

## INTRODUCTION

# DICK TRACY, TINTIN AND SERIOUS COMICS

Larry Hancock and Michael Cherkas, the creators of *The Silent Invasion*, have described their long-form graphic novel as a “science fiction mystery.” It is that, and more — in particular, it is one of the most disturbing, and ultimately terrifying, works ever to grace the comics medium.

To a casual reader, to a potential buyer browsing through this volume, the terror of *The Silent Invasion*, the ability of this narrative to be profoundly disturbing, will not be readily apparent. The artwork, by Cherkas, is “cartoony,” and less-than-realistic comic art, whether termed “big foot” (in the jargon of the daily newspaper strips) or “expressionistic” (when some reviewer is searching for a word to justify liking a mere comic book), is strongly associated, in the American mind, with humor.

While I cannot claim to be an expert where European comics are concerned, I can recognize readily enough that some of Cherkas’ influences stem from foreign shores. And in Europe (to name one of several continents the following pertains to), graphic storytelling (a.k.a. comics) is regarded as a valid narrative form for stories to be read by grown-ups.

Nonetheless, many European cartoonists favor a non-realistic approach to their artwork; springing from the draftsman-like but humorous approach of the Belgian comics genius Hergé (creator of Tintin), any number of European cartoonists have brought a stylish, moody, design-oriented approach to work of a serious — that is, non-humorous — nature. This contrast between the comic and serious has enlivened the works of such cartoonists as Serge Clerc, Yves Chaland and Joost Swarte.

There have been American stylists, as well, of course, and the obvious influence upon Cherkas is Chester Gould, that frustrated gag-a-day artist who couldn’t sell a strip to the Tribune Company Syndicate until he broke from form (his own and the field’s) with a certain wild, violent story strip. Gould, a “big foot” cartoonist of the *Mutt and Jeff* school, preceded such men as Alex Raymond, Hal Foster and Milton Caniff onto the comics pages; being first, and being his own man, led Gould down dark, surrealistic paths that often got him dismissed as a “bad” artist.

Oddly enough, one of the other chief stylists of the story strip was Will Gould — no relation to Chet — whose Red Barry was one of King Features’ “answers” to the popular Dick Tracy (another “answer,” significantly, was Alex Raymond and Dashiell Hammett’s *Secret Agent X-9*). Possibly because his popular strip ran only a short time, apparently due to frequently missed deadlines, Will Gould is little-known these days. And, not surprisingly, both Goulds are highly regarded as anything but “bad” artists in Europe.

Meanwhile, back in the present, the story strip is almost dead in the water (not to mention the newspapers), and the comic book field is dominated by super-hero strips drawn by artists who are descendants, in one way, shape or form, of Raymond and Caniff (although some of them probably don’t know it). A few brave souls are venturing into less commercially safe territory, sometimes at Marvel and DC Comics, but more often at

