



Shazam! #3

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Shazam!

Issue #3: "Stamina"

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The Mad Mummy struck Captain Marvel with a sledge hammer-like blow, sending the hero sprawling into and demolishing a bank of computers with a deafening crash.

"No, you fools!" Dr. Thaddeus Bodog Sivana screamed. "There goes my house surveillance!"

The scene was the basement of the "spooky house" located on Radley Street near downtown Fawcett City. Dr. Sivana's secret laboratory was located here, and the Mad Mummy was magically bound to do the evil scientist's bidding. And right now Sivana's bidding was for the ancient monster to destroy Sivana's most hated enemy, the heroic and powerful Captain Marvel.

As Cap was on the floor trying to disentangle himself from the computers' smashed circuits and wires he spied the Mad Mummy quickly advancing on him, ready to deliver another crushing attack. Reacting with the speed of Mercury, Cap kicked the decrepit monster into the far wall where it collapsed to the ground as the wall came down around it.

Bolting to his feet Cap shot a hurried glance at the Egyptian-style sarcophagus resting on a table in the center of the basement that was pulsing and glowing an eerie green color and contained two petrified children. Cap swiftly yet carefully began to lift the coffin off the table as the children trapped inside were revealed to be Freddy Freeman and Mary Bromfield, the best friends of Captain Marvel's alter ego, Billy Batson. Cap had just gotten the sarcophagus completely off the table—

The Mad Mummy charged into Cap from behind and caused him to drop the sarcophagus, destroying the table it had lain upon and roughly spilling out the two kids onto the floor. The horrid creature sat on the hero's backside and began raining blows on the back of Captain Marvel's head while chanting a chilling mantra in its gravelly voice.

"Kill...kill...killl..."

But the Champion of Shazam heaved the mummy off him with the strength of Hercules and whirled to face the creature, his face hard and determined.

"Enough. This ends now," Cap declared.

And Cap flew through the air and hauled the Mad Mummy up through the huge hole in the ceiling made when Cap had originally crashed down into the subterranean laboratory. Now in the living room of the spooky house, Cap unleashed a torrent of thunderous blows that pummeled the Mad Mummy relentlessly, not giving it a chance to recover. The ancient creature went down to the floor and could only attempt to protect itself under the tremendous barrage of fists from the indomitable superhero. But as the short, intense battle raged on in the now devastated room Cap began to notice something odd.

The Mad Mummy seemed to be losing its strength.

A bewildered Cap felt his own vigor evaporate right out of him as he stared at the weakening monster. It was still trying to press on and continue the fight but it was clearly and rapidly losing its energy as it seemed to comprehend what was happening to it.

"No... nooo..."

And as Cap stood stock-still in amazement the Mad Mummy used the last of its strength and stopped moving altogether, remaining in a defensive posture on the floor. Cap wasted not another moment.

Leaving the defeated Mad Mummy where it lay, Cap zoomed back down to the basement laboratory to check on the condition of the kids who had tumbled from the sarcophagus he had dropped.

Mary Bromfield had never been so terrified in her life. She had been trapped in a coffin with her friend Freddy Freeman by a mad dwarf who had a living mummy for a pet, and if that wasn't enough Captain Marvel had dropped her out of the coffin so brusquely there was no telling how long her bruises were going to last. While in the coffin she felt her strength leaving her and rendering her powerless to act, but now that she was free from the casket she was beginning to recover and get her energy back. She was even strong enough to get to her feet. She turned to check on the condition of Freddy...

And gasped.

Captain Marvel plunged down through the hole in the ceiling and faced her, startling her from her horror. She had never been this close to the World's Mightiest Mortal before, and she couldn't help but note how big he was.

"Miss Bromfield, are you all right?" Cap spoke gently.

This brought her back from her daze. "Captain Marvel— *Freddy!*" she cried, pointing toward the floor.

"Holy Moley!" Cap hollered.

Cap was aghast to see Freddy's left leg under the crushing weight of the sarcophagus itself, the young teen too weak to even scream. With incredible speed Cap flipped the casket off of Freddy and cradled the gravely injured youth in his arms.

Mary was fighting her tears. "Captain Marvel, is he..? Will he...?"

