting off a gas main that exploded brilliantly. The ground shook and Bulletman and Captain Triumph raced into the area to prevent the explosion from getting out of control as Kid Marvel came flying overhead and past Kid Eternity. Sabbac raced after him, and was abruptly stopped in his charge by a powerful kick from Freddy.

"Move, Mary!" Lori cried out as she shoved her friend from the building facade that had at started to collapse from the explosion. As Mary stumbled out of the way, she watched the stone crash onto Lori.

"No!" Mary cried out in horror as she found herself lifted up into the sky in strong, safe hands.

"Don't worry, young lady, I've got you, and you're getting out of here," Captain Triumph told her as they streaked from the battle zone. "And my partner has your friend, so don't worry. And don't go back in there!"

The two girls were deposited on the safe side of the cordon in a rushing blur of red and white, left without time to thank their rescuers as Mary hugged her friend tightly.

"Now can we go home?" Lori asked in a quiet voice, skin more pale than ever, and then hugged her friend back.

"C'mon. Let's go. We'll see our Marvels another time."

"Well then, I daresay the answer is obvious. At least, if you believe in primal and material displays of such intangibles," Holmes explained as he looked at Kid Eternity. "And I have no reason to deny that such must exist, now. After all, I have this monstrosity and your cousin dueling on just such principles, powered by just such principles. Think about it." He gave a bow and vanished from view, leaving Kid Eternity frustrated to have been given no answer. At first. And then it slowly crossed his mind what Holmes had just told him. The thought turned into a smile and he

nodded. Now he just had to talk to Kid Marvel and he knew exactly who would give him those precious moments.

"Eternity!"

The Terrace

Captain Marvel stood up, pressing the huge block of metal over his head and grinning at Ibac. "This was supposed to hurt, Ibac?"

"No. In fact, it was meant to do exactly what you're doing now," Ibac calmly replied as he reached out and slapped a button in the wall of the basement room. Marvel heard a click and looked over to see an electrode slide out from the wall and fire powerful bolts of electricity into the metal block that then coursed into his body, down to the metal plate he stood on. The brilliant discharge forced Ibac to divert his eyes until the discharge ended, plunging the house above into darkness, and only emergency lights offering a dim glow in the basement room.

"Okay, that's enough of that," Captain Marvel said without a sign of damage, hefting the block behind him to the floor and stepping forward, prepared to strike at Ibac. "Time to put an end to this now."

"Guess again," Ibac replied smugly as he ducked and thrust the spear up into the hero, into his side and under his ribcage, making Captain Marvel grunt in shock and pain and stagger to one side. The chain lashed out now and wrapped around Marvel's far hand. With a massive effort of his great strength, Ibac spun and swung Captain Marvel into the block, leaving a depression in the side. Then the spear struck again, up near his neck and collarbone, and again Captain Marvel grunted, frowning now. "I said I'll find your weak spot! My knowledge of warfare, battle and tactics is unmatched, no matter your Wisdom, Marvel!"

Marvel used his speed to lunge into Ibac's midsection; powerful scarlet-clad arms wrapped him tight and crashed him into a far wall. He flexed his hand and shattered the chain wrapped on it, and then he casually knocked the spear from the villain's grip. He stared into Ibac and realized this fight might go on for far too long. He had to get back to Sabbac.

"Give it up," Captain Marvel replied as he listened to that very Wisdom and smiled that confident, cheery smile. "Just back down already!"

"Never! I back down from no one!" the criminal cried out in his deep, powerful voice. His face was twisted up in hate and fury, but suddenly, it began to melt into shock and fear. "No! No! No I didn't say that, didn't mean that!" He cried as sulfurous, sickly green flames erupted at his feet and swept swiftly over the thick, evil body.

When the flames died away, the scrawny, shaken and limp body of Stanley Printwhistle collapsed into the hero's arms, softly crying. "Oh thank you! Thank you, Captain Marvel! Oh thank God, I'm free of that monster! Free! You couldn't believe... just couldn't... the things he made me do!" He cried hysterically as Captain Marvel held him, feeling uncomfortable and unsure.

"It's okay, Mr. Printwhistle. I know you were just a pawn in this sick game, but it's over. Just never, ever say that word again. You understand?"

"Oh yes. Yes! Never... never!" he promised as he sank to his knees and hugged himself tight. "I'll... I'll turn myself into the police, I promise."

Captain Marvel stared down at the rather pathetic looking former janitor and pursed his lips in a frown. "I have a better idea."

