

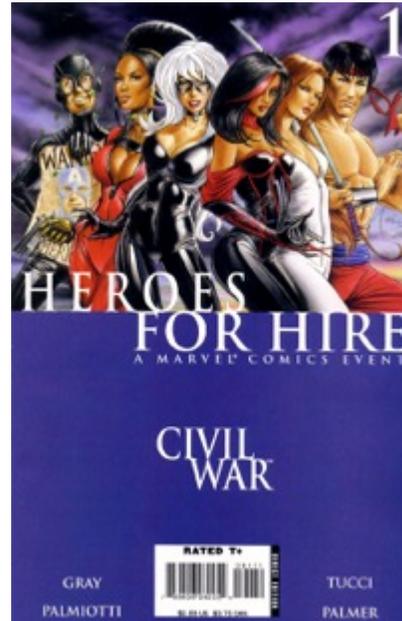
## HELLION FOR HIRE 11: FINALLY MADE THE MAINSTREAM

by Billy Tucci

The phone rang about 11am. "We've got a problem." It was my friend and fellow **Heroes For Hire** cover-compadre, Mark Sparacio. "Allan's Diamond shipment is MIA. Diamond swears it was shipped, but UPS has no idea where it is." The despondent Mark was referring to Allan Paperin of The Comic Book Depot and one week's worth of missing comics and other product - including the new **Heroes For Hire #1** we were scheduled to sign that evening at his Wantagh shop.

What rotten luck! My first Marvel signing - the mainstream, the *big-time* and now this! Oh well, as the saying goes, "What doesn't kill you only makes you stronger!" I guess after twelve years of waiting, what's another week, right?

As you can imagine, this all truly sucks. I didn't get much sleep last night as I haven't been this nervous about a comic shipping since the debut of **Shi - The Way of The Warrior #1**, way back in late March of 94'. Once again, I'm treading in un-chartered waters. Unlike a Crusade book, I'm not privy to any sort of color/lettering proofs or other production details one becomes accustomed to in self-publishing. So on top of the basic anxiety of not knowing what the final product will look like, I'm really nervous as to whether the buying public will accept me as a new artist for Marvel.



Flashback Twelve Years to 9 April, 1994

**Shi - WOTW #1** had shipped the week before and I'm on my way to my first comic book signing ever at The Strike Zone in Astoria Queens. Of course I get lost along the way, but I finally do make it. It's the Saturday after the debut of Harris Comics' **Vengeance of Vampirella #1** and I get to sit next to "Vampi" penciller, Buzz. Already an old pro, it's the first time I've had the pleasure of meeting the man, and all I can say is that I'll never be the same! Regardless, Buzz's casual and friendly way with the customers really puts me at ease and in the end, after pizza and sodas were brought in for everyone, it ended up more of a party than a signing.



Flash-forward to the present...

and doodling away on page 15, issue #3 of **HFH** where again, I'm desperately trying to like that bastard, Reed Richards. This time he's googly-eyeing my girl, Tarantula. Sure, sure, I know, he's only interested in her mind and the tight leather costume has nothing to do with his attention, but I am struggling and just taking my frustrations out on the man for marrying Sue in the first place. Anyway, I've been at this page all morning (it's now 12:30 pm) and I'm really in need of a Big Gulp

and some Raisenettes. Again, the phone rings - no it's not Mark telling me they found Allan's shipment but Bob Nastasi of Amazing Comics and Collectables. Bob asks if I'd mind coming down to his wonderful Sayville store to sign a few **Heroes For Hire**.



"How does it look?"

"Great!

"Okay I'll be there in a few minutes!"

Like Shaun in *Shaun of the Dead*, I hatch a plan. *Take Pete's car, grab Liz, kill Philip* -sorry, I love that movie; let's try again. Take the car, save William from Deborah (she's about to kill him), head over to 7-Eleven, grab a Big Gulp, Raisinettes, a donut for the boy and sit pretty in Bob's store signing **Heroes For Hire!** Funny thing is, it all works out just as planned. I pull into the parking lot in front of a couple of smoking-hot beauticians who oogle over the boy and make my way to Bob's, where - get this - he's ordering *more Heroes For Hire!*

After a very pleasant hour (William immediately lies down on the floor and goes to sleep) or so at Amazing Comics, I'm back at the studio and inside the Baxter Building. I call Tom Palmer to discuss the book and see what he was talking about with me staying within the preset lines of the Marvel art boards. The book does look great, but due to my unfamiliarity (and being too proud to say otherwise) of the Marvel page grid, I didn't set up the original art right and many of the pages in the first half of book are cut off a bit. For this I truly apologize, but promise it won't happen again.

During my conversation with Tom, Mark calls in with good news: Allan's shipment was found and it's at the store, so we're again set for 6pm. As it is I'm struggling through this page (something's just not right) but trod on through until it's time to go.