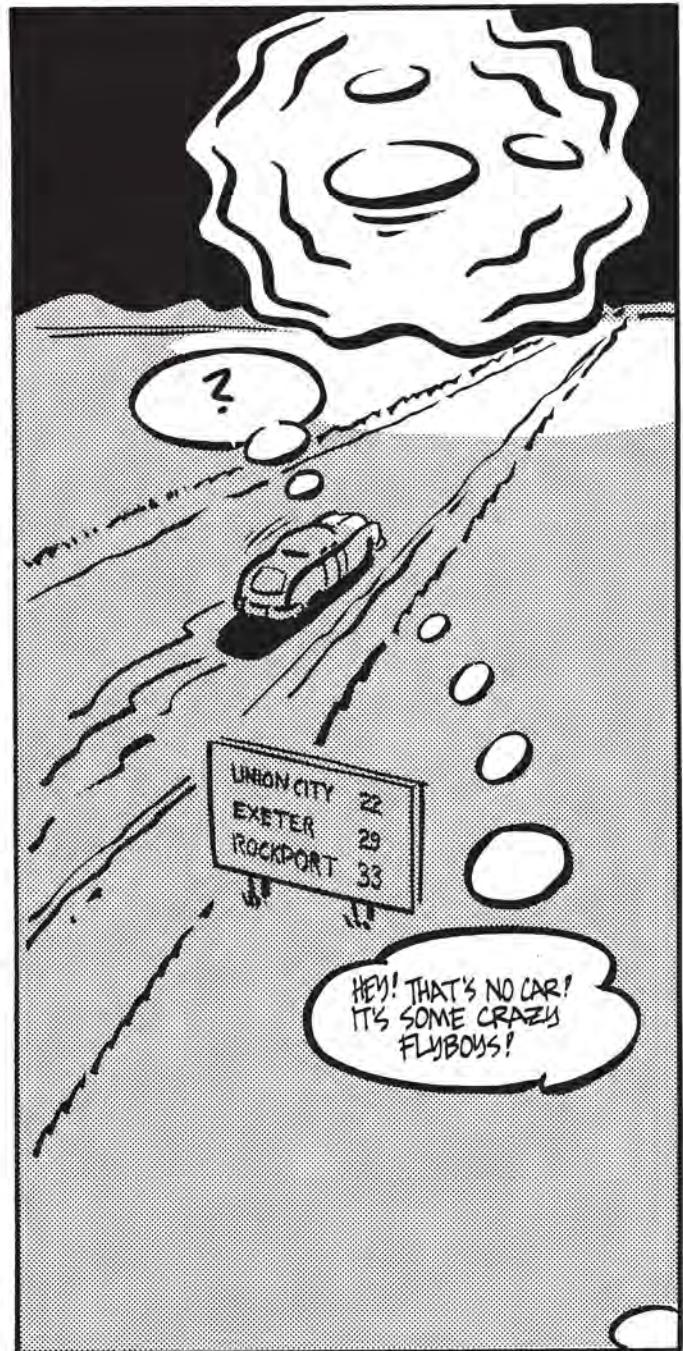
# CHAPTER ONE

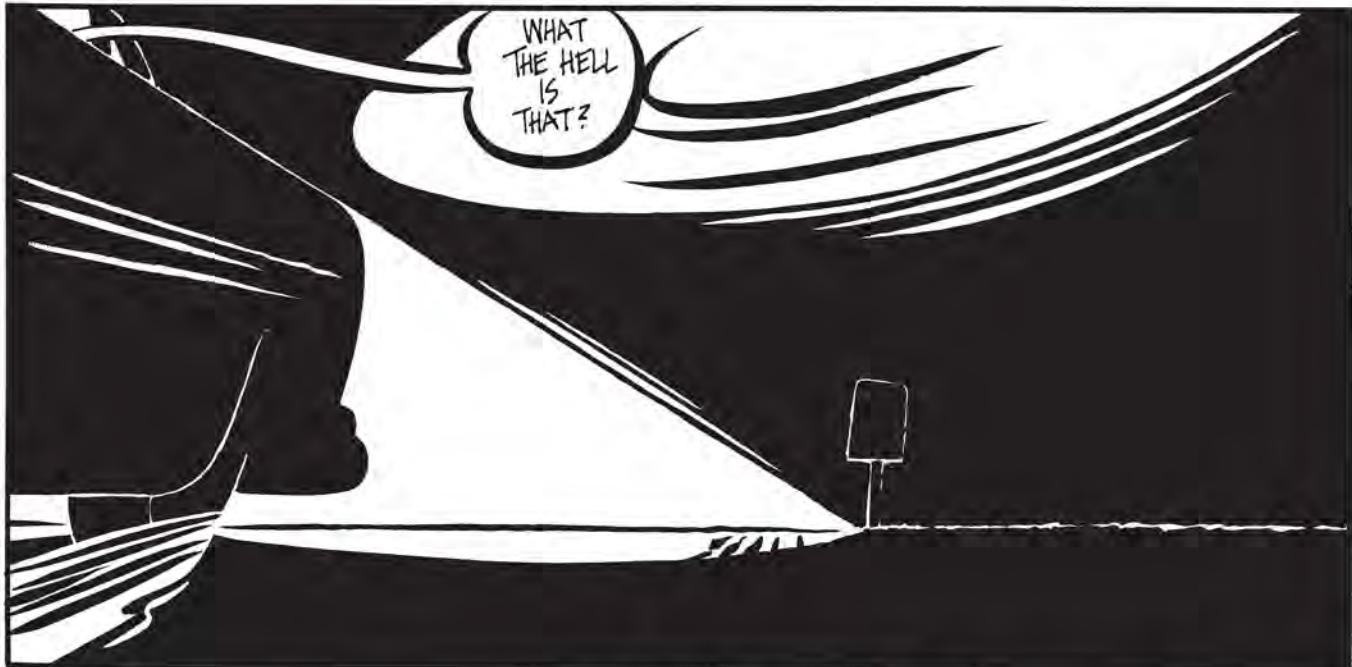
# ATOMIC SPIES



APRIL 1952







MAY 1952...

"VARLEY CHUNKS" "VARLEY MEAT" FOR YOUR PET  
HE'LL THINK IT'S NEAT... NOW THE UNION CITY WEATHER.  
TODAY - MOSTLY SUNNY WITH A FEW CLOUDY  
PERIODS... A HIGH OF 63... COOL TONIGHT WITH A  
LOW OF 48...

HMM...

TO EVERY LIFE THERE COMES A TURNING POINT.  
FOR SOME IT HAPPENS IN THEIR YOUTH; AND FOR  
OTHERS IN THEIR TWILIGHT YEARS. SOME LIVES  
ARE CHANGED INSTANTLY, EXPLOSIVELY. BUT OTHERS  
FEEL NARY A NUDGE AS DESTINY IS DERAILLED  
AND NEVER QUITE FULLY RIGHTEDED.

MY LIFE CHANGED FOREVER THE WEEK  
I MET GLORIA AMBER.

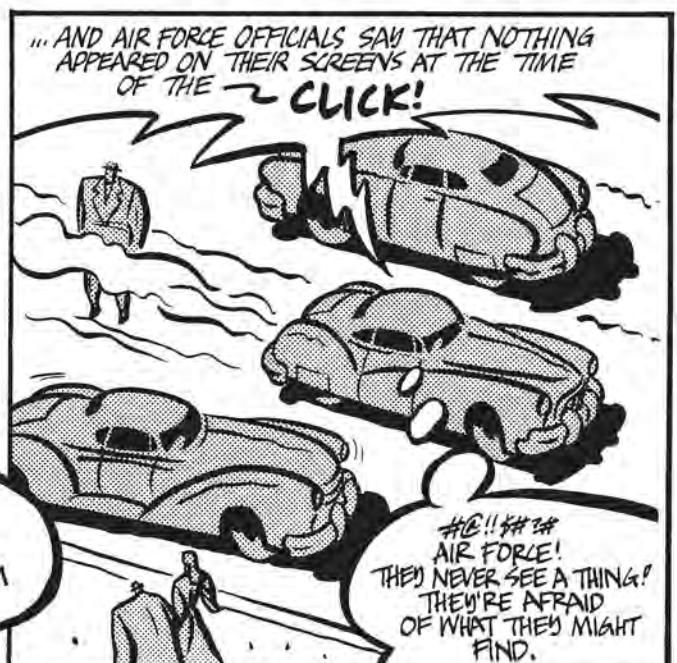
...IT'S NOW A QUARTER PAST EIGHT. THE NEWS IS COMING UP ON THE HALF-HOUR AND WE'LL HAVE DETAILS ON THESE STORIES - THE FIRE DEPARTMENT SUSPECTS ARSON IN LAST NIGHT'S EAST SIDE FIRE WHICH CLAIMED TWO LIVES... THE MAYOR HAS PROMISED AN INVESTIGATION AMIDST REPORTS OF KICKBACKS IN THE SANITATION DEPARTMENT... AND LAST NIGHT NEAR COPPER HILL, MYSTERIOUS...

#@%\$#@#  
THIS STUFF  
LOOKED GREAT  
AT THREE  
IN THE  
MORNING...

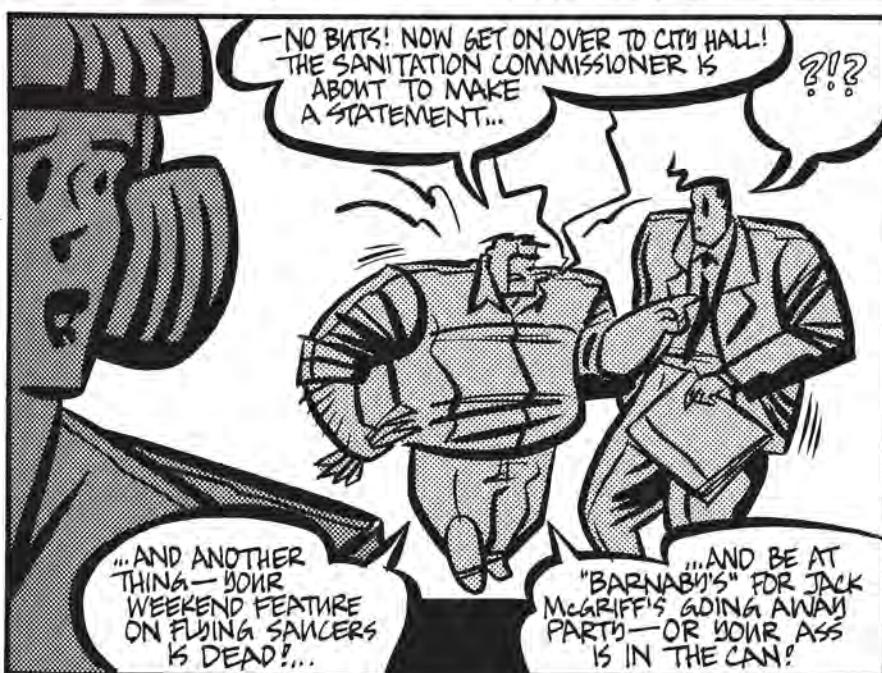
THE TRUTH BEHIND  
FLYING SAUCERS  
by MATT SINKAGE

...BUT IT'S JUST A PILE  
OF GARBAGE THIS  
MORNING. I'LL HAVE  
TO REWRITE THE  
WHOLE  
THING!

FOR THE LAST HALF YEAR FLYING SAUCERS HAD BEEN MY MAIN INTEREST—BECAUSE OF THE BOOK I WAS WRITING—AND FOR PERSONAL REASONS.







THE SANITATION COMMISSIONER WAS PROBABLY GOING TO SPOUT MORE GARBAGE THAN HIS DEPARTMENT CLEANED UP IN A WEEK—ALL OF WHICH I COULD GET FROM A BUDDY OVER AT THE EXAMINER. I WAS MORE INTERESTED IN WHAT HAD HAPPENED OUT AT THE HANOVER FARM.

HEY, MISTER!

NOPE. I WAS LOOKIN' RIGHT AT THE BARN WHEN THE BOLT O' LIGHTNIN' HIT IT!

...SO, DESPITE WHAT I HEARD ON THE RADIO, NOTHING UNUSUAL HAPPENED OUT HERE LAST NIGHT?

NO STRANGE LIGHTS OR NOISES, MR. HANOVER?

I SAW THEM, MISTER! I SAW THE LIGHTS!

NOPE.

...AND IT WAS 'BOUT THIS BIG, MISTER!  
JUST LIKE IN THE COMICS!

SOUNDS LIKE A FISH STORM TO ME, SON —

YUP, THAT'S WHAT IT IS! DON'T PAY ANY ATTENTION TO HIM! THE BOY READS TOO MANY O' THEM THERE FUNNY BOOKS!

C'MON, JOHNNY!  
AND WHERE'S YOUR SISTER?

PSSST! MISTER,  
I SAW THEM TOO!!

REALLY? TELL ME  
WHAT YOU SAW.

A BALLOON!  
A BIG BALLOON!

TELL ME ALL ABOUT IT!

WELL,  
I DON'T LIKE THUNDER... SO  
I WENT INTO  
JOHNNY'S ROOM...

I'D MET PEGGY BLACK ABOUT THREE YEARS EARLIER AND NATURE HAD RUN ITS COURSE. WE'D DATED, FALLEN IN LOVE AND ANNOUNCED OUR ENGAGEMENT.

MATT! DON'T!

YOU SHOULD HAVE LEARNED BY NOW... I'M NOT THAT KIND OF GIRL... WE SHOULD WAIT UNTIL WE'RE MARRIED!

AWW...  
C'MON, PEGGY! HOW OFTEN DO WE GET TO BE ALONE HERE..?

ALRIGHT,  
ALRIGHT ALREADY!  
SAM, HOW ABOUT A GAME OF MONOPOLY THEN?

WE'D SET THE WEDDING DATE THREE TIMES... AND POSTPONED IT EACH TIME.

HER MOTHER WASN'T CONVINCED THAT I WAS THE RIGHT MAN FOR HER LITTLE GIRL.

Sniff! Sniff. ...SAYS IS THAT THE CASSEROLE BURNING?

OH, NO!

I'M SURPRISED THAT YOUR MOTHER WENT TO A MOVIE AND LEFT US ALONE FOR THE EVENING!

MATT, JUST BECAUSE SHE DOESN'T LIKE YOU, DOESN'T MEAN SHE DOESN'T TRUST YOU!

THOUGH  
LORD KNOWS SHE'D  
HAVE GOOD  
REASON NOT  
TO, IF SHE  
ONLY KNEW.

SHORTLY...

YOU KNOW, A STRANGE THING HAPPENED TO ME TODAY UP AT COPPER HILL...

...REALLY THINK WE COULD SET THE DATE AGAIN. I'VE NEVER SEEN MOTHER IN A BETTER MOOD THAN THE LAST FEW DAYS...

...AS IF SOMEONE TOLD HIM NOT TO TALK ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED...

...COULD GET THE HALL, I'M SURE. OH, MATT, I'D LOVE TO BE A JUNE BRIDE...

...EVERYTIME I GET A HOT LEAD THAT COULD TURN INTO SOMETHING BIG, I RUN INTO A ROADBLOCK...



IF ONLY I'D LISTENED TO PEGGY AND NOT PROBED ANY FURTHER INTO THOSE MISSING MEMORIES.

I'D HAD HOPES OF DOING MORE THAN JUST HOLDING HANDS WITH PEGGY THAT EVENING, BUT COSTELLO WAS EXPECTING ME TO SHOW UP AT "BARNABY'S" ...

... AND I CHECKED EVERY NEIGHBOUR FOR FIVE MILES AROUND...



FRANK WASN'T TOO HAPPY WHEN I TOLD HIM I'D GONE OUT TO THE HANOVER FARM. BUT THAT DIDN'T STOP US FROM DISCUSSING WHAT I'D FOUND - OR RATHER, HADN'T FOUND...



SO? MAYBE THERE  
WAS NOTHING TO SEE.  
SHRP?

OR MAYBE SOMEBODY  
GOT TO THEM EARLY THIS  
MORNING. ? BYPE



I THINK YOU'RE  
STEWED.