Cap looked straight into her eyes. "I know what I have to do with him. Mar- ah- Miss Bromfield, do you think you're strong enough to hold on to me?"

"Y-yes..."

“Then climb on my back and hold on tight!”

It took mere seconds for Captain Marvel to take Mary home to Master Street, and Mary was grateful that Cap dropped her off by her bedroom window so she wouldn't be seen out so late at night by her parents. Before Cap took to the sky again she asked a few urgent questions.

“Captain Marvel, will Freddy be okay?” she eyed Freddy's apparently lifeless form in Cap's arms.

“I sincerely hope so, Miss Bromfield. I've got to get him to Beck Memorial, fast.”

“And that old, bald dwarf got away with that gold statue!” Mary exclaimed.

“I'll deal with him later. Goodnight, Miss Bromfield.” Cap launched up into the sky and out of Mary's view.

Mary stood for a moment, shivering with worry about the fate of Freddy. Then, as she was climbing in her bedroom window, another thought struck her somewhat absurdly.

He knows my name! And where I live!

Captain Marvel didn't take Freddy Freeman to Beck Memorial Hospital.

Carrying Freddy in his arms the red-garbed powerhouse rocketed toward an old-fashioned subway entrance located near the exact center of Fawcett City, and when he sped down into the tunnel there inexplicably appeared blurring images of color and light as the laws of physics along with space and time seemed to no longer exist. The effect was disorienting and awe-inspiring to those few who had experienced it, but Captain Marvel had taken this journey many times before so he was accustomed to its mind-bending properties. Soon the tunnel took the form of a stone

passageway, and Cap flew in a red and gold blur past the grotesque carvings of the Seven Deadly Enemies of Man and rounded a corner to enter a huge open cavern, lit up by two enormous fiery braziers on either side of an imposing stone throne. This was the Rock of Eternity, a strange, mystical place where all magic, both earthly and otherworldly, found its source.

But it was the wizened, ancient being seated upon the throne with white flowing robes and a long white beard that Captain Marvel had traveled this fantastic passage to see. For this being was the great wizard Shazam, the mage who granted Cap his legendary powers and was the safeguard and keeper of the Rock of Eternity. Cap approached the wizard and softly placed the deathlike body of Freddy Freeman at his feet.

"Wizard," Cap pleaded. "I have come to ask a favor of you."

"I know, my Captain," Shazam kindly replied. "I have observed all the proceedings you have been involved in."

"Then can you save my friend?" Cap was hopeful.

"He has been under the spell of a powerful dark magic that even I cannot fully remove," the wizard stated. "For too long was he possessed by these forces, and even now his life ebbs away."

Cap's stomach began to turn in alarm. "You mean there's no way you can bring him back?"

"No." But as Shazam gazed upon his desperate champion his expression softened and when next he spoke his tone was more hopeful. "But there may be a way you can save him."

"What? How?"

"By sharing the powers I bestowed upon you can you perhaps still the malevolent energies coursing through his body," the old wizard explained. "I myself cannot grant him my powers."

"Why not?"

“Because I am not certain this one possesses the purity of heart I require in my champions. I have made that mistake before,” Shazam declared. “Are you certain this boy Freddy is worthy to wear the mantle of Marvel?”

Captain Marvel didn't hesitate. “Yes.”

The wizard regarded his champion for a moment. “Very well. Then we must begin immediately.”

Rising from his throne and stepping down from on high the wizard raised his arms over the prone Freddy, murmuring an ancient incantation. Tendrils of flashing energy leaped from his fingertips and engulfed the dying boy in a cocoon of white light. The wizard nodded, and Captain Marvel raised his arms over Freddy as well, adding his own brilliant energy to Shazam's magical cocoon. The white light shone brighter and brighter until it finally reached its zenith with a silent explosion of mystical white lightning, magically charging the very air of the Rock of Eternity. After a few moments the energy dissipated, and Freddy groggily opened his eyes.

Cap looked to the wizard, who nodded toward Freddy.

Bending down on one knee, Captain Marvel addressed Freddy Freeman.

“Freddy,” Cap whispered. “Do you know who I am? Speak my name.”