The Plaza

As Kid Marvel and Sabbac landed blow after blow on each other, Kid Eternity maneuvered closer to his cousin. Freddy was hurled once more from the massive villain, and Kid Eternity stepped up and helped him to his feet.

"I have a plan, we need to talk," Kit said as he tried to keep his grip on the powerful young man before he could fly off.

"I don't think Sabbac's going to give us that chance," Kid Marvel retorted as they watched Sabbac stepping toward them both already.

"Leave that to my friend, he'll give us the time we need."

A short, squat looking man with shaggy black hair and determined look in his eyes stepped out between the Kids and Sabbac. He wore red and white boxing trunks, dark brown boxing gloves on his hands as he lifted up his arms protectively, bouncing slightly, defensively.

"Got it, Stallion?" Kid Eternity called out to his companion. "Keep him busy."

"No problem, boss," the boxer said with a cocky grin and a rocking of his head to crack his neck. "I got dis handled for ya."

"You called on Rocky?" Freddy asked incredulously, as the boxer stepped up and jabbed several hard blows into Sabbac's midsection, stopping the monster out of sheer disbelief.

"He always ends up winning in the end," Kit replied defensively. "And I needed time to tell you the plan."

"Doesn't he always lose his first fight?"

Kit mused and shrugged, answering, "Then we'll talk quickly." Both young men took a moment to glance around and Kit asked, "Do you hear music?"

"What's the plan, cuz?" Marvel asked worriedly, and then brought his head closer to Kit's so they could whisper.

Meanwhile, the Italian Stallion was taking brutal blow after ferocious punch, his face bruising up, cuts leaking blood across his face, but he continued to return to his feet, slower and slower each time, punching back again and again, infuriating the already enraged Sabbac.

"Go down, damn you!" Sabbac screamed and launched a cone of fire that swallowed the heroic boxer, reducing the area to smoking, melting asphalt. "Now at last! You two! Die as a family! I'll enjoy killing you a second time, Kit!"

"Eternity!" Kit screamed out, and the regal form of King Arthur

Pendragon appeared on one side of the teen, while best friend, the unbeaten Lancelot, appeared on Kit's other side. "Hold him, fellas!" Kit ordered and the two knights charged into battle, grappling to hold Sabbac in place.

"It won't last long, get a move out, Kid!" Kit said as Freddy hurled into Sabbac's exposed chest, taking all three to the ground.

With Sabbac flat on the ground, Kid Marvel sat up and while the knight's strained to keep Sabbac from grabbing the young hero, Freddy cried out, "**Marvel!**"

As the blue-tinged bolt from heavens hurtled down, Kid Marvel stepped out of the way at the last moment, letting it crash into Sabbac. "Now you'll see why I chose the family I chose, Tim. Billy, he risked a lot to save my life, and he saved me with a gift of love. Get used to that word, Tim."

Sabbac screamed in agony as the bolt tore into his demonic form, the emotional force of the gift smashing into the raw hate and fury of his own magic, sparking within Tim Karnes's heart the last remaining embers of why he'd done this. At his heart, he loved having a family. This ember erupted into brick red flames that swept over Sabbac's body as he continued to scream and jerk in agony, the evil powers swept away from him and reducing him to a battered and weak looking teen-ager.

"It's over, Tim," Freddy said as he stepped up to Tim and looked down at him. "It's all over." Before Tim could open his mouth to say a word, any word... and especially that word, Kid Marvel flicked his fingers into the side of his head and knocked Tim Karnes unconscious.

Epilogue

The police car pulled away from the ruins of the Plaza, Timothy Karnes cuffed and gagged in the back seat as Chief Kitchens secured the scene. He looked most unhappy, and barked angry orders as he coordinated emergency workers, numerous fires being battled by firefighters, ambulances screaming in the distance.

He watched as the Marvels, and this Kid Eternity, worked with Captain Triumph and Bulletman to rescue other trapped citizens and clear the roads for those same emergency vehicles. His face was red and angry, but he continued to coordinate and do nothing else for now.

"It's okay, Chief," Susan said as she stepped up to watch the heroes, superhuman and not, working hard at recovering the city. "I think we've learned why trying to hound these guys isn't the smart thing to do. We need them, you were right. And with this Captain Marvel leading them, I think they're going to be good for the Fawcett."

