

## HELLION FOR HIRE #9: ANOTHER CON, ANOTHER LONG NIGHT IN THE ER

by Billy Tucci 08-10-2006,

### An Apology

As you can imagine I've been pretty damn crazed these past few weeks which unfortunately lets loose the senile madness that trickles down from my clouded skull to your computer screen. Regardless, and staying true to my out of control A.D.D. this column will not focus on the promised "Memories of San Diego 1997-2005" but rather the more apropos Wizard World Chicago Con and yet another visit to the Emergency Room. Please forgive me, but after looking around the Internet, news of this and past SDCC seems to have gone the way of the Dodo (aside of course from Wizard Magazine doing a two-page article on the Marvel Knights triumphant thrashing of DC's Bullets in that glorious, glorious softball game). So my friends, today we will zero in on the news at hand (both industry and professional) and my very unprepared visit to the "Windy City."

Case in point was what happened to me the day before Wizard World last week starting around 6:30pm. Please note this was written last Thursday, before catching my flight to Chicago.

### Here we go again -

Somewhere UP THERE Jack Kirby and John Buscema must be having a grand ole' time with this writer/artist. For the comic book gods must be testing to see if I actually have the mettle to make it as a mainstream comic artist. Once again, here I sit before the screen after yet ANOTHER long night in the E.R. This time it wasn't Deborah or William but rather my mother Marie. The alarm first sounded after a very nice dinner of shrimp tacos prepared by Deb, that my mother started complaining about "chest pains" that had been bothering her for the last 24 hours. I asked why she didn't say anything and she replied that she didn't want to bother us and thought it was a simple case of heartburn. She seemed pretty scared and that was enough for me to dial 911.

I accompanied her in the ambulance (which was a mistake, please read later) to the very same hospital Deb had her monthly stay in last April. Many of the doctors and nurses remembered Deb and me and were very cordial and nice amid the typical chaos of an emergency room on the



hottest day of the year.

All night and morning long, my mom went through a battery of tests, which thankfully all came up negative. But she was still experiencing some awful pains in her chest and her EKG stats were "abnormal" so she has to stay for a couple of days. I have to admit it was all pretty scary as they gave her multiple doses of Morphine, Nitroglycerin and other types of pain/blood thinning medications. Of course, I felt terrible for all the other suffering going around as one woman came in with her two very sick children (one a toddler), while in the room next door we witnessed one crack-head woman who's heart wouldn't beat on its own be taken to another hospital ("should WE go to that hospital too?") only to be replaced by another 23-year-old girl who overdosed on Tylenol because of some friggin bastard boyfriend of hers. I felt so bad for this asshole girl's heartbroken mother (who was all alone) and had to give her a hug as I could imagine how it must have felt sitting there helpless as a team of doctors tries to revive your child. I think the girl is going to be okay, but I myself wanted to go in and slap the shit out of her for doing such a stupid thing.



There too, were some light moments as well. On the other side of the curtain waited a heat-exhausted old chap and his wife of 50 years. I'm not sure how many of you know New York Italian-Americans who have been married for fifty years, but they're just a pisser to listen to. These two were obviously devoted to one another but it was just hysterical listening to them bicker and yell at each other all night long, especially since "Josie's" husband, "Nuncio" was as deaf as a door knob.



Of course listening to this, and to keep my mind off my mother's condition while waiting for the Cardiologist to show, I had to grab some pieces of paper. I started to jot things down when my mom would relax after another shot of morphine and even managed to have a conversation with my Golden neighbors. As you can imagine, the exchange was quite colorful as they wondered, "What the hell country are we in?" And "aside from us, does any of these other people in here speak English?" I casually replied that at least all the medical staff did, but Nuncio was still pretty pissed and rambled on and on at how his parents "learnt English" and even after suffering "a lung collapse in Normandy," fighting for his country" now must watch as "*these* people don't want to be Americans and are only using us for welfare and free Medicare."

I guess because of the stress I too was sort "using" Nuncio myself (though I'm not yet on Welfare and do pay for my medical coverage) to keep my mind off my mom's condition, but the conversation did relax me enough to come up with a really cool Black Cat storyline and some gesture drawings (please see them here). Hopefully it will one day become something and if you see me at a Con ask about it and I'll most likely pick your thoughts.