Allan's store is about 40 miles away, but traffic's not so bad and when I arrive, I'm greeted by a great crowd, all in line to get some **Heroes For Hire** signed! From there, any anxiety I previously had simply ebbs away. Allan, along with his crew including, Scott, Arnold and Henry put on a great store signing. Mark and I did sketches for everyone and even though I didn't ask, must have signed over 100 **Heroes For Hire** books - and some **Shi**'s as well! As an added bonus my good buddy, Gary Cohn, made a guest star appearance and delighted fans with his wit and my new birthday present -- a true fencing saber. A man of



many talents, Gary's not only a college professor and high school teacher, but also a master fencer who's been at it for almost 20 years. However, it was the fact that he's also the Eisner-nominated author of **Shi - Senryaku**, who along with Dan Mishkin created the legendary Blue Devil that got everyone's attention. All present knew of his work, and dare say I saw the man signing some past DC books pulled from the back-issue boxes.

I also got the chance to pick up a bunch of books including, Terry Dodson's beautiful **Wonder Woman #2, Civil War #2** (I know I should have picked it up earlier), and Millar and Hitches **Ultimates Vol. 2** - TPB.

Overall, it was one great evening filled with well-received art critique (thanks guys), comics conversation, and debate. All topped off with an awesome Italian dinner at the local restaurant.

### One Grass Roots Industry

I'm not sure how many of you reading this are pros, but I'm sure those that are will all agree to what an honor it is to be asked for your signature. To me it's truly one of life's greatest pleasures to have touched the lives of strangers in one way, shape or form and to share our mutual love of "American Mythology."

I love doing store signings. I find it incredibly inspiring and educational. Here, I can ask those who know everything about certain characters, their plot lines and their universes. I love going to conventions, but for the most part they're too loud and busy to actually talk to readers in earnest. Not so with the more intimate atmosphere of a store signing. Especially now that I'm foraying into the world of Mainstream comics and characters, I find that talking with the readers is crucial to my future in this business.



We're all part of an industry whose heart and soul lies in the causal interaction between pro on one side of the table and reader on the other discussing new and long-beloved characters' pasts and futures. It is here, within the confines of the local comic shop, that many a great storyline is born - with some eventually trickling down (or up) to become the biggest blockbusters in print, movies and games.



Again, it is a great honor to be here with you all in the shop and on the web. In fact, I will soon devote an upcoming column titled "Inspiration" dealing with a comic shop roundtable that will hopefully turn some random thoughts into the printed page. But for now, after reviewing **HFH #1** and looking at Terry Dodson, Bryan Hitch and Steve McNiven's amazing work, I must get back to the drawing board to completely re-do page 15 of issue #3. Another upcoming column will deal with my thoughts on comic book lateness and deadlines.

Oh and yes, it seems I received an email rebuttal from Reed Richards. I haven't read it yet, but if it's appropriate, I will print it in full next week. I feel this one's gonna be a Doosy!

Tally Ho and please pick up **Heroes For Hire!**

Billy

Kolimar

08-25-2006 11:25 AM

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Quote:

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Originally Posted by **MattBrady**  
*after pizza and sodas were brought in for everyone*

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That's a great way of doing a signing. :D I'm hungry now :mad: :p :D

Kolimar

08-25-2006 11:26 AM

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Quote:

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Originally Posted by **MattBrady**  
*it ended up more of a party than a signing.*

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I'm sure everyone sighed after stuffing themselves with pizza. :D I'm terrible, I know :p

rodolfo leon

08-25-2006 02:58 PM

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damn. Tucci has slowly become one of my f---ing heroes through his columns.

gonna have to buy the damn book! :mad:

johnchrist

08-25-2006 03:57 PM

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you know soda's bad for you, that's why I stick with beer, good for the cardio vascular. I bet after about a twelve pack your signatures gets really squiggly.

Kolimar

08-25-2006 03:59 PM

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Quote:

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Originally Posted by **MattBrady**  
*As an added bonus my good buddy, Gary Cohn, made a guest star appearance and delighted fans with his wit and my new birthday present -- a true fencing saber. A man of many talents, Gary's not only a college professor and high school teacher, but also a master fencer who's been at it for almost 20 years. However, it was the fact that he's also the Eisner-nominated author of Shi - Senryaku, who along with Dan Mishkin created the legendary Blue Devil that got everyone's attention. All present knew of his work, and dare say I saw the man signing some past DC books*

*pulled from the back-issue boxes.*

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[Comic book creators and their work in other fields. What do you think? :p :D ;\)](#)

TheLizard207

08-25-2006 04:28 PM

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i enjoyed the interview and Heros for Hire #1. Can't wait until the tie in buisness is over with though

BlackCatGuy

08-25-2006 05:50 PM

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Quote:

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Originally Posted by **MattBrady**

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---

Billy, you have nothing..... NOTHING..... to be nervous about! The book is great!:D

No, better than great! All the high hopes and expectations I had for this book have been not only met, but far.....FAR exceeded! This is going to be one of those "keeper" series, that are so far and few between! A truly fun and exciting read, filled with stupendous artwork! And an EXTREMELY sexy Black Cat to boot!:rolleyes: What more can I ask for!?

Thank you for making it "worth the wait"! Yes! You are the new BIG artist at Marvel! Congratulations!:cool: Please pass on my thanks to the whole HFH team, especially Mark for the wonderful painting of your cover pencils!

Lucky Luke

08-25-2006 05:57 PM

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Are there any chances to see the entire Shi collected?

Billy Tucci

08-25-2006 06:05 PM

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Quote:

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Originally Posted by **BlackCatGuy**

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Black Cat Guy -- You made my friggin day!!!!

**Billy Tucci**

08-25-2006 06:08 PM

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Quote:

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Originally Posted by **Lucky Luke**

*Are there any chances to see the entire Shi collected?*

---

Lucky Luke,

We have started collecting all Shi's in b/w ala, "The Essentials" and "Showcase" style. "The Difinitive Shi Vol. 1" is 576 pages and is out now. Please pick it up if you can.

Thanks,  
Billy



Billy Tucci

08-25-2006 06:08 PM

Quote:

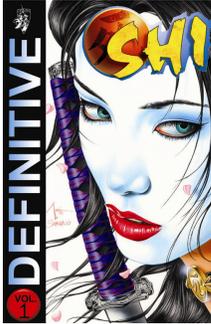
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Billy Tucci

08-25-2006 06:08 PM

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Quote:

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Thanks,  
Billy



TCJohnson

08-25-2006 06:12 PM

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He gets the point! He gets the point! :P

I gotta say, I love the enthusiasm you have for your work. It is very inspiring.

Think you might be doing sketches at baltimore comicon?

## Lucky Luke

08-25-2006 06:21 PM

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Quote:

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Originally Posted by **Billy Tucci**

*Lucky Luke,*

*We have started collecting all Shi's in b/w ala, "The Essentials" and "Showcase" style. "The Definitive Shi Vol. 1" is 576 pages and is out now. Please pick it up if you can.*

*Thanks,*

*Billy*



---

Cool! Many thanks, Mr. Tucci. :)

## Billy Tucci

08-25-2006 06:25 PM

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Quote:

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Originally Posted by **TCJohnson**

*He gets the point! He gets the point! :P*

*I gotta say, I love the enthusiasm you have for your work. It is very inspiring.*

*Think you might be doing sketches at baltimore comicon?*

---

Oh crap! How did I do that?????!!!!

Yes, I'll be doing sketches the whole show. Hope to see you there!

Billy Tucci

08-25-2006 06:25 PM

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Quote:

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Originally Posted by **Lucky Luke**  
*Cool! Many thanks, Mr. Tucci. :)*

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Thank you sir!

BlackCatGuy

08-25-2006 06:40 PM

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Quote:

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Originally Posted by **Billy Tucci**  
*Black Cat Guy -- You made my friggin day!!!!*

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Your welcome! I meant every word too! I got so many people reading the first issue, I had to pick up extra copies!:eek:

xomanowarfan

08-25-2006 07:08 PM

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Sweet cover!

I love seeing lines outside of comic stores...even if it is for a signing:D

Northstar04

08-25-2006 07:18 PM

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HFH #1 was great, and I am recommending it to all my buds. Thanks for a perfect first issue!!

DaVeO

08-25-2006 07:29 PM

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My comic store sold out! But I read a buddy's copy and it was pretty great. Know that I am almost exclusively a DC fan but this was a fun issue and OMG Paladin is in it! I hope to pick up #1 at the Toronto Expo, well done Billy and everyone else. I do have a question. How does Turantula pop those foot blades of hers? She's a short-fuse isn't she? Poor Humbug.

Billy Tucci

08-26-2006 09:50 AM

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Quote:

---

Originally Posted by **DaVeO**

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Thanks for all the great comments guys! Humbug's gonna be a-okay. He's sort of a normal guy who has (in MHO) a great power that could truly wreak havoc on his enemies. But once Civil War is over (at least with our book) you'll really get a more in-depth and light-hearted look at our team. It's going to be a lot of fun!

I'm not sure how Tarantula's toe stingers work. How did the originals?

Billy "Just a squirrel trying to get a nut" Tucci

cindercatz

08-27-2006 06:21 PM

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Quote:

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Originally Posted by **Billy Tucci**

*Billy "Just a squirrel trying to get a nut" Tucci*

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:D lol

Love the book. :)

ANGELDOGGIE

08-30-2006 11:34 PM

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This book has got me back into comics folks! In a **BIG** way! Thank you Billy Tucci for getting me back in!:D

BlackCatGuy

09-06-2006 07:43 PM

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Hey, way to go ANGELDOGGIE! Anything that gets a follower back in HAS to be a good thing! It's a perfect book to bring you back into the fold too!

(And since I was the one whose excitement for this book got you back in, you owe me a six pack of my choice! And **NOT** that Sam Adams stuff! The only Adams I like is Morticia!!:p )