Henry Kitchens looked over to the District Attorney, eyes wide in surprise at her words. "You're crazy. Look at the destruction, look at the injured. Thanks to Captain Marvel needing his... secrets and to do all this *his way*, I lost two good men today. And how many more injured. Oh no. You were right. And maybe you won't give me your cooperation, Mrs. Kent, but rest assured... at some point down the road, your office will get a case you can't refuse!"

He stormed off to get his hands dirty on honest rescue work, leaving Susan behind to say softly, "That's Mrs. Barr, actually." She smiled and headed for her car, knowing Jim would be in good hands with his new friends, and she needed to get this Miss Minerva home safely. Along with the other fellow the Captain had brought along, this Stanley fellow. She needed to think about what to do with him, and she was glad the Captain had brought him to her.

With the Chief's current attitudes, she thought, who knows what would happen to the poor guy?

As the hours passed, the recovery operations were well underway, and the costumed heroes retreated from the area after helping to secure the survivors. They stood and looked at each other for several long minutes, trying to figure out what to say.

"Thanks a lot for coming out of retirement, Captain Triumph," Captain Marvel said as he shook the elder hero's hand. "It means a lot to have you working with us."

"My pleasure. I'm going to be hurting a lot tomorrow, but it was worth

it," Triumph replied. "With you guys around, I don't expect to come back out of retirement. You all did great. But if you need some less physical help, I'm Lance Gallant, and you're welcome to come and see me at my lighthouse." He turned to Bulletman. "That's a good look, Bulletman," he teased the battered hero as he noted he wore a nearly identical costume to his own. "You wear it well. It's good to know I have a kind of legacy of my own, and that it's in good hands." He then flew off with a farewell to the group.

"Wow. He said I'm his successor," Bulletman said with an awed smile. "And you, Cap, Kid... Kid?" He chuckled as he shook each hand in turn. "You need me, I'll be around."

"I think it's clear we can use all the help we can get," Kid Marvel said with a smile. "Thanks for the assist. Hope to see you around more."

"You bet," Jim Barr replied, again awed. "You bet. Gotta get home, I've got a wife who's gonna be very worried if I don't show up soon."

"Give Mrs. Kent my regards," Captain Marvel said with that big grin of his.

"Will do." Then Bulletman was also hurtling into the skies, leaving only Billy, Kit and Freddy.

"Guess we have a lot to talk about," Captain Marvel said.

"You bet. A whole lot," Freddy replied. "Like why you get to be an adult, and I'm still just me, only in a blue suit."

"Hey, at least you get to curse," Captain Marvel answered with a laugh. "Do you know how hard it is to be taken seriously when all you can say is 'holy moley'?"

"Does this mean we get to have a cool superhero base?" Kid Eternity laughed as he took a moment to float around, enjoying the ability to fly in the early morning light.

"Sure. It's called our apartment, and we need to head there right now, actually," Captain Marvel answered with his own laugh.

"Oh? How come?" Kid Marvel asked as the three of them headed away over the city, toward the rundown Tangles.

"Because it's almost six in the morning, and we have to open the stand, sell some papers, Billy has to get an exclusive of our battles to KWHZ, and then we head to school," Captain Marvel reminded him.

"Wait? We still have to go to school?" Kid Marvel looked stunned at the thought.

"Oh yeah. You should have seen what I went through the last time I played hooky. The Wizard was furious!"

And all three laughed at the thought as they dipped down toward the decrepit tenement, slowly being bathed in the golden light of a new day.

If you enjoyed this story, you can find more alternate universe tales of your favorite DC heroes at [DC3 Multiverse](#).

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From the same author on Feedbooks

Danger Trail #1 (2007)

Danger Trail: The Blood & Dragon Affair, Part 1 (of 3)

Danger Trail #2 (2007)

Danger Trail: The Blood and Dragon Affair, Part 2 (of 3).

Ninjas and vampires and diabolical plots, oh my! King Faraday, Speed Saunders and the Enemy Ace are joined by a masked crime-fighter as they face two secret societies with a monstrous agenda! Pulp action at its finest as we seek out...the Danger Trail!

Danger Trail #3 (2007)

Danger Trail: The Blood and Dragon Affair, Part 3 (of 3).

Learn the mission of the Blood Red Moon! Uncover the mastermind behind the Black Dragon Society! Watch our heroes try and work together when some can't trust others, and one has no clue that there's cavalry coming to the rescue! Who would have thought marital strife could be so much danger for the heroes, or so entertaining for the readers! It's the conclusion to "The Blood and Dragon Affair!"