## **Zombies Attack!**

I know it's not exactly PC, and perhaps an automatic fanboy reaction to stress, but I couldn't help but imagining this emergency room being turned upside down as the "infected" are brought in, thus "crying havoc and letting loose the dogs of war!" I mean, this is where all great zombie movies begin, right here baby! So I begin scoping out the place, testing rooms to see which have locks, (the bathrooms do) then keep a close eye on the half dozen or so police officers anticipating that one of their wounded "perps" would kick off the whole shebang. I imagine doctors, nurses, staff and security coming to the doomed officer's aid as I (knowing what's really going on), grab his gun belt and wheel my mom safely into a nice locked up bathroom with running water. There, Marie and I would simply wait the whole thing out and perhaps even get a chance to blown some infected brains out at the same time. For more insight into my fascination with killing the undead, please check out **Zombie-sama!** written by myself and beautifully illustrated by John Broglia (Narwain Press).

## **Fast forward one week...**

Anyway, back to reality. By 5am, my mother was finally given a room and insisted I leave, which I really wanted to do at this point, since I couldn't keep my eyes open. Of course, I cursed myself for not following the ambulance with my car and was now forced to call a cab. Now this particular hospital is about 15 minutes from my home and some rude jag-off cab dispatcher insists that I have the money for the son-of-a-bitchin' \$35.00 ride home! I tell him I do (after raiding Marie's pocketbook) and wait for him outside the ER. Twenty-five damn minutes later a cab shows up, but it's not the company I called. No problem as the chap says he'll take me home. I tell him the bastard from the other company wanted "thirty f#\$%ing dollars" for the trip. He replies that he was going to charge me more, but sees I'm not in no mood for bullshit and will do it but just "won't call it in." So out of the hospital parking lot we go and right into the gas station next door for some petrol and to apply some nasty crap to the sores on his face! I ask if he's got change for a twenty, to which he of course replies in the negative. I then step out to the equally miserable attendant and get change. I'm not cheap but for \$30.00, I'll be damned if he's getting one penny more, and after yet more face picking and stalling because of the flat thirty, we're off.

I arrived home Thursday around 6am, and since William and Matthew (the poor boy had a virus and was crying all morning long) were in our bed didn't get much sleep before getting up by 9am to work on another page and this column.

Of course it was all one big pain in the ass, but on the bright side, it seems that my mom's condition was only a pulled muscle in her chest/neck and will a-okay.

## **The Gods have one funny sense of humor don't they?**

So I still wonder if this is simply a case of one blasted barrage of bad luck, or could it be the beginning of something wonderful? After all, isn't penciling a comic is supposed to be simple? No writing, no lettering or coloring guides, no paper prices or distribution headaches, just turning in one page and onto the next correct? Why then all the headaches and "speed bumps" must go with the "chance of a lifetime for me?" I then recall similar events occurring all around me while **Shi #1** was being put together and that all seemed to work out pretty well for me, so I guess I should just go with the flow and quit my bitching. At least now I know I can deliver at least one page a day and am once again, in the thick of things and on a roll!

One things for sure amid all this madness - I *love* drawing **Heroes For Hire** and think my pages and the covers are getting better and better. Writers Palmiotti and Gray have supplied some extremely witty (and detailed) scripts, Tom Palmer has served as one great mentor and editors

Mark Paniccia and Nate Cosby are Saints. I hear the numbers for **HFH** are coming in pretty good, so I'm relieved and glad they want me to stay on. Please see please see my pencils to the cover to #4 and Mark Sparacio's amazing painting that has improved it ten-fold. Mark pulled off a Herculean effort to finish the piece for solicitations and I owe him a nice dinner for it! Next week, I've got to do #5 and will post that soon enough as well.



## Wizard World Chicago

After writing last week's (which has turned into this week's) column, I raced to the airport 45 miles away. Needless to say, I made it in the nick of time only to find that my flight to Chicago was delayed for another four friggin hours!

Regardless, Wizard World was a huge success. Though due to my mother's condition I was VERY torn about going initially, it all worked out for the best and I had one hell of a time! Mark Sparacio and I got to sign at the Marvel booth Friday, Saturday and Sunday with John Romita Jr., Paul Jenkins and Mike Perkins. Friday night I hosted a great pizza dinner at the Embassy Suites for my Chicago **Shi** fans (who are more family now than anything) before going on a very interesting midnight motorcycle ride with my old army buddy JB Wells. In the end, it was the Hyatt hotel's Knuckles Bar. I also had a great time hanging with my good friends Marc Patten, Bruce Macintosh and Jim Calafiore.



Saturday night, Sparacio, Scott Lamky, John and Donna Taddeo and I were all treated to an incredible steak dinner by my very generous buddy Jeff Schwartz at Morton's. The dinner was simply amazing and was had some great conversations and laughs all evening long. Afterwards was Knuckles once again with my dining mates and a ton of laughs with the Marvel gang.

I know I'm getting long here, but again it's two weeks worth of writing and promise to lighten it up a bit for next week's column. Thankfully all that was wrong with my mother was a pretty bad chest muscle pull and she's back to normal. Again, much appreciation for listening to my rants and the next time you'll see me at a con, I'll most likely have a single malt in hand. I need it!

Tally Ho!  
Billy

<http://www.newsarama.com/general/Hellion/09/Hellion09.html>

PS - last "Hellion..." I promised to write about a particular person who's interested in modeling for "Shi." Here name is Ursula Mayes (see [Ursulamayes.com](http://Ursulamayes.com)) and I met her and her very nice husband and son in San Diego. Ursula's is an actress and model who's been seen in Maxim. Half Cherokee and half Chinese (right Ursula?) she's currently on the show *Deal or No Deal*, and if I'm lucky you should be seeing her beauty grace the covers of the next installment of **Shi**. So here ya go....what do you think?



*About Billy Tucci and Crusade Fine Arts, Ltd.*

Discussion thread: <http://forum.newsarama.com/showthread.php?t=80034>

xdemon

08-10-2006 09:33 AM

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Great column!

Ursula - Put her on the cover of EVERY comic book! :D

NeoGundamX

08-10-2006 09:53 AM

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Always look forward to your columns, Billy. Great stuff. As good as they are supposed to be for you, I hate going to the hospital. Don't worry, man. Jack and John are smiling on you and you can make it as a mainstream artist, mainly because you are a great artist. Oh yeah, please put Ursula on the cover of every comic book. Talk to Joe Quesada about it.

Book of GOB

08-10-2006 09:58 AM

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I just missed you in Artist's Alley this year. I wanted to let you know I dig these articles!

Glad to hear your mother's OK. Really glad to see Ursula.

Prometheus3

08-10-2006 10:23 AM

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This is a great column and I look forward to every installment. I can't wait to read Heroes for Hire #1!

Vyper

08-10-2006 10:26 AM

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One comment about the H4H cover - Misty Knight needs wider hips. She's supposed to be more curvy than Colleen. Just nitpicking

Billy Tucci

08-10-2006 10:45 AM

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Quote:

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Originally Posted by **Vyper**

*One comment about the H4H cover - Misty Knight needs wider hips. She's supposed to be more curvy than Colleen. Just nitpicking*

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You are right Vyper. I thought I made Misty's hips much wider. I'll have to check my pencils and if I did it correctly, will kill Mark Sparacio for all of us. If not, then I'll

have punish myself somehow.

Thank you all for the great comments. As for the column, I just wanted to write about my day to day happenings and that comic writers/artists (at least most of them) are all just a bunch of regulars joes. Now that's a pretty cool idea for a column "Who's an ass in comics." As my good buddy Beau Smith says, "Real men don't name, names" so I'll have to figure out a good way to write about certain folks w/o making it too obvious who they are.

O.J. Flow

08-10-2006 11:23 AM

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**Yipes!**

Too...  
Much...  
HAWTNESS.

:eek:

Titan Slade

08-10-2006 11:47 AM

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Quote:

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Originally Posted by **Billy Tucci**

*You are right Vyper. I thought I made Misty's hips much wider. I'll have to check my pencils and if I did it correctly, will kill Mark Sparacio for all of us. If not, then I'll have punish myself somehow.*

*Thank you all for the great comments. As for the column, I just wanted to write about my day to day happenings and that comic writers/artists (at least most of them) are all just a bunch of regulars joes. Now that's a pretty cool idea for a column "Who's an ass in comics." As my good buddy Beau Smith says, "Real men don't name, names" so I'll have to figure out a good way to write about certain folks w/o making it too obvious who they are.*

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Billy

What would you think about H4H being a Marvel MAX title? Just curious. Thanks

MarkSparacio

08-10-2006 01:41 PM

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**Hips, Hips, Hips...**

Vyper: You are correct! Misty Knight's hips were a bit wider in Billy's original sketch than in my finished painting. There is a scientific reason for all of that but it is waaaaay too ponderous to go into... Alright, alright, I screwed up. I made her hips more sleek, thinking she looked a little chunkier than she should have. It was after a great pitched battle with the aforementioned William Tucci that I eventually won out. Well, actually there are two reasons that I won our little battle: The first is, I out-

weigh Billy by about 50 pounds(give or take a few) and the second is, well, I out-weigh Billy by about 50 pounds. All kidding aside, I hope that you like the painting anyway and I hope that you will still read the book...

Billy, at every con that we are at together, you bring to my booth all these girls who want to model for SHI and you don't introduce me to Ursula?! I think she would make a great SHI model to say the least...

Thanks to everybody who stopped by our tables and at the Marvel booth in Wizard World Chicago over this past weekend and made it such a huge success!!!

jaredgood1

08-10-2006 02:32 PM

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Quote:

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Originally Posted by **Vyper**

*One comment about the H4H cover - Misty Knight needs wider hips. She's supposed to be more curvy than Colleen. Just nitpicking*

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Wow. Now that you mentioned it, I threw both images in photoshop, layered them together and adjusted the opacity a couple of times and it looks like ALL the gals lost weight. Still great work, but kinda odd.

Marc Patten

08-10-2006 02:57 PM

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Quote:

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Originally Posted by **MarkSparacio**

*The first is, I out-weigh Billy by about 50 pounds(give or take a few) and the second is, well, I out-weigh Billy by about 50 pounds. All kidding aside, I hope that you like the painting anyway and I hope that you will still read the book...*

*Billy, at every con that we are at together, you bring to my booth all these girls who want to model for SHI and you don't introduce me to Ursula?! I think she would make a great SHI model to say the least...*

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Hey, I shared a room with both Tucci and Sparacio in Chicago, and Billy never even mentioned Ursula, let alone introduced her back in SD. This is all 'cause I bought everyone a drink at the Pizza gathering except you, isn't it Billy? :mad:

As for Mark's painting sliming the women on the HFH #4 cover, well, they say when you go from pencils to paint you lose about 10 pounds... I got to see this piece develop for 4 days at the show and the magic that Mark does with color and a brush is just amazing. You wouldn't want to add another 10 lbs to Ursula's hips, now would you? ;)

Marc P.  
Destination Entertainment  
Cover Art Director, Comics Buyers Guide

## BlackCatGuy

08-10-2006 04:39 PM

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Hey Billy!

First thing.....I'm glad to hear that your mom is okay, and I hope your son is feeling a lot better!

Your column here is addictive, as it's always extremely colorful!:D I'm really interested in this Black Cat story that you've got cooked up! (As I'm sure you know!) And next convention that I see you at, I'll be sure to bring it up! It's gettin' closer to the release of HFH #1, and I can't wait to get my hands on it! Wait.....that didn't come out right!:cool:

Thank you for posting all the great Black Cat artwork in this column! I certainly DO appreciate it! Every week there is some new Felicia treasure waiting for me!:D :D

By the way, I think Ursula would be PERFECT as Shi! She has the look!

## JLAJRC

08-10-2006 07:02 PM

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Now that you mention it Billy, has there ever been a zombie story set in a hospital or morgue? It's so logical I can't believe I've never thought about it. Think about it, "When Zombies Attack Six Feet Under/ER."

Ursula is definately hot.

## johnchrist

08-10-2006 07:38 PM

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Zombies rock, and so does your mom!

Good to hear I'm not the only person who is going through hell getting a first issue, self-published out.

Let's just say having a terrible case of poison oak resulting in a doctor's visit and being prescribed prednisone which managed to give me hives on the palm of my hands and then having to return to the doctor's a few weeks later because of some pressure in my abdomen, running bloodwork, doing X-rays only to be told it is most probably a damaged muscle caused by a floaty/swim competition I drunkenly engaged in down in Catalina is not the quickest way to get the last of your comic completed.

Wow, look at that run-on-sentence.

Only 5 more pages to edit (darken pencils add faces to extras in background) and it's ready!

Apocrypha #1 cover is up on [www.alpineunderground.com](http://www.alpineunderground.com) and [johnchrist.deviantart.com](http://johnchrist.deviantart.com)

Check 'er out!