Freddy glanced over at Cap and his eyes grew wider. “C-Captain Marvel?”

KRA- KOOOM!!!

The lightning flashed and the thunder roared, striking Freddy and magically transforming him into a shorter, younger looking version of Captain Marvel himself! But instead of a red uniform, this new Marvel was clad in blue with the gold lightning bolt and gold sash belt standard in the Marvel uniform; his cape was also identical to Cap's except the primary color was red instead of white with gold trim.

"Wow! I feel the power!" the new Marvel marveled. "What happened to me?"

"You were dying of a strong dark magic so I brought you here," Cap elucidated. "I brought you before the wizard and through his magic I shared my power with you. You're now a Marvel."

"I know...somehow I know," the new Marvel put forth, turning to the wizard. "And you're the wizard Shazam himself!"

"Yes," the wizened being affirmed. "You now possess the wisdom of Solomon, the strength of Hercules, the stamina of Atlas, the power of Zeus, the courage of Achilles and the speed of Mercury."

"Thank you, Shazam," the new Marvel breathed wonderingly.

"Do not thank me, for it is Captain Marvel who has granted these abilities to you." The wizard indicated Cap with a gesture.

"Yes, thank you Cap!" The new Marvel then paused a moment, thinking. "And you're...Billy! Billy Batson!"

"That's right, Freddy; you're using the wisdom of Solomon already," Cap beamed.

"But why am I still a teenager? And why is my costume a different color than yours?"

"Probably because the power came from me instead of the wizard," Cap answered. "And you still look much older than you actually are. I'd say at least eighteen, nineteen."

The new Marvel smiled as he tried to process the astounding events of the past twenty-four hours. "This is unbelievable," he said in awe.

"So what should we call you?" Cap speculated. "Captain Marvel, Junior?"

"No, then I couldn't say my own name." The new Marvel thought a bit.

“Well, there’s a Kid Flash so why don’t I call myself…Kid Marvel?”

“Works for me.” Cap confirmed, and the wizard nodded his approval.

“Now that that’s over let’s get to fighting the bad guys!” Kid Marvel said anxiously. “And Dr. Sivana’s still out there! Let’s go, Cap!”

Kid Marvel shot into the air and began to head to the passage leading away from the Rock of Eternity.

“Kid! Wait!” Cap called out, and Kid Marvel halted in mid-air. “We have to fix things back in Fawcett City before we can find Sivana.”

“What do you mean?” Kid queried.

“Well, I was supposed to bring Freddy Freeman to the hospital, and I’m sure by now the Wormwood Orphanage has been looking for you,” Cap responded. “There are appearances we need to maintain, and we need to protect our identities.”

“But…but…” Kid whined.

“Use the wisdom of Solomon again, and you’ll see what I mean,” Cap offered. “You’ve got to change back into Freddy Freeman so we can get our lives back in order. Think about Mary, and what she’s been through. She must be worried sick about you.”

Kid paused a few seconds. “You’re right, Cap. I just got carried away.”

“Your enthusiasm is good, Kid. But sometimes even Marvels have to think about their responsibilities.” Kid Marvel flew down next to Cap, and the “elder” Marvel put his hand on his protégé’s shoulder.

“A word before you transform,” the wizard broke in, addressing Kid Marvel. “The dark magic that was once throughout your body has been transmuted, but not eliminated. It will still manifest itself inside you, and though it will not be fatal its effects will still be felt on your person while in your non-Marvel form.”

“I understand, Shazam, and again thank you. I’ll try to become as great a

champion as Cap is." Kid then turned to Captain Marvel. "Does this mean they'll call me the Big Blue Cheese?"

Cap laughed. "Maybe, or perhaps we'll be known as Captain and the Kid."

"I hope not," Kid Marvel groaned, and then he steeled himself for the magic words. "CAPTAIN MARVEL!"

High above the skyscrapers of Fawcett City a large dirigible floated, its presence masked by a high-tech cloaking device. Inside the blimp's cabin stood Dr. Sivana, gleefully crowing to his henchmen while clutching the Golden Scorpion, an ancient Egyptian device of vast power.