Danger Trail #4 (2007)

Danger Trail: The Verdant Darkness Affair, Part 1 (of 2)

Mightiest Mortals #1 (2007)

Mightiest Mortals: With a Stroke of Lightning!

Mightiest Mortals #2 (2007)

Mightiest Mortals: In a Crash of Thunder

Mightiest Mortals #3 (2007)

Captain Marvel: Under a Seal of Six Gods!

Justice League #8 (2007)

Justice League: Lucky Number 7.

What are the chances that a rash of good fortune across the globe could be the League's next case? Pretty good when this luck starts rewriting the laws of the universe and threatening the existence of

ages-old mystic defenses keeping ancient, primordial forces at bay!

Justice League #9 (2007)

Justice League: To See Tomorrow.

Why are there hawk soldiers of Thanagar on Earth? Who are the strange new superhumans appearing around the globe, testing and probing local governments? What exactly is the Justice League facing when a quartet of self-proclaimed heroes declares Earth "their last stand?" It's the beginning of an epic threat wrapped inside two strange mysteries that will leave the Justice League hoping that Earth survives "To See Tomorrow!"

Justice League #10 (2007)

Justice League: To See Tomorrow, Part Two (of Four).

"To See Tomorrow" continues as the stakes only get higher and secrets slowly start to unravel. Hawkman and the Martian Manhunter are caught between the Thanagarian invaders and their own satellite! The rest of the League is caught between Mon-El and Wandjina! And in the big picture, it's all symbolic of the Earth being caught between the enigmatic Overmaster and a still-hidden mastermind with dreadful intent!

Danger Trail #5 (2008)

Danger Trail: The Verdant Darkness Affair, Part 2 (of 2).

What connection lies between la Llorona's kidnapped children and Nyola's captured heroine Rima? What is drawing the natives of Central America and Mexico together? Speed Saunders, King Faraday and Midnight are joined by Doctor Occult to learn the truth before an Empire of Blood washes over the land!

Weird Western Quarterly #11 (2008)

Johnny Thunder: Steel Heart Iron Soul.

As Johnny Thunder, John Tane has evaded the deathbed oath to his mother never to do violence, and become Mesa City's great protector. Now he's about to be challenged on a whole new level when a powerful land baron makes a grab for greater wealth and glory, and the enigmatic renegade, Madame .44, has Johnny Thunder's heart in her sights! What might be his most dangerous

mission yet will also be the first chapter in a ballad of love and gunslinging like the Wild West has yet to see!

Danger Trail #6 (2008)

Danger Trail: The Man in Stitches Affair, Part 1 (of 2)

Danger Trail #7 (2008)

Danger Trail: The Man in Stitches Affair, Part 2 (of 2).

The Revenant Program proceeds apace as Saunders and Midnight must struggle with former ally King Faraday to find the evidence that can shut down Doctor Zero for good! Maybe, just maybe, newcomer Argent St. Cloud can help out!

Speeding Bullet #4 (2008)

Bulletman: The Birth of Bulletman, Part 4 (of 4): Man Made Gods. This is it! The mystery is revealed and the gloves come off as Bulletman duking it out with the Murder Prophet and his god of murder, the Nihilist! Can he come through his baptism of fire and blood intact? And even if he wins, does the Prophet truly get the last laugh?

Danger Trail #9 (2008)

Danger Trail: The Nation of Murder Affair, Part 2 (of 2).

As Speed Saunders and King Faraday join Argent St. Cloud to search for Michael Gallant, a wave of murders leaves the city of New York reeling as the heat rises, tempers flare, and Rue Morgue revels in the bloodbath!

Danger Trail #8 (2008)

Danger Trail: The Nation of Murder Affair, Part 1 (of 2).

Gangsters want Thomas Dewey dead at all costs, bringing Michael Gallant onto the case, Argent St. Cloud at his side! But when Murder, Inc. steps up to the challenge, can even he call on enough reinforcements to save the day?

Danger Trail #10 (2008)

Danger Trail: The Stolen Myth Affair, Part 1 (of 3).

It begins here! Threads woven from the start of the series, put into play centuries beforehand, all start to come together in this issue, as familiar faces return to the scene, dark forces gather for the

attack, and the secrets of the Trail yawn wide and threatening! All this and a special guest-star...the Queen of the Amazons!

Danger Trail #11 (2008)

Danger Trail: The Stolen Myth Affair, Part 2 (of 3).

Things heat up for our heroes as the Dragon Queen and the Queen of Blood unite to betray Vandal Savage; Savage raids Washington, D.C. to acquire the Ineffable Libram; and King Faraday and Speed Saunders face off with Queen Hippolyta and Rima the Jungle Woman! Things couldn't get any worse than this, could they?

Danger Trail Annual #1 (2008)

Danger Trail: The Savage Sins Affair.

As the Stolen Myth Affair heats up, as a covert war rages on the Danger Trail, take a peek inside the history of the man who has set this all into motion...Vandal Savage! Balloon Buster Steven Savage is doing just that as he uncovers threads and connections surrounding the many figures of the age that all lead back to this diabolical mastermind, some stretching back centuries! If the truth about him can't be unraveled soon, those threads will choke the present day and continue into the future!

Danger Trail #12 (2008)

Danger Trail: The Stolen Myth Affair, Part 3 (of 3).

Vandal Savage begins his plan to bring the world into his control! King Faraday, Speed Saunders and Midnight, along with their assembled allies, make their bid to stop him, but there are three queens in this game, and each one has their own vision for how the endgame should play out! It's the end of the first year on the Danger Trail...is it also just the end?

Speeding Bullet #1 (2008)

Speeding Bullet, Part 1 (of 4): Modern Gods.

James Barr has developed a special device that allows him tremendous powers! Now he steps into a new world of masked men and heroic deeds, but is he really ready to take his place among the world's newest gods? Will the Murder Prophet usher in an age of blood first?

Speeding Bullet #2 (2008)

Speeding Bullet: The Birth of Bulletman, Part 2 (of 4): Deepest Secrets.

James Barr steps into costume for the first time, and Bulletman is on the case of the Obermyer murders. But so is another person...the actual killer, a mysterious being called the Murder Prophet, who is paving the way for his master, and the police and the rookie hero struggle to catch up and stop him!

Speeding Bullet #3 (2008)

Speeding Bullet: The Birth of Bulletman, Part 3 (of 4): Bleeding Truths.

The race is on to uncover the real killer as Detectives Farley and Doherty try to dig through the murder mystery, Martin Obermyer meets the killer and Bulletman stumbles in a critical way, leaving him to face the fury of his wife!

Mightiest Mortals #4 (2008)

Mightiest Mortals: Wielding Fists of Virtue.

Captain Marvel is caught between a throwdown with Ibac and Sivana launching an all-out assault on our hero and the Fawcett itself! As bad as that is, though, it gets worse for Kit Freeman...much worse! Meet Sabbac!

Mightiest Mortals #5 (2008)

Mightiest Mortals: Scenes of a Day

Mightiest Mortals #6 (2008)

Mightiest Mortals: Between Opposing Forces.

Freddy finds himself having the most startlingly worst day of anyone's life! Can it be worse than losing a close relative? What about the dark secret within another relative? Or the secrets being held by his best friend? It all comes crashing down on him in a terrible avalanche of revelations! All this while the city moves on without him!

Mightiest Mortals #7 (2008)

Mightiest Mortals: From the Shadows of Twisted Minds.

Get ready for action and excitement! Freddy buries his cousin, Christopher Freeman, and has another showdown with his stepbrother Tim Karnes. And we discover just how fiendish Sivana

can be when he pushes Captain Marvel's every attribute in an issue in which the World's Wickedest Scientist...doesn't even appear! All this, and the fate of Beautia!

Mightiest Mortals #8 (2008)

Mightiest Mortals: To the Truth of the Matter.

Billy and Freddy have their confrontations on secrets kept, power hoarded and relations hidden, all the while the forces of the law struggle to keep Lady Justice apart from her new champion and Miss Minerva asserts her innocence!

Mightiest Mortals #9 (2008)

Mightiest Mortals: The Abyss of Blood Relations

Fawcett City goes on despite the gang war, despite the debut of new heroes, despite it all, Fawcett City goes on. Come and see how it does, as Chief Kitchens deals with the presence of Captain Marvel and what it means for his police force! And has Miss Minerva over-played her hand?

Mightiest Mortals #11 (2008)

Mightiest Mortals: The Tide of Heroism.

The beginning of the stunning two-part finale to Captain Marvel's first year! Sabbac has gone on a rampage, and Ibac is taking advantage of the chaos! Bulletman struggles to intervene, but everyone wants to know where Captain Marvel is! All this and more (and boy, do I really mean it this time)!

Mightiest Mortals #10 (2008)

Mightiest Mortals: The Punishment of Good Deeds.