Billy Tucci

08-10-2006 10:57 PM

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Quote:

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Originally Posted by **JLAJRC**

*Now that you mention it Billy, has there ever been a zombie story set in a hospital or morgue? It's so logical I can't believe I've never thought about it. Think about it, "When Zombies Attack Six Feet Under/ER."*

*Ursula is definately hot.*

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First off Ursula is also very, very nice, I met her husband and son too who are all great people.

As for the Zombie hospital thing, oh man have I been thinking! Very low budget film since it's all interiors. Just have to get the sushi delivery boy in there somehow.

Billy Tucci

08-10-2006 10:57 PM

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Quote:

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Originally Posted by **johnchrist**

*Zombies rock, and so does your mom!*

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*Let's just say having a terrible case of poison oak resulting in a doctor's visit and being prescribed prednisone which managed to give me hives on the palm of my hands and then having to return to the doctor's a few weeks later because of some pressure in my abdomen, running bloodwork, doing X-rays only to be told it is most probably a damaged muscle caused by a floaty/swim competition I drunkenly engaged in down in Catalina is not the quickest way to get the last of your comic completed.*

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*Check 'er out!*

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Nothing's ever easy is it? good luck with your book and don't give up!

beta-ray

08-11-2006 02:43 AM

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Man you have to go through a lot of crap. Glad to hear everything pretty much worked out in the end. Guess you just have more experience to draw from now.

As for Ursula... I think i need a personal interview before I can truly decide. Think she would like a trip to Hawaii for business? Sorry her husband has to stay behind. Hahaha

Thanks for another great column. Great cover.

**Billy Tucci**

08-11-2006 09:30 AM

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Quote:

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Originally Posted by **BlackCatGuy**

*Hey Billy!*

*First thing.....I'm glad to hear that your mom is okay, and I hope your son is feeling a lot better!*

*Your column here is addictive, as it's always extremely colorful!:D I'm really interested in this Black Cat story that you've got cooked up! (As I'm sure you know!) And next convention that I see you at, I'll be sure to bring it up! It's gettin' closer to the release of HFH #1, and I can't wait to get my hands on it! Wait.....that didn't come out right!:cool:*

*Thank you for posting all the great Black Cat artwork in this column! I certainly DO appreciate it! Every week there is some new Felicia treasure waiting for me!:D :D*

*By the way, I think Ursula would be PERFECT as Shi! She has the look!*

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Mike,

Thanks for the great comments of support and thanks for the great pic and a CHALLENGE COIN from your unit. For those of you not familiar with a "challenge coin" it's something that dudes who are/were in the military usually bring to a bar with them. If they meet someone else from the military you throw on on the bar. If he/she doesn't respond with one of there own, they owe you a drink. I hit Mike with one in Philly and he was kind enough to get one for himself and now me!

Anyway, I know you live in CT, but hope to see you again in Baltimore or New York later this year.

And yes, we all like Ursula don't we?

**Billy Tucci**

08-11-2006 09:31 AM

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Quote:

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Originally Posted by **beta-ray**

*Man you have to go through a lot of crap. Glad to hear everything pretty much worked out in the end. Guess you just have more experience to draw from now.*

*As for Ursula... I think i need a personal interview before I can truly decide. Think she would like a trip to Hawaii for business? Sorry her husband has to stay behind. Hahaha*

*Thanks for another great column. Great cover.*

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Ah, it's no different than what everyone else goes through. Just a pain during such tight scheduling.

Thank you all for the words of encouragement.

**BlackCatGuy**

08-12-2006 04:09 PM

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Quote:

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Originally Posted by **Billy Tucci**

*Mike,*

*Thanks for the great comments of support and thanks for the great pic and a CHALLENGE COIN from your unit. For those of you not familiar with a "challenge coin" it's something that dudes who are/were in the military usually bring to a bar with them. If they meet someone else from the military you throw on on the bar. If he/she doesn't respond with one of there own, they owe you a drink. I hit Mike with one in Philly and he was kind enough to get one for himself and now me!*

*Anyway, I know you live in CT, but hope to see you again in Baltimore or New York later this year.*

*And yes, we all like Ursula don't we?*

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Billy, I'm glad that the challenge coin and the photos got to you alright! Were the photos in good shape? I was a bit worried that they would get bent up!

All times are GMT -4. The time now is 08:41 PM.

<http://www.newsarama.com/general/Hellion/09/Hellion09.html>