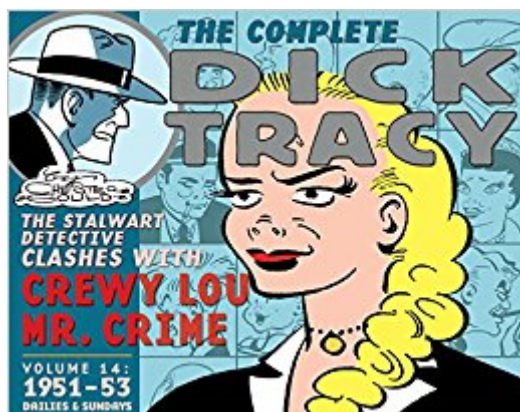


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# Complete Chester Gould's Dick Tracy Volume 14



## Synopsis

What does Crewy Lou do with Bonny Braids? Dick and Tess's baby isn't the only child in danger in Volume 14: wait until you meet Sparkle Plenty's new best friend, "Little Wings," and discover the ominous reason she appears to glow in the dark! Chester Gould also ramps up the violence and death traps, introduces more inventions (closed circuit surveillance, the first broadcast police line-up), and more crazy characters such as Tonsils, Dot View, Mr. Crime, Odds Zonn, Newsuit Nan, and Spinner ReCord, plus the touching story of the girl known as Model. Including all strips from September 16, 1951 • April 18, 1953.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Chester Gould (1900-1985) was born in Pawnee, Oklahoma, the son of a newspaperman and grandson of a circuit-riding preacher. He attended Oklahoma A&M (now Oklahoma State University) before transferring to Northwestern University in Chicago, from which he graduated in 1923. He produced the minor comic strips *Fillum Fables* and *The Radio Catts* before striking it big with *Dick Tracy* in 1931. Originally titled *Plainclothes Tracy*, the rechristened strip became one of the most successful and lauded comic strips of all time, as well as a media and merchandising sensation. He was twice accorded the "Cartoonist of the Year" Reuben Award by his peers. Gould continued to write and illustrate *Dick Tracy* until his retirement in 1977.

It's funny that Crewy Lou gets top billing despite being taken out very early in the book. The Crewy Lou story also demonstrates Gould's lack of planning in his stories. The story opens with Crewy Lou trying to evade the police with Dick Tracy's newborn baby, Bonny Braids, in the passenger seat. Given the events it seems like probably hours between the opening of the story and Crewy Lou's fatal fall and yet when Tracy finds the car someone shouts, "Weeks in the car! The tot will be bones." Huh? Apparently it took WEEKS for Tracy to find the car despite an obvious trail of vehicular destruction through the woods. The next villain, Spinner DeRecord, is a dud. He's a forgettable knucklehead who plans out an elaborate scheme to dispose of a corpse only to have his plan fail pretty much immediately. The next story introduces Dick Tracy Junior's girlfriend, Model Jones. It's interesting to see that Junior has grown up. Model is practically an adult, holding down a job. Sadly she has a tragic life with abusive, alcoholic parents and a lowlife crook of a brother. Model appears as a truly good person with a very painful life. Gould is well known for trying to pull on the heartstrings of the reader but it usually falls flat. I was never concerned by B.O. Plenty's near death in the previous volume because I didn't care if he died. Likewise I never felt worry when Gould tried to give the impression that Bonny Braids might have been torn to shreds by wild animals. Model was different and the writer of the books introduction was 100% correct when he said that hers was the most tragic Dick Tracy story of all time. One of the best Dick Tracy stories but very sad. The next story is pretty wild. A talentless singer named Tonsils is represented by a psychopathic agent whose MO is to pull out a gun and force people to hire his client and the gun is no idle threat as he attempts to murder a nightclub owner. The story moves all over the place with a horsemeat mobster and a surprising love story. Gould was surely making the story up as he goes but in this case it works. The Tonsils story has perhaps the most horrifying death as yet the Dick Tracy comics and that really says something. Segueing directly into the Mr. Crime story we then get an example of where Gould's habit of making it up as he goes along fails. Gould creates this whole storyline where Mr. Crime's girlfriend creates this mind controlling liquid made from blood and then does absolutely nothing with it. The theme of this volume seems to be little girls put in life threatening danger. First we get Bonnie Braids who is possibly consumed by wild animals. Then Spinner DeRecord tortures a very young girl to gain information. Sparkle Plenty and Bonnie Braids are nearly killed when the driver of a boat they're in is shot. Finally, crime boss Odds Zonn's daughter is irradiated with radiation and the book closes with a doctor examining her glowing body. Going back to volume 13 we had the story of Sparkle Plenty

nearly being killed by TV Wiggles. Not sure what Gould's obsession is with teasing the readers with deaths of little girls. I found this to be one of the better volumes so far and I give Gould credit for actually improving his writing after so many years of writing the series. We have passed the phase of his famous grotesque villains but volume 14 has some pretty good ones. I also give IDW for having another great introduction. All in all one of the better volumes.