Amazing origins issue as we discover the secret behind the magic words, and the history of Sabbac and Ibac! Freddy walks into a deathtrap, Victor Craize starts to feel the power of the people, and the police make a startling discovery about Miss Minerva!

Nightwing #30 (2008)

Nightwing: The Riddle of the Sphinx.

Just when you'd think Dick's got enough trouble juggling Titans duties as Nightwing, solo duties as the Batman, and mentoring duties with Tim, things get harder. There's a new villain hitting the streets, one with a dangerous delusion, and Dick's not happy

to see that Nightwing is apparently on the case, without Dick's permission! Come and join us for "The Riddle of the Sphinx!"

Nightwing #31 (2008)

Nightwing: Riddle of the Sphinx, Part 2 (of 2)

Dick must try to get to the bottom of the crazed King Tut and foil his rampages, but he also needs to figure out how to deal with the new Nightwing! As he digs up more information on both, all three men spiral into a collision course of tragic proportions, and Professor McElroy might just be the ultimate victim in all of this!

Justice League #11 (2008)

Justice League: To See Tomorrow, Part Three (of Four).

Things are falling into place at a rapid pace now... for the villains! With the League stretched thin across the globe, friends come racing to the rescue and the action only heats up! Watch Hawkgirl lead the storming of the JL satellite; witness Superman confront Mon-El over his mysterious mission; and thrill to the throwdown between Wonder Woman and the Persuader, as the master villain behind it all draws closer to his goal! All this and more!

Danger Trail Vol. 1 (2009)

This volume collects Danger Trail #1-12 as well as Danger Trail Annual #1. This is the complete first story arc in which our pulp heroes confront the treachery of the Blood Queen, the Dragon Queen and their mysterious backer. Stay tuned for Danger Trail #13 coming soon!

Danger Trail #13 (2009)

Danger Trail: The Brown Lady Affair, Part 1.

In the wake of the battle with Vandal Savage, Speed Saunders has set his sights on finding the Sigil of Seven; that quest being his only remaining link to the missing (and treacherous) Harriet Cooper! His friends Argent St. Cloud and Michael Gallant, along with ally Doctor Occult, want to know what his intentions are, but first they must untangle a dark scheme involving the ghosts of Great Britain!

Mightiest Mortals #13 (2009)

Mightiest Mortals: Opening Passages.

As Fawcett City recovers from the fall of Ibac and Sabbac, our heroes find more things to be worried about. Susan Barr must prosecute the bloodthirsty Tim Karnes while reassessing her stance on costumed crime-fighters; Dudley must wrestle with what he should reveal to Billy, and Billy must deal with the fact that Freddy refuses to return to his crippled body!

Danger Trail #14 (2009)

Danger Trail: The Brown Lady Affair, Part 2 (of 2).

Speed Saunders must deal with the fact that the artifact Harriet had been searching for, the Sigil of Seven, is Doctor Occult's primary weapon against supernatural evil! In the wake of her treachery, what can that mean? And none of our heroes can take the time to figure it out now, as they struggle to save Michael Gallant from the Dagger of Koth!

Danger Trail #15 (2009)

Danger Trail: The Falkenstein Affair.

Once rivals of the air and enemies at war, now the Enemy Ace and the Balloon Buster must work together to penetrate the secrets of Castle Falkenstein and the strange mad scientist ready to bring two worlds together to fuel his rise to power!

Danger Trail #16 (2009)

Danger Trail: The Blood of Templars Affair.

Danger Trail #17 (2009)

Danger Trail: The Blood of Templars Affair, Part Two.

Things heat up for our heroes as they head into an ancient Knights Templar castle as one of three groups desperate to unlock its secrets and find a powerful relic that will decide the victor in the opening battles of a far greater war, one that has the attention of the enigmatic Sanguine Father! A far greater war that echoes across the decades!

Danger Trail #18 (2009)

Danger Trail: Affairs of Blood and Fate, Part Two: The Angel of Death!

The strangest crossover of all times continues here, as Rose Psychic, Eel O'Brien, Speed Saunders, Midnight, Trin Dee and Andrew

Bennett find themselves caught in a holy war between the forces of the Order of St. Dumas and the Sanguine Father, who offers a glimpse into a terrifying future for the world!

Danger Trail #20 (2010)

Danger Trail: Affairs of Blood and State, Part 6 (of 6).

Danger Trail #19 (2010)

Danger Trail: Affairs of Blood and State, Part 4.

Weird Western Quarterly #18 (2010)

Weird Western Quarterly: Lust Faith Love Treachery.



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