



All-Star Comics #1

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All-Star Comics
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Chapter 1: The Historama

In a cavernous chamber of rock, on a stone chair between two dimly glowing braziers, sat the ancient wizard Shazam. He gazed solemnly into the mists as the images began to take shape before him: there was a white-haired mortal, bed-ridden, his body still vital but his mind sadly deteriorated; the mortal gazed out a window, as if searching for someone he long expected, but never found. He dozed, falling in and out of lucidity.

Captain Marvel was dying, Shazam realized. Or rather, C.C. Batson, the mortal host of the wizard's powers, was. For seventy years, Batson had served as the Champion of Shazam, battling the forces of evil as Captain Marvel. Batson need only utter the name of the wizard to call the magical thunder and lightning from the sky, to summon 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! When he was Captain Marvel, Batson was transformed, suffused with youth and vitality—age could not touch the Champion of Shazam!

But when he was not Captain Marvel, time worked its slow progress upon him, as it must upon all mortals. In the dark days of the Second World War, Captain Marvel was called daily into action by a desperate world, to battle sinister Nazis and rampaging monsters, alien threats and mad scientists. He served side-by-side with the world's greatest heroes, in the honored ranks of the Justice Society of America, and continued the fight long after they retired. But though he was the World's Mightiest

Mortal, he was still a mortal... Tragedies followed triumphs, and time works its inevitable will upon all...

Eventually, C.C. Batson forgot the name of the ancient wizard who long ago sought out a mortal that was noble of spirit and pure of heart...

But the world *needed* Captain Marvel.

Since the dawn of time, Seven Deadly Enemies had waged war for the hearts and souls of Man: Pride, Envy, Lust, Hatred, Selfishness, Laziness and Injustice. A champion was needed to point the way; a soul that was pure, and free of the corruption of the Seven Enemies...

C.C. Batson had been one such man...

The Historama scrolled in a vista of ever-changing images past the eyes of the ancient wizard as he remembered the events of almost seventy years ago, when he had, at last, been forced to choose a champion again to wield his power...

The mists parted, and C.C. Batson again appeared, except this time he was young and hale. He made his way carefully down a long dark tunnel, holding aloft a smoldering torch. And he wasn't alone: at his side, flinching at the macabre carvings on the walls was Batson's partner, a scrawnier man with a widow's peak: Theo Adam.

"How much further, Batson?" Adam's voice echoed down the centuries. "This hidden tomb is giving me the willies."

"It's hard to say, Theo." Came C.C.'s rich timbre. "That old scroll we bought at the bazaar in Shiruta was not exactly precise. But if it was genuine, then we could be on the verge of the discovery of Ancient Khandaq's greatest and wickedest King, the legendary Khem Adam!"

"If!" Theo Adam snorted. "You mean we could have come all the way to

this godforsaken country for nothing? I knew I should have gone to work for Carter Hall in Egypt...”

With sad eyes, the wizard Shazam watched again as the two men came upon the stone sarcophagus, carved only with a thunderbolt, and a dire warning in hieroglyphs.

“This must be it!” Adam set upon it instantly with a crow-bar. “Let Hall have Khufu, the treasures of Khem Adam are ours!”

“Wait!” Batson grabbed his partner by the arm, halting him. “We’re archaeologists, not grave robbers. And if there are any treasures to be found here, they belong to the people of this poor country!”

“Get yer mitts offa me, Batson!” Adam swung the crow-bar, catching C.C. a glancing blow to the head, felling him. Somewhere, Shazam could hear the laughter of the Seven Deadly Enemies of Man...

Sweating, Theo went back to work on the sarcophagus, prying off the lid to reveal a moldering mummy, wrapped in rotted lineaments. But what set his eyes glowing was the glittering blue scarab of lapis lazuli atop the dead king’s chest. With trembling hands, Theo snatched it out of the coffin, and saw that the back of the scarab was also inscribed with hieroglyphs and the thunderbolt symbol.

The ancient wizard remembered the day, so many millennia ago, when he had at last confronted his former champion, made mad and wicked by the loss of his family and the slaughter of his people; Shazam had been forced to trap the power of his first champion in the scarab, burying it with the mortal remains of Teth Adam.

He had never expected it to be freed again.

Theo read the hieroglyphs.

“Shazam...?”

Thunder cracked the sky, and lightning split the roof of the temple outside the desert oasis city of Hurut. And where Theo Adam once stood, there lived again the mighty Black Adam!

C.C. Batson awoke just in time to see the apparition take flight.

“Holy Moley...!”

But C.C. Batson’s astonishment was just beginning.

From out of the dust of the ruined temple came the wizard himself, awakened from his millennia-long slumber by the use of his power.

Shazam watched as he himself led the amazed Batson deep underground, across time and space, to the very chamber he watched from now!

“Black Adam has fallen into madness, and perverts the power I gave to him. He has surrendered to the Seven Deadly Enemies of Man, and he must be stopped. As long as you remain pure of heart and innocent of spirit, you need only call upon my name to wield my power. Will you become my new champion? Will you become a captain of marvels?”

Without hesitation, C.C. Batson spoke the magic word.

That first titanic battle between Captain Marvel and Black Adam rocked the heavens themselves. For a day and a night, their struggle raged across the deserts of Khandaq, two evenly matched champions vying for supremacy. But when the fight spilled over into the ruins of ancient Gon, the tyrant at last had had enough. He fled into the night, beaten and humbled, but smoldering with hatred and jealousy for his new nemesis.

And over the years, wherever Black Adam reared his head, Captain Marvel would be there, too.

But Black Adam was not the only menace to threaten the world. It was a dangerous time, and the Seven Deadly Enemies of Man were abroad in force. The Axis Powers rose up to engulf the world in fire and war, and villains of every stripe appeared to work their nefarious plans. And Captain Marvel was there to oppose them!

The ancient wizard watched with pride as the mists of the Historama swirled and revealed the long career of his champion. He saw the machinations of the evil genius Sivana, who vowed to destroy Captain Marvel. He saw the Aryan super-soldier known as Captain Nazi challenge, and repeatedly fall before the might and compassion of the power of Shazam... and there were others— many others!— like the Venusian worm Mr. Mind, the Lord of the Beast-Men, King Kull and the mad firebug called the Arson Fiend.

But Captain Marvel was not alone in his crusade.

Following his selfless example of heroism, other heroes rose up: first the Flash in Keystone City, then the Sandman in Manhattan, and Hawkman and Green Lantern and Wonder Woman and the list went on and on! Together, the heroes protected the world as the Justice Society of America, and Captain Marvel stood at their side against the likes of the Ultra-Humanite, Solomon Grundy, the Dragon King and even Adolf Hitler himself!

The balance shifted and the scales tipped back— not even the Seven Deadly Enemies of Man were a match for the message of hope and justice.

Yes, the world needed Captain Marvel— but maybe not so much anymore. The World's Mightiest Mortal almost felt that he could settle down in Fawcett City, with his wife Marilyn and his young son Billy...

With great regret, the wizard looked again upon that sad day when Dr. Thaddeus Sivana kidnapped Billy Batson.

It was a cold and rainy afternoon in 1951, and the boy had been out on the curb hawking his newspapers. The headlines were all of the recent Senate Hearings demanding the unmasking of the JSA, and Captain Marvel was away in Washington, D.C., testifying. The hunchbacked little goblin Sivana had watched his archenemy for a long time, had seen how the Captain had given the 13 year old boy a scoop to take back to the producers of radio station WHIZ... The brilliant but diabolical mind had made some deductions, and calculated that Captain Marvel could be hurt through the newsboy.

So Sivana snatched Billy off the street, dragging him to his secret lair.

“The game is up, Sivana!” The Captain smashed through the concrete walls of the hideout, bursting into the sinister laboratory where Billy was chained to the wall. “This time you’ve gone too far, dragging a child into this! You’re going away for good, now!”

“That’s what you think, you Big Red Cheese!” Crowed Sivana and aimed the weapon that had been a gift from his former assistant, Per Degaton.

But the temporal cannon did not have the desired effect: the beam ricocheted off the Captain’s chest, useless against the magical protection of the power of Shazam, and struck Billy Batson!

Captain Marvel watched in horror as his son flashed out of existence!

“Bring him back!” He snatched up the mad scientist and demanded, tears in his eyes.

“I can’t!” Sivana laughed. “The beam only works one way!”

And for the first time in his life, C.C. Batson heard the whisperings of the Seven Deadly Enemies of Man in his ears... This man who hated him for no reason, who lived only to do evil— *who had just taken away from him his only child!*—was completely at his mercy and would not the world be better for his execution?

Shazam watched again the struggle on his champion’s face, with sorrow and with pride: for in the end, here was a noble being, pure of heart and innocent of spirit! Here was Captain Marvel, and he did the right thing.

Sivana went to jail. And C.C. and Marilyn Batson clung together in their grief.

And Captain Marvel carried on, fighting the never-ending battle. The Captain was a beacon of hope and justice in a world that was sometimes too cynical to find these qualities on its own. But a time came when the mortal Batson spoke the wizards name less and less frequently: a new age of heroes had dawned! There came a strange visitor from another planet, a Man of Tomorrow who rose up to protect his adopted world;

an Amazon Princess who was like unto a goddess herself; and a Dark Knight Detective from whose sight no criminal could escape. And the World's Mightiest Mortal was content to watch with pride as his legacy was continued by another generation...

But Captain Marvel could afford to sit and watch no longer!

From his throne in the cavern that existed outside of time and space, the wizard Shazam saw that a new menace was rising! Foes thought long vanquished were banding together and hatching a deadly scheme, one that no Man of Steel or Amazonian Champion could withstand.

Perhaps C.C. Batson could no longer carry on the fight, but it was time for another to take up the mantle of Captain Marvel!

But in all the world, where could he find a heart so pure, a spirit so innocent...?

Shazam peered into the mists and remembered.

Yes... There is one...And he returns just in time!

On the streets of Fawcett City, from out of a tear in the fabric of time, a young boy stumbled!

He looked about himself in amazement, at the casually apathetic passers-by, the skyscrapers towering above him, and the sleek, rushing traffic in the street.

The boy scratched himself on the head, craning his neck up at the only familiar landmark, the WHIZ radio tower that dominated the Fawcett City skyline, though even it was different, sporting a new digital news reader that scrolled the headlines in glowing red letters: **JANUARY 25TH, 2006: FAWCETT CITY FUSILIERS PLAY METROPOLIS COMETS TONIGHT AT WHIZ FIELD...!**

“Holy *Moley!*” Exclaimed Billy Batson.

Chapter 2: The Rebirth of Evil!

The zeppelin was a relic of the post-war days in Fawcett, a nostalgic fixture in the skies over the city. Few knew that it had recently been purchased by the mysterious German recluse named Albrecht Krieger—otherwise known as Captain Nazi!

The super-soldier serum of long-dead Nazi scientists coursing through his veins, the Aryan ubermensch, looking no older than the day he was first injected with the serum, narrowed his eyes and gazed around the table at the infamous gathering he had called together in his floating lair.

They glared back at him, and he could almost feel their palpable desire to again wreck havoc.

“Why have you called us here, Captain Nazi?” Spoke the wizened little man with the beady eyes as he toyed with a spark of flame that danced like a live thing from his finger tips.

“Patience, Arson Fiend. All will be revealed soon.” Captain Nazi soothed the old man.

But the Neanderthal-looking man with the horned helmet was also showing his impatience. He slammed his meaty fist upon the table, snarling.

“King Kull waits for no man!” He spat. “I have returned to civilization for one thing and one thing only: to kill Captain Marvel!”

“That is why we are all here, my hirsute friend.” Came the weird voice from the jar on the center of the table. Floating in a bath of brine in the jar was a large green worm with bulging eyes, regarding the Lord of the Beast-Men with disdain. “He is the only obstacle that stands in my way of dominating this insignificant planet.”

“You mean ‘our way’, don’t you, Mr. Mind?” Captain Nazi rumbled

dangerously.

“Yes. Of course.”

“Kill. Captain. Marvel.” Spoke a cone-headed metallic robot with a single-mindedness they all could share.

“Well said, Mr. Atom.”

From out of nowhere appeared a man in dark flowing robes, bald, with a carefully groomed goatee and a devilish glint in his eye. He stepped up to the table with his hands folded into his sleeves.

“At last, Ibac.” Captain Nazi said. “Those of us that still live, I have called together as you requested. Now perhaps you would care to explain yourself?”

Ibac, the man who had once been Stanley Printwhistle but had made a deal with the devil for the cunning of the most evil men in history, Ivan the Terrible, Cesare Borgia, Attila the Hun and the Roman Emperor Caligula, smiled and stroked his moustaches.

“Ah, my old comrades! Captain Nazi, Arson Fiend, King Kull, Mr. Mind and Mr. Atom! I have called us all together again to share in my greatest discovery! As you all know, I was ever the student of the occultic arts, and have long used my powers to seize the respect that is rightfully mine. But, like all of you, I was frustrated time and again by our mutual enemy, Captain Marvel!”

At the mention of the hated name, King Kull bared his teeth and a rumbling came from deep in his chest.

“Kill. Captain. Marvel.” Repeated Mr. Atom, his optical sensors flashing hotly.

The brine in Mr. Mind’s jar gurgled in amusement.

“Bah!” Scoffed the Arson Fiend. “He’s defeated us every time. And now he has his pal from Metropolis to call on if he needs help!” He wiped the drool from his chin, and belched a tiny spurt of flame.

“Superman is alien filth.” Captain Nazi cracked his knuckles. “I have long desired to unleash the fury of the Everlasting Reich upon him.”

Ibac flashed a droll smile.

“The Kryptonian will not be a problem for us. You see, his greatest weakness is magic, and I have at last found the Dread Infernal Word!”

Though none of them knew what that meant, they all recoiled in apprehension.

“You see,” Ibac explained. “When the mortal who has been granted the blessing of the wizard Shazam speaks his name, he is transformed into Captain Marvel. When our late, lamented comrade Timothy Karnes spoke the word ‘Sabbac’, an acronym of the foulest demons in hell, he was granted their power. I, myself, have gained my cunning the same way. However, there is another word, vouchsafed to me by the infernal princes themselves after much study and close communion, which will transform a mortal into an unstoppable godlike force!”

“And what is this word, Earthling?” Spoke the Venusian worm, Mr. Mind.

Ibac’s face darkened. “It must never be uttered in vain. And if the summoning is to work properly, it must be spoken for the first time in the presence of the Seven Deadly Enemies of Man.”

“And where is that? Gotham?” Chuckled the Arson Fiend.

“At a place called the Rock of Eternity! Where dwells the wizard Shazam!”

It took a moment for that to sink in. Mr. Mind was the first to realize the implications of that statement.

“We will strike at the heart of the earthling’s power...” Mused the worm.

Cruel smiles spread across the faces of Captain Nazi and King Kull, and the Arson Fiend cackled with delight.

“Kill. Captain. Marvel.” Mr. Atom whirred and beeped.

“Yes!” Ibac clenched his fist. “Are you with me, my friends? Will you stand at my side when I speak the word?”

“Aye!” They raised their voices in unison.

“At last!” Ibac crowed. “The Monster Society of Evil lives again!”

Chapter 3: A Boy Out of Time

It was raining, and Billy Batson was alone and confused.

Night had fallen, and the lights of the city had come on; cars splashed puddles of water on the street, forcing Billy to take shelter in a doorway. He huddled against the cold, his teeth chattering.

He had gone into the WHIZ Building, and asked to see Mr. Sterling Morris, the owner of Amalgamated Broadcasting Corp, the media conglomerate mogul who hired Billy to hawk his newspaper, only to be told that the old man had passed away ages ago, and the company was now run by his grandson, Sterling Morris IV!

Sivana must have really done it, this time, he sniffled, staring at the passers-by. His ray-gun had zapped Billy from 1951 into the future! His Mom and Dad would be in their eighties now, if they were even still alive!

“Hey, mister!” Billy called to a hurried-looking man as he walked by. “Have you seen Captain Marvel, today?”

The man squinted at Billy from underneath his umbrella, barely pausing.

“Where you been, kid? The Big Red Cheese ain’t been seen around here in years!”

