How far would you go to become someone else.



# THE TALENTED MR. RIPLEY

Patricia Highsmith

CHAPTER ONE

# A Journey for Tom Ripley

Tom looked behind him and saw the man coming out of the Green Cage. He walked faster. There was no doubt the man was following him. Tom had noticed him five minutes ago, staring at him from a table. Tom had paid for his drink in a hurry and left.

At the corner, Tom leaned forward and ran across Fifth Avenue. There was Raoul's. Should he take a chance and go in for another drink? Or should he run over to Park Avenue and try to escape by hiding in dark doorways? He went into Raoul's.

As he walked up to an empty seat at the bar, he looked around to see if he knew anyone. There was that big man with red hair, whose name he always forgot, sitting at a table with a blonde girl. But who was that man outside? Was that the kind of man they would send after him? He didn't look like a police officer or a detective. He looked like a businessman, someone's father, well-dressed with gray hair. Was that the kind of man they sent on a job like this? He would chat with you in a bar, and then bang! - one hand on the shoulder and the other hand holding a policeman's identification. Tom Ripley, you're under arrest! Tom watched the door.

Here he was, coming inside, taking a place at the bar. Tom stared at him. They couldn't give you more than ten years, Tom thought. Maybe fifteen, but with good behavior - As the man started to speak, Tom suffered a moment of desperate regret. Why was he pretending to work for the income tax office? Yes, he received checks for hundreds of dollars from stupid people who believed him when he said they owed money. But he never cashed the checks. It was really just a silly game that made him feel powerful.

"Pardon me, are you Tom Ripley?"

"Yes."

"My name is Herbert Greenleaf. Richard Greenleaf's father." The look on his face would have been less confusing if he had been holding a gun. The face was friendly, smiling, and hopeful. "You're a friend of Richard's, aren't you?"

Tom searched his memory. Dickie Greenleaf. A tall, blond guy. He had quite a lot of money, Tom remembered. "Oh, Dickie Greenleaf, yes."

"Charles and Marta Schriever told me about you. I know so few of Richard's friends, but they seemed to think you know him quite well. Somebody told them you drank at the Green Cage."

"I remember him, yes."

"But you're not writing him now?" Mr. Greenleaf seemed disappointed.

"No, I don't think I've seen Dickie in a couple of years."

"He's been in Europe for two years. The Schrievers thought you might have some influence on Richard. We want him to come home."

Tom hadh't seen the Schrievers more than three or four times in his life. He had once calculated Charley Schrievers income tax and saved him a lot of money. Maybe that was why the Schrievers had recommended him. Maybe Charley had said that Tom was intelligent, honest, and very willing to help. It was a slight mistake.

"I don't suppose you know anybody else close to Richard who might be able to persuade him?" Mr. Greenleaf asked.

"I'd certainly like to help. Where is he staying in Europe?" Tom asked, not caring at all where Dickie was staying.

"In a town called Mongibello, south of Naples. He divides his time between painting and sailing. He bought a house. Richard has his own income - not a large amount, but enough to live on in Italy it seems."

Tom thought Dickie was probably having a great time over there. An income, a house, a boat. Why should he want to come home? Dickie was lucky. What was Tom doing? Living from week to week. Hiding from the police now for the first time in his life. He had a talent for mathematics. Why didn't someone pay him for it? Tom realized that his whole body had tensed. He was bored, bored, bored! He wanted to be at the bar by himself.

"I'd be very happy to write to Dickie if you give me his address. I suppose he'll remember me. We were at a weekend party out on Long Island once, I remember. And I came up to your apartment a few times, too," Tom went on. "He showed me some of his models - of ships."

"Did he ever show you his drawings?" Mr. Greenleaf was smiling again.

Dickie hadn't, but Tom said brightly, "Yes, of course he did. Interesting, some of them." Tom had never seen them, but he could imagine them now - and

he could see Dickie holding them up for him to see.

"Yes, Richard has talent," Mr. Greenleaf said with satisfaction.

"I think he has," Tom agreed. He was getting more bored every minute. He knew the feelings. He experienced them at parties or when he was having dinner with somebody he didn't want to be with. "I'm sorry I'm not free now or I'd go over and try to persuade Richard myself," Tom said, just because Mr. Greenleaf wanted him to.

"Richard has always listened to his friends' advice. If you or somebody else could find the time, I'd even send them over to talk to him. I don't suppose you could get time off from your present job, could you? "

Tom's heart suddenly jumped. He put a look of careful thought on his face. He didn't have a job. He might have to leave town soon anyway if the police started asking questions. He wanted to leave New York. "I might," he said carefully.

"I'd be glad to pay for your trip. Do you really think you might be able to go - this fall?"

"I think I might. I'd be glad to see Richard again - especially if you think I might be able to help."

"I do! I think he'd listen to you. You'll probably succeed where the rest of us have failed. Why don't you come over to my house and meet my wife? We'd be so happy if you would go to Europe and bring Richard back."

***

"Hello, Tom, my boy!" Mr. Greenleaf said in a voice that promised good drinks, an excellent dinner, and a bed for the night in case he got too tired to go home. "Emily, this is Tom Ripley!"

"I'm so happy to meet you!" his wife said warmly.

"How do you do, Mrs. Greenleaf?"

"Mr. Ripley's been here before," Mr. Greenleaf said. "He's come here with Richard."

"Oh, has he? I don't believe I met you, though."

About thirty minutes later, they went into the dining-room, where a table was set for three with a dark blue tablecloth and a whole cold chicken.

The conversation was dull and the dinner delicious. Tom told Mrs. Greenleaf that he was working for an advertising company called Rothenberg, Fleming, and Barter. Later, on purpose, he called it Reddington, Fleming, and Parker. The Greenleafs didn't notice the difference.

"Where did you go to college?" Mr. Greenleaf asked.

"I went to Princeton for a time, then when I visited an aunt in Denver I stayed out there and went to college." Tom hoped Mr. Greenleaf would ask him something about Princeton, but he didn't. Tom could discuss the teaching system, the college rules, the atmosphere at weekend dances, and the political beliefs of the students. He had been very friendly with a Princeton student last summer and had asked him for more and more information in case he might be able to use it some time. Tom had also met a young man who had been going to the University of Colorado. He had told the Greenleafs that he had been raised by his Aunt Dottie in Boston. In truth, though, she had taken him to Denver when he was sixteen, and he had only finished high school there, but he felt like he had gone to school there as well. After Tom had finished high school, they had moved back to Boston again.

Mrs. Greenleaf came in with some photographs and Tom sat down beside her as she looked through them. Richard taking his first step; Richard with long, blond curls. The photographs weren't interesting to him until Richard was about sixteen. Richard had hardly changed between sixteen and twenty-four.

Mrs. Greenleaf handed Tom several photