



Shazam! #2

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Published: 2006

Categorie(s): Fiction, Fan Fiction

Tag(s): "Captain Marvel" "Doctor Sivana" "Mad Mummy" Comics DC2
Shazam Ibis

Shazam!
Issue #2: "Strength"
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Billy Batson was in quite a fix.

He and his good friend Mary Bromfield were being abducted by a couple of rough-hewn goons who were dragging them towards the back of a large delivery truck, right out in broad daylight. Why they were being kidnapped Billy didn't know, but it didn't take a genius to realize that the reason couldn't be a very good one. Billy caught sight of Mary's wide, terrified eyes and felt a surge of dread but also, oddly, a tinge of excitement.

Because Billy had a secret.

By speaking the name of the ancient wizard Shazam, Billy would be magically transformed into Captain Marvel, the World's Mightiest Mortal!

However, there were two problems Billy had to contend with in this situation. First, his mouth was covered by his kidnapper's hand, preventing him from speaking; and second, if he *did* say the magic word Mary would learn that he was, in fact, a superhero.

But one more glance at his friend's petrified face was all the convincing Billy needed. Frantically wiggling his head, Billy was able to get his mouth in the webbing between the thug's thumb and forefinger, biting down hard on the goon's hand and causing him to shriek in pain and release Billy's face.

Billy instantly shouted, "Sha—."

And a tremendous burst of light exploded out of nowhere directly behind the thugs' truck, blinding Billy and forcing his abductor to drop him to the ground. Squinting painfully and rubbing his eyes Billy heard a great booming voice issue a stern command.

"BEGONE!"

Billy, slowly recovering, crawled over to Mary, who had also been let loose and was similarly beginning to regain her sight. Hearing the sound of an engine starting, the kids were shocked to see the delivery truck pull out and speed away from them.

"What happened?" Mary wondered as Billy shrugged his shoulders.

"Hello, children. I trust you are unharmed?" a warm, rich voice intoned behind them.

The kids turned around to see a tall, dark-skinned man dressed in a sharp black suit and wearing a red turban on his head, holding a short ornate staff and smiling pleasantly. The young investigators recognized him at once.

"Mr. Ibis!" Billy exclaimed. Ibis was the curator of the Fawcett City Museum and well liked by the youth of the community.

"Yes, William. Mary. You must have had quite a scare. Come to the museum and calm your nerves." Ibis invited reassuringly, leading the shaken children away.

The kids sat in the Fawcett City Museum staff break room munching on chocolate chip cookies presented to them by Mr. Ibis' wife Taia, who was as kind as her husband. While Taia poured them all cups of milk, Ibis spoke to the children.

"So neither of you know what those men wanted with you?" Ibis inquired.

“Nope,” Billy replied through a mouthful of cookies. “They sure were scary though.”

“Uh huh,” Mary agreed. “Ms. Taia, could you show me to the restroom?”

“Certainly, Mary.” Taia flashed a beautiful smile as she led Mary out of the break room, leaving Ibis and Billy at the table.

Ibis suddenly turned serious. “William, I must warn you that I feel you may be in grave danger. There are powerful and dangerous magicks that have been set loose near this area.”

“Mr. Ibis” was an expert in magic, for he was in reality Ibis the Invincible, one of the most renowned and powerful magicians in the world. He was aware that Billy was the new Captain Marvel, just as he had known and fought beside the late C.C. Batson, who was the original Captain Marvel— and Billy’s father. Billy himself occasionally consulted Ibis for his vast knowledge of ancient Egyptian culture and practices; the mage had actually lived thousands of years and had been “reborn” in numerous times and ages. His wife was in fact Princess Taia, also of ancient Egyptian heritage, Ibis’ soulmate and faithful companion throughout much of recorded history. If Ibis was concerned about something, that meant real trouble.

“Two nights just last, a sarcophagus was stolen from the museum,” Ibis continued. “That sarcophagus contained an ancient evil, that— should it ever be awakened!— could provide its master with the location of an artifact so infused with dark magic, its power is beyond description. I fear that that ancient evil has already risen again, and if so beware the Mad Mummy, brave William.”

Billy’s eyes grew wide. “The Mad Mummy?”

“There’s more. I have heard whispers that Thaddeus Sivana has returned to Fawcett City,” Ibis pressed on. “I believe he may involved with the theft of my sarcophagus, and perhaps is responsible for your attempted abduction.”

“Dr. Sivana?” Billy was incredulous. “He’s still *alive*? I don’t even think

he's been *seen* since—."

The conversation was interrupted by the return of Taia and Mary, and to Billy's dismay Taia addressed her husband.

"Dear one, the children have been here for some time, and their families must be worried. It is time now that I should transport them home."

"Of course, my love," Ibis concurred, giving Billy a look that warned *Be careful*.

Later that evening

In the basement of a spooky, ramshackle old house at the end of Radley Street, Dr. Thaddeus Bodog Sivana cackled insanely until he was overcome with a fit of coughing. The Mad Mummy stood in one corner of the makeshift laboratory, its hideous red eye glowing with unearthly life, awaiting its orders. Sivana's own goons were strewn about the room, pouting and sulking after taking a tongue-lashing from their maniacal leader. And standing out in the back of the lab was an open sarcophagus, bathed in a bright green glow, containing inside it the critically weakened form of thirteen year-old Freddy Freeman, close friend to Billy and Mary and the source of the Mad Mummy's power.

"Yes, it's dark enough now," Sivana crowed to the prone Freddy, who was too weak to even talk. "I can unleash the Mad Mummy to claim my prize, wherever it may be. It will not rest until it has done my bidding. Then I'll have the power to rule the world! Ha-ha-ha-kaff! Kaff! Kaff!"

One of Sivana's henchmen scratched his head. "Hey boss, howcum you don't just send us to get whatcher lookin' for?"

"*You?*" Sivana's face was filled with revulsion. "You imbeciles couldn't grab a couple of scrawny *kids*! And I'll still have to deal with them in due time. I'm sure they'll come looking for you," he sneered at Freddy. "And we can't have that now, can we? But now..."

Sivana shuffled over to the Mad Mummy, meeting its dead, crimson gaze. "You! You know what it is I seek?"

“Yesss...” the Mad Mummy grumbled.

“And you know exactly where to find it?”

“Yesss...” the Mad Mummy grumbled.

“Then go forth, retrieve it and bring it to me! As swiftly as you can!”

“Yesss...” Moving quicker than its great bulk implied it could, the Mad Mummy slogged across the room to the basement stairs and ascended them rapidly.

When the primeval monster was gone Sivana slumped in his chair, letting his guard down and appearing bone-weary and frail.

“I hope it doesn’t take him long to find it; it’s reputed to be located in this country,” Sivana mumbled, almost to himself. Then his head snapped up. “What are you dunces looking at? Find something to do!”

The Fawcett City Museum was closed and empty, save for the lone security guard, an elderly man by the name of Dawkins. Every fifteen minutes Dawkins toured the museum and noted his safety checks in a written log. Tonight was like any other night, not much to report, and Dawkins returned to his station to settle in and enjoy a Twinkie. Just as he was about to take that delicious first bite, something caught his eye on one of the security monitors.

The rear receiving entrance door was shaking almost off its hinges, as if someone or something was trying to get into the museum. Before the portly guard’s stupefied eyes the door burst in and the alarms immediately screamed, jostling Dawkins to his feet. Drawing his small pistol the security guard ran as fast as his stubby legs could carry him to the back door; when he got there he froze in shock at what he saw.

It was a mummy, straight out of a bad horror movie, lumbering toward him with surprising speed, seemingly ignorant of the ear-piercing alarm it had set off. Dawkins, hands shaking, tried to bring his gun up but the

mummy reached him first, knocking the pistol from his hand with a swing of its club-like arm, and the next thing Dawkins saw was inky blackness.

The Mad Mummy broke into the museum curator's private office, reducing the oak door to splinters. Moving robotically, as if it were being compelled to act, the monster felt the stone wall behind the large office desk with its repugnant, cloth-wrapped fingers until it found a miniscule crack in the masonry. With tremendous strength the Mad Mummy ripped open the secret sliding panel, which under normal circumstances could only be opened with magic words, and saw cold stone steps leading into the darkness below the museum.

Its blood red eye glowing malevolently, the Mad Mummy descended the stairs and wound up in a secret chamber, a room not even drawn in the museum's official blueprints, but filled with wondrous magical treasures. There were gnarled wooden wands and iron cauldrons, ancient books of witchcraft, and many Egyptian artifacts too arcane to be appreciated by any but the most magically-inclined. There was an elaborate Egyptian sarcophagus and a pitch black oblong box with no markings, next to smaller golden statues of the gods Osiris and Isis. And a relatively small chest, identified with Egyptian hieroglyphs, tucked away innocuously in a corner of the chamber.

The Mad Mummy lifted the chest and brought it to the center of the room, reaching down with both hands and snapping off the locks that had been installed on the chest in recent centuries. Then without hesitating the heinous creature opened the lid of the chest—

And was thrown backwards by a great blast of energy that launched the Mad Mummy across the room until it crashed into the oblong black box— not destroying it, but damaging it with numerous small spiderweb cracks. Getting back to its feet the Mad Mummy returned to the chest and claimed its true prize: a shimmering scorpion cast from gold, intricately detailed and radiating immense magical power. Satisfied, the Mad Mummy tucked the Golden Scorpion under its arm, retreated to the stone stairs and began to shamble up them.

“...And you shoulda seen Sivana’s face-he was so mad!” Uncle Dudley Batson laughed a big-throated laugh that was so infectious Billy couldn’t help but chuckle himself.

Billy loved his uncle’s stories about C.C. Batson- both in his “normal” life as an archaeologist and his exciting exploits as the original Captain Marvel. The subject of Dr. Sivana had come up, and Dudley had a boat-load of Sivana stories, so the two had spent the evening reveling in Dudley’s tales of heroic feats and nefarious villainy. Most of all, Billy enjoyed the easy camaraderie he had with his uncle, and appreciated how much he had learned from the jolly old man.

But the peaceful evening was interrupted with the squawk of the police scanner Billy used to keep tabs on Fawcett City’s crime. “Calling all units! Alarm at Fawcett City Museum! Possible break-in, proceed with caution! Repeat, alarm at Fawcett City Museum!”

Billy hesitated, not wanting to leave Uncle Dudley and his thrilling stories of his father’s adventures. Dudley saw the boy’s reluctance and was puzzled.

“Don’tcha think you should check it out?” the hefty old man asked.

“But I want to hear more stories,” Billy complained.

“Well, I don’t know about you,” Dudley kindly put forth. “But your dad wouldn’ta thought twice.”

Billy eyes grew wide with realization as he stared ashamedly into his uncle’s eyes. “I’m sorry. It’ll never happen again,” he declared as he bolted for the door.

Uncle Dudley smiled. “I know it won’t. Godspeed, lad.”

Outside the brownstone apartment Billy scanned the area to see if anyone was around; convinced he was alone Billy spoke aloud the magic

word bestowed upon him not so very long ago.

“SHAZAM!”

Thunder boomed as a lightning bolt of pure magical energy flashed from the sky, striking Billy and instantly transforming him into the mighty Captain Marvel!

Without a moment’s pause Cap zoomed into the sky, rocketing in the direction of the Fawcett City Museum.

The Mad Mummy had just banged out of the rear door of the museum, the Golden Scorpion in tow, to find itself confronted by Ibis the Invincible, who had his short staff raised above his head. The staff was actually the Ibistick, a mystical wand of magic and the prime focus of Ibis’ abilities.

“Foul creature! You dare to invade my domain? I am the guardian of the Scorpion!”

“Not yoursss...” the creature grumbled. “I am the keeperrr. I must bring to my masterrr.”

“Your master indeed! No good could come of that, I’m certain. Now unhand the Scorpion or face the might of the Ibistick!”

The Mad Mummy plowed ahead, and Ibis cast a spell of powerful energy from the Ibistick at the rotting monster. But the creature lifted the Golden Scorpion and blocked the spell, deflecting it back at the magician, who was so caught by surprise, the spell rebounded upon him and struck him down to the ground, the Ibistick flying from his hand.

Dazed and without the Ibistick to protect him, Ibis struggled to sit up, but as he did he gazed up to a horrific sight.

The Mad Mummy stood over him, holding the Golden Scorpion above in its decayed hands, and brought the magic idol down hard on Ibis’ head.

With its foe vanquished the moldy, decomposing creature resumed its lumbering yet speedy pace—

WHOOM!

Captain Marvel flew straight into the Mad Mummy, knocking it off its feet and causing it to drop the Golden Scorpion. Cap immediately turned his attention to Ibis, who was bleeding from his head and needed medical treatment as soon as possible. But then Cap was hit from behind by the fetid monster, who had reclaimed the Golden Scorpion and was using it as a weapon once more. Angered more than hurt, Cap picked the Mad Mummy up by the throat with one hand and heaved him out of the museum's back lot, almost hurling the creature into a host of police cruisers arriving on the scene.

Deciding Ibis was the top priority, Cap scooped up the injured magician along with the Ibistick and flew off for Beck Memorial Hospital, hoping Fawcett's finest would be able to contain the Mad Mummy until he got back.

Mary Bromfield sat in her room, worried about Freddy Freeman, whom she still hadn't been able to reach all day. The Wormwood Orphanage where Freddy lived wouldn't take her calls, and she couldn't be sure he was even there, especially after the suspicious treatment she'd gotten from Ms. Wormwood, the headmistress. Mary had called Billy about sneaking out to check on Freddy, but she had been told by Billy's uncle that he was sleeping. Weird. The three of them, including Freddy, had taken many secret late night trips to investigate some mystery or another, and it wasn't like Billy to turn in so early in the evening after making plans with one of the other of them.

Mary's snooping blood was boiling and she couldn't stand not knowing if Freddy was all right. So she dressed in her sweatpants and dark sweat-shirt (her night creeping gear!), and slipped to her window. As she opened the window she thought of her parents, Nick and Nora Bromfield, who were good and fair people but far too trusting. Mary climbed out the window and jumped on her bicycle, intending to ride to Billy's home and pick him up so they could find out about Freddy.

But to get to Billy's apartment Mary had to pass by Radley Street, where the spooky house stood like an ugly, foreboding gargoyle. Mary had been in the spooky house, and it was as terrifying as she had imagined it to be, so she pedaled hard to try to put the spooky house behind her.

But she glanced over at it, and saw what appeared to be a green pulsing glow coming from what must have been the basement window. Mary's journalistic instincts took over, and she rode to the iron gate of the spooky house and tried to get a better look at the strange phenomenon. Cautiously stepping off her bike, Mary deliberated on what to do; she wanted to continue on to Billy's place, but what was going *on* here...

No. It was too scary, especially without the boys. She was going to get out of here and—

"Well, lookit what we got here..." a rough voice drawled.

And Mary was scooped up by two pairs of coarse hands and carried into the bowels of the spooky house.

Fawcett's finest could *not* contain the Mad Mummy.

Captain Marvel arrived back at the museum to find numerous officers injured and lying on the ground, the more severe cases being carried to multiple ambulances on the scene. All of the police cruisers were damaged, fire crews were putting out flames and the entire fiasco had the air of a war zone. Cap approached a young sergeant who was giving orders and directing the EMTs to the downed officers still in need of assistance.

"Captain Marvel!" the sergeant cried. "We tried to stop it but..." He was at a loss for words.

Cap put a comforting hand on his shoulder. "You did the best you could, sergeant. Can you tell me the direction it left in?"

The shaken officer pointed. "That way. Go get 'im, Cap. Give 'im one for us."

“Will do!” Cap took to the skies again.

The Mad Mummy finally reached Radley Street, by staying in the shadows and somehow managing to avoid detection. The Golden Scorpion was still tucked under the mummy’s arm and its rotted, putrid bandages shielded the bright golden idol from giving away the Mad Mummy’s position. Straining its sole crimson eye, the ancient monster spied its destination, the spooky house, just a few houses away at the end of the street. As if it was inspired by this sight, the Mad Mummy increased its shambling, jerky pace— until a brawny red and gold figure swooped down in front of it and stood directly in its path!

“End of the line,” Captain Marvel announced. “And I’ll take that gizmo, whatever it is.”

Cap threw a crushing haymaker that sent the Mad Mummy sprawling, yet it still managed to hold on to the Golden Scorpion. Cap pounced on the mummy, raining devastating blows on its body and finally ripping the golden idol from its grasp. The Mad Mummy lay on the ground, soundly defeated. As powerful as the horrible creature was, it was no match for the World’s Mightiest Mortal!

But as Cap held the Golden Scorpion in his hands, he became entranced by its brilliant, shiny hue and the magical essence that seemed to emanate from it. The Mad Mummy, greatly hurt but still conscious, used the opportunity of Cap’s distraction to reach into the bandages beneath its chest and pull out what appeared to be a tiny metallic horn, weathered and dull but still in decent condition. As Captain Marvel at last took his eyes off the scorpion and looked down upon the Mad Mummy he saw the monster put the horn to its cracked lips and blow into it.

At once a horde of black-winged, faceless demons dove down at the Captain from all sides, overrunning him and tearing at his flesh with talons as sharp as knives. Cap ducked and put his hands over his head, thereby dropping the Golden Scorpion as the demons threatened to rip him to pieces. Cap let out an involuntary shriek of terror and swatted weakly at the demons, which were screeching a piercing sound that

seemed to burrow straight into the valiant hero's brain.

The Mad Mummy put away the Horn of Horror and forced itself to its feet. It staggered to the Golden Scorpion, picked it up, then continued its tortured march down Radley Street to the spooky house.

Mary Bromfield was tied to a chair, a gag in her mouth, while an ugly, bald and incredibly old dwarf was taunting and laughing at her.

"That's two!" the dwarf cried. "Only one more to go! And I'll find him, my pretty, oh yes I will..."

Mary guffawed to herself over that one. *He's using "The Wizard of Oz" to try to scare me?* But she *was* terrified. She never dreamed there was a laboratory under the spooky house or that it would contain such a bizarre cast of characters. A dwarf, a few thugs, and an open coffin emitting a dreadful green glow were certainly the stuff of nightmares. And did he say *two*?

Mary whimpered and braced herself as the dwarf reached to her face and, to her amazement, removed the gag from her mouth.

"Now tell me where he is!" the dwarf hissed, inches from her face. "Where's your other friend? Tell me, and I'll make things much less painful for you..." Did that mean he'd gotten to Billy or Freddy? Mary felt the hot sting of tears in her eyes.

All attention was diverted by one of the goons. "Boss! The mummy's back!"

"*What?*" The dwarf looked at one of the monitors set up to view the rooms of the spooky house. "*It is him!* But how could he return so quickly..."

The Mad Mummy thumped down the stairs into the basement and limped into the laboratory, stopping in front of the crazed dwarf.

"You're back!" The dwarf squealed. "Do you have it?"

The creature reached out and handed a gleaming golden idol in the shape of a scorpion to the dwarf, who held it high over his head in triumph.

“YES!” the dwarf exclaimed, then his face became contorted with bafflement. “Where was it?”

“In the museummm...” the Mad Mummy rumbled in a craggy voice.

The dwarf was incensed. “*Here?* All this time I’ve searched for it, and the Golden Scorpion was in Fawcett City *the whole time?! I searched every inch of that accursed place, and this treasure was nowhere to be found! Wha—*”

The dwarf was possessed by a fit of coughing, ceasing his rant. When his fit ended, the dwarf’s eyes widened in alarm as he stared at the condition of the mummy. “What the blazes happened to you?”

“A man came from the skyyy...” the Mad Mummy growled.

“The Big Red Cheese!” The dwarf excitedly squeaked, continuing to gaze at the mummy. “It has to be! He must be on to me but I’m not ready to face him yet! How can I keep him at bay...?”

The dwarf’s face lit up as he apparently got an idea. “I’ve got it! Boys,” he ordered his henchmen, pointing to the sarcophagus. “Put *her* in, too!”

Captain Marvel was struggling to battle against the demons, to no avail. The black, shapeless evil spirits were preying on his deepest fears, paralyzing him and keeping him unsure and afraid...

Wait. What’s really happening here?

Summoning the courage of Achilles, Cap stood his ground and let the demons swirl around him. One by one the spirits disintegrated into the night air until Captain Marvel stood alone, unscathed and stronger than ever!

They weren't real. Cap thought. They were a manifestation of my fears.

But his victory was short lived; Cap heard a horrifying scream coming from the spooky house at the end of Radley Street. Worse, Cap recognized the voice, and it sent a chill down his spine.

Mary!

Captain Marvel used all the speed of Mercury to hurtle himself like a missile to the spooky house.

Dr. Sivana was gloating and the sarcophagus glowed an even brighter, macabre green hue. "Yes, yes! It's working! It's working!"

And the ceiling of the basement exploded inward as Captain Marvel thundered down and landed, directly facing a shell-shocked Sivana.

"*You!*" Cap shouted.

"*You!*" Sivana yelled.

Cap's eyes were drawn to the sarcophagus spewing a pulsing green illumination that seemed to dominate the room. Surveying the ghastly coffin more closely Cap was horrified to discover that both Mary Bromfield and Freddy Freeman were lying inside it, immobilized with faces of pure terror.

"Sivana," Cap fiercely whispered. "What have you done?"

"Why don't you ask *him*, you big oaf!" Sivana countered, pointing to his right.

Captain Marvel turned to face a revitalized and apparently unharmed Mad Mummy— now *twice* as powerful with the life forces of *two* children to call upon!

To be concluded!

If you enjoyed this story, you can find more tales of your favorite DC heroes at DC2 Universe.

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Shazam! #3 (2006)

Shazam!: Stamina.

Captain Marvel battles the Mad Mummy while his friends are in dire peril and Dr. Sivana's true plot is revealed. And what is the fate of Freddy Freeman? Featuring the DC2 debut of Kid Marvel!

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