Dejected, Billy leaned back into the dry doorway. When the rain stopped, he would make his way to his family’s old brownstone

apartment on the corner of Parker and Binder, but he dreaded the scene that awaited him.

This can't be happening! He wailed inwardly. Dad would never let Sivana get away with this...

Don't give into despair, Billy, said a voice in his head that sounded suspiciously like his father's. *Hope is eternal, if you only have faith and courage...*

As in all things, Billy relied on the wisdom of his father.

Unable to tell if he was wiping rain or tears from his eyes, Billy waited, consoling himself with the memories of his family, remembering the smell of his mother's fresh-washed linen apron as he rushed into her arms, the broad smile on his father's face as he flew over the city, defending it always from the evils of the world...

Squinting into the rainy night, he noticed across the street, a figure in a raincoat with the collar up and his hat pushed down, beckoning to him!

Huh?

Billy emerged from the doorway, and cautiously approached the mysterious man who seemed to know him.

"Who are you?" Billy asked bravely, pushing his rain-soaked dark hair out of his eyes.

In answer, the figure just turned and walked slowly away, motioning for Billy to follow.

Thankfully, the stranger led him into an old-fashioned subway entrance, dimly lit but dry.

"Hey, wait up!" Billy called after him, as he bounded down the stairs.

The subway tunnel seemed to be deserted but for the two of them, and just as Billy was about to ask his silent companion what was going on, a sleek, oddly decorated train rushed almost soundlessly up to the platform.

A door swooshed open, and a warm welcoming light glowed within.

Billy looked up at the stranger, who merely pointed into the train.

Trusting his intuition, Billy stepped up into the car, and the door closed behind him. As the train began to pull away, Billy glanced out the window to see that the platform was deserted: the stranger had disappeared!

The train picked up incredible speed within seconds, and Billy watched the objects outside speed by in a blur. There were streaks of color and fantastic images, and he suddenly had the impression that the train's destination was no earthly location!

After all that had happened to him, Billy felt bone-weary. He settled down on one of the comfortable leather seats and soon fell asleep. By the time he woke up, the train had stopped, and the door was tantalizingly open!

He cautiously stepped from the train, in a long stone passage, with the ceiling lost to his sight. His steps echoed as he made his way down the long corridor. He knew something very unusually was going on, but somehow he knew he was in no danger...

He soon came upon a large portion of the passageway where the wall was carved in bas relief; seven hideous squatting trolls with lolling tongues and forked tails, each of them inscribed with a name (Pride, Envy, Lust, Hatred, Selfishness, Laziness and Injustice), with a legend above them that read: The Seven Deadly Enemies of Man. And now Billy knew where he was: the Rock of Eternity! He remembered his father's stories of the strange, otherworldly place, where dwelt the ancient wizard that was the source of Captain Marvel's powers!

Come forward, Billy Batson... You have been chosen!

The sonorous voice echoed in his head, and Billy, wonderingly, obeyed, plunging deeper down the passageway.

Around the corner, he came to a wide cavern, at the end of which was a great stone throne, surrounded on either side by smoking braziers. On

the seat was an old man in white robes, with a beard so long it gathered in his lap.

“Holy Moley...!” Billy breathed.

He approached the throne, bowing his head in respect, but the wizard forestalled him before he could bow or kneel.

“Nay, my boy. I do not ask you to do me obeisance. Indeed, I have much to ask of you.”

Billy gazed up at him, astonished.

“Please, sir. What do you mean? Why am I here?”

The ancient wizard lumbered to his feet, towering over Billy.

“Because yours is a noble soul, pure of heart and innocent of spirit. You have been chosen, Billy Batson!” He thundered, and suddenly all illusion of frailty was gone. The wizard waved his hand at a slab of rock on the wall behind his throne, and from his finger sprouted a tongue of flame that carved his own name into the wall in fiery letters!

“You have been chosen to bear 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! The Monster Society of Evil has risen again, and this time, they mean to call an abomination into being! They must be stopped! *You* must take up the mantle of my champion, as your father did before you, and become Captain Marvel!”

And the boy, like his father so long ago, did not hesitate.

“Shazam!”

Lightning flashed and thunder roared!

To be concluded!

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