Here we have the latest Dick Tracy volume. This one covers the years 1951-53. For me, the only sequences I had already read was the Crewy Lou story-line and the Junior/Model story-line. As with the prior volume, some feel this decade isn't as good as the past, as it didn't have the standout 'grotesques', but I have to disagree, as I feel the writing is much better in this decade, as seen in the Junior/Model story-line. This volume gives us several great stories: The first story is a continuation from the last volume, dealing with Crewy Lou. As seen in that volume, Crewy Lou is a photographer, who uses this to get into the home of rich people to rob them. But she and her partner make the mistake of robbing a linchpin in a crime syndicate lead by "The King", when his wife kills him. Crewy's partner is killed and she is grabbed by her brother, who tries to kill her for sullyng the family name. That volume ended with Crewy on the lam in Tess's car. Which has Tracy's newborn daughter, Bonnie Braids in it!!! In a long draw out sequence, Tracy searches for Bonnie as Tess pines at home. Crewy is trying to get away, but fate is against her, and Bonnie is finally rescued. We then have a story-line that also addresses an issue raised by some readers about Dick Tracy. In recent strips, much was made of his new home, and some questions how a plainclothes cop could afford this. So to answer that issue, this story-line took it up. Tracy is questioned on how he could afford his home, which he answers by the fact that he scrimped and saved and both the property at a low price during the depression. But accusations that he took stolen property from the evidence room emerges. It soon shown that this was really the custodian, in cahoots with Spinner ReCord who did this. The Custodian is killed and Spinner tries to lam it, but is caught and a recording he had made of his crimes seals his fate. The next story is one that is also considered a high watermark for Tracy: the story of Junior and his first love, Model Jones. Problem is, that while Model is a wonderful person, the rest of her family is not. Her parents are a couple of alcoholics, relaying on Model for support. And her brother Larry is a petty criminal, who steals parking meters for their money. But then Larry makes the mistake of killing a cop and trying to lam out. Model is shot, and in a long sequence, dies in Junior's arms. The next story starts a series of linked storylines that takes up most of the rest of the volume. We first met a strange pair: Tonsils, a terrible singer, and his agent Dude. Dude is in the rackets, but wants to go straight, thinking that making Tonsils a singer is his ticket

out. But he is still a thug, using his gun to get jobs for Tonsils. Then it looks like luck has changed for Tonsils when a TV personality, Dot View, takes a liking to him and other racketeers bumps off Duke. But, instead, they try to bump off Tonsils, who hides out with a couple who save him. In a confrontation, the old man is accidentally killed by Tonsils, who is now wanted by the police. Tonsils is soon picked up by henchmen working for Mr. Crime, who gives Tonsils an offer he can't refuse: shoot Dick Tracy or be feed to a barracuda! Tonsils takes the job. Tracy and the Plenty family are vacationing in the mountains, where Tonsils stalks him and shots him. Tonsils reports his success and is rewarded by being fed to the barracuda anyway. Tracy is alive, thanks to the rescue of Rifle Ruby, who also helps in finding and rescuing Sparkle and Bonnie. We are introduced to a new character, Newsuit Nan, who works for Mr. Crime. She is in charge of assigning his assassins to their jobs, as well as working out chemicals she puts on her nails, getting people to talk. But when an assignment for Mr. Crime goes bad, Mr. Crime kills her and shuts down his headquarters. Tracy and company are moving in, and they start figuring out stuff. Like what happened to the Judge that owns the building Mr. Crime has been using as a headquarters. We soon discover that Mr. Crime is really Mr. Alpha, an importer. And an interesting character is an old lady (never named, and whose face is never shown to us) who has some man-eating plants from South America with her. But soon, the career of Mr. Crime comes to an end. But soon a new character emerges, Odds Zonn, who is trying to take over Mr. Crime's territory. We are also introduced to his daughter, Little Wings, who it is discovered is radioactive due to getting radioactive paint on her? What will her fate be? We'll have to see in the next volume!!! Can't wait for the next volume!!

This is the volume I've been waiting for ever since DW began their most welcome COMPLETE DICK TRACY series. There may have been better (read: weirder) villains - the Brow, Flattop/Shaky/Wormy/T.V. Wiggles come to mind - but starting with Junior's tale of doomed love ("Model") and then swooping into the nine month-long Mr. Crime epic, Chester Gould had us all on the suspense-chair in the early Fifties. For months we knew something was going to happen to Dick. Blackmailed by Mr. Crime, the singer Tonsils was forced to assassinate Tracy - or else be fed to Mr. Crime's "pet" barracuda. Gould layered and infused a great deal of suspense into this sequence, with Tonsils on a forested bluff viewing the back of Tracy's head through a telescopic sight as Dick speeds his daughter Bonnie Braids and Sparkle Plenty in a speedboat across a lonely lake. And when the moment to pull the trigger comes... Gould's storytelling seemed to ratchet up during this period, veering into NAKED CITY realism. Even when Tracy must battle a man-eating cannibal vine, then survive being imprisoned in a snowy culvert with cars rolling across his back (!) - a keen

month-long sequence! -we find ourselves rooting for him struggling to make it all come out right. A superb volume - perhaps the keystone of this entire reprint series. The stories would go on, returning to strangeness; but never again would there be a time when Gould's readers were more involved with Tracy. Buy this one, now!

One of the best...fantastic.

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