# SERIOCOMIC (26)

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*One in a weekly* [*series of enthusiastic posts*](http://hilobrow.com/tag/seriocomic/)*, contributed by HILOBROW friends and regulars, on the topic of our favorite comic books, comic strips, and graphic novels.*

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**DICK TRACY**

Little Face Finney had a tiny face on the middle of his face. The expanse up his forehead rose like a stroll on the beach, waves of hair curled on the horizon; his wide cheeks ended on the distance shores of his ears; his chin a pinched afterthought. At least, that was my child’s eye view, peering at one of the villains in Dick Tracy’s Rogue’s Gallery — from [Chester Gould](http://hilobrow.com/2009/11/20/hilo-hero-chester-gould/)‘s 1931–1977 comic strip, *Dick Tracy*. In one brutal sequence, Little Face is locked in a freezing meat truck, gets his ears amputated, hides by rolling himself up in a suffocating rug, only to be ousted when the cops use a swarm of bees to sting him into screaming release.

These grotesque tales fixated in my young memory, at least as best I can recall down the tunnel of time. As a child, I felt trapped in sheltered suburbia. I scrawled a Jean Genet quote, “Family is the first prison,” on my school notebook. I must have noticed how cool Dick Tracy looked, with his futuristic two-way radio watch. I might have felt relief when he nabbed and jailed the dreadful Pruneface, Mumbles, Pear-Shape. Memory is treacherous. Mostly I recall sympathy for monsters. Dick Tracy’s captivating villains lured me into an early monster love that morphed over the years, the kind of monster love you can only have until you actually meet one.

Childhood is blinkered. We’re told who to be, how to behave. We try. We trudge to school, do our homework. My childhood was by the book — controlled, restrained, ordinary. Inside this suburban trek a kid might sense an explosion is possible. A jailbreak.

In the grind of childhood subservience, a stealthy peek into *Dick Tracy* offered a moment’s relief. There was the compelling craftiness of Haf-and-Haf, the half-debonair, half-hideous Tulza Tuzon, who taught crows how to steal all that glittered and bring him the coin. There were crows in my backyard, too. Dare I?

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