"The Big Red Cheese might have stopped my Mad Mummy, but I still got away with this!" Sivana raised the golden artifact over his head, and nearly dropped it in a fit of coughing. His henchmen looked dubiously at their crazed leader.

"So whatta ya gonna do with it?" one of them asked.

"Do? Do? This device will be the means of my salvation! My *resurrection*, you oaf!" Sivana hacked. "And now, at last, I will use its power to make me whole once more."

Holding the Golden Scorpion in front of his face Sivana whispered something to it that his goons couldn't hear. But suddenly a golden radiance shone from the idol and bathed the mad scientist in a golden hue, so bright his thugs had to look away from the procedure. It lasted only a few seconds, and when the light finally died down the henchmen were shocked to see a younger, vital Dr. Sivana, laughing maniacally and jumping in place with excited energy.

"It worked! *It worked!* I'm young again! *Yes!* All those years of research in those ridiculous ancient texts and they were accurate! I'm *me* again! I'll find a new base of operations and I'll set up the greatest laboratory ever conceived! I'll—"

Then Sivana's face darkened, and an evil, twisted grin appeared on his face. "And I'll get you, you stupid Big Red Cheese. I'll get you and I'll destroy you and stand over your dead body and *spit* on it if it's the last thing I ever do! HAHAAHAHAHA!"

And the cloaked zeppelin floated away into the calm and peaceful night.

Billy Batson ran through the doors of Beck Memorial Hospital, skidding to a stop in front of the receiving desk, telling the receptionist that he was Freddy Freeman's brother. The attendant directed him to an emergency room stall where Freddy was getting his broken leg examined by a doctor, who was about to ask for privacy when Freddy told him that Billy was his brother.

"All right young man, that's quite a break you've got there." The doctor addressed Freddy, sounding somewhat suspicious and glancing at Billy. "If Captain Marvel hadn't vouched for you I'd question what really happened to you, but his word is good enough for me. We'll be right back to set the break and fit you for your cast."

The doctor left the two boys alone, and Freddy shot a resigned look at Billy. "It's my leg. I know that's where the dark magic is— was. I can feel how weak it is and I don't know if it's gonna get any better."

Billy felt terrible, for he considered himself responsible for Freddy's leg. "Well, just let the docs do their thing, and maybe it'll heal up right. Don't give up hope."

"No way, man, are you kidding? I'm just getting *started*." Freddy smiled. "But you better get going. The orphanage has been notified and they're on their way. I don't wanna explain what my 'brother' is doing here."

"Okay, Freddy. I wanna go check on Mr. Ibis anyway. He should be here too. Take care, and I'll see you soon."

"Hey Billy?" Freddy turned serious, and Billy turned to look at him.

"Thanks. For everything." Freddy winced at the pain in his leg.

Billy grinned and left the room.

Ibis the Invincible and his wife, the Princess Taia, walked up the steps to the Fawcett City Museum, where Ibis was the curator. Ibis was an extremely powerful magician in possession of the Ibistick, his ancient magic wand, and he had used the Ibistick to heal himself of the injuries he had suffered from the attack of the Mad Mummy. The doctors couldn't comprehend how the dark skinned man with the formal attire and the red turban could possibly heal so quickly, but as there were no longer any apparent injuries to speak of, they reluctantly released the gentle curator. Taia had picked him up at the hospital, and Ibis had insisted on returning to the museum to inspect the damages the Mad Mummy had wrought.

At the top steps of the museum the two policemen guarding the entrance allowed the two caretakers to enter the museum, which had been sealed off as a crime scene. Most of the initial investigations were concluded, and the detectives spoke with Ibis and Taia about the rear entrance being broken into and the curator's office door being smashed in, but they would be back in the morning to continue their work. Ibis and Taia thanked the policemen and assured them that the museum was actually in fine condition and they would fully cooperate with the investigations in the morning.

After the detectives and officers had cleared out and left the premises, Taia turned to her husband with a look of concern.

"Should I reset the alarms?" she inquired.

"Not until I inspect the Dark Chamber," Ibis replied. "Come, my love."

Stepping into his office, Ibis the Invincible stood before the rear wall behind his desk.

"UN!" Ibis commanded in a stern voice and the sliding panel in the wall opened and revealed a set of stone steps leading downward into the bowels of the museum.

As the pair began to descend the stairs they heard a thunderous crash coming from down below in the direction they were heading. Wielding the Ibistick before him, Ibis began to hurry down the remaining steps with Princess Taia close behind him until they reached the bottom of the steps and the couple stood in a secret chamber filled with wondrous and dangerous magical artifacts. Through the dim light, Ibis saw the opened chest that once contained the Golden Scorpion, pilfered by the Mad Mummy and taken to the despicable mad doctor. There was a sudden chill in the chamber, and Ibis' attention was drawn to the ceiling where a gigantic hole had been torn in the ceiling and on every level of the museum so that the staid magician could look straight up through the museum and into the starry night sky. As he pondered this he heard Taia's horror-struck voice behind him.

"Ibis, my love! Behold!"

Ibis turned to see what had concerned his wife so, and when he did he was shocked beyond belief.

"No," Ibis whispered in dread. "It can't be..."

There were hundreds of shards of a black metallic material scattered all over the chamber's floor, and the shattered remains of an oblong box constructed of the same opaque material.

Captain Marvel had returned to the "spooky" house on Radley Street, which didn't seem so spooky anymore, and was placing the inanimate body of the Mad Mummy back inside its sarcophagus. He sealed the lid and stood to view his surroundings.

The basement laboratory was smashed beyond recognition, with all of Sivana's computers and equipment destroyed in Cap's battle with the Mad Mummy. Upstairs the house didn't look much better due to neglect. Cap thought about what had happened and found himself dissatisfied with the way things turned out. Sivana had gotten away with the Golden Scorpion, and there was no trace of his whereabouts. Ibis the Invincible had been injured, both Freddy and Mary had nearly gotten killed and

Freddy may have been permanently harmed thanks to him. Still, he had stopped the Mad Mummy and shared his powers with Freddy, so Cap hoped that counted for something. Ibis was also apparently unharmed since he was no longer at the hospital, so Cap made a mental note to check with him at the museum tomorrow.

But in truth it already was tomorrow, it was so late, and Cap was grateful it was a Sunday so Billy wouldn't have to go to school. Deciding to call it a night, Cap prepared to pick up the sarcophagus and take it back to the museum before heading for home.

WHOOM!!!

The house seemed to explode as Cap was hit by something so fast and so forceful he didn't have an instant to see what was coming. Shaking his head while lying on the floor, Cap tried to hurriedly collect himself but found it difficult to shake the cobwebs from his brain. He had never been hit like that, not by the Mad Mummy, not by the parademons of Apokolips, not by anyone or anything. He needed to get his bearings—

"You wear his colors, and your face is similar," came the cold, imperious voice. "But you are *not* the Captain Marvel I know."

And Cap looked up to see Black Adam, fists on his hips, looming over the befuddled hero with a taut, grim expression on his face.

The End... of the beginning

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Shazam! #1 (2006)

Shazam!: Wisdom.

The World's Mightiest Mortal, now in his own monthly adventures! Join Billy Batson as he deals with homework, friendships, schoolboy crushes, baseball-- and opposing evil as the new Captain Marvel! What is the secret of the spooky house on Radley Street? What ancient evil threatens to rise again?

Shazam! #2 (2006)

Shazam!: Strength.

A frantic Billy must decide whether or not to reveal his greatest secret to Mary in time to save them from the kidnappers. Plus the Mad Mummy strikes at the Fawcett City Museum! What is he after, and how does it fit into the nefarious plans of Dr. Sivana?

Shazam! #4 (2007)

Shazam!: Power.

Black Adam returns to battle Captain Marvel! But where has this powerful evil being been, and why has he been away for so long? Also, Fawcett City is introduced to the newest member of the Marvel family - Kid Marvel!

Shazam! #5 (2007)

Shazam!: Courage.

Captain Marvel finds himself involved in two major showdowns: one with the dangerous Black Adam and one with... Kid Marvel?

Rogues Gallery #13 (2009)

Rogues Gallery: I Am Scarecrow.

What's the definition of fear? What does the mind see when fear is all they know?

The Scarecrow is born to show Gotham City that he is FEAR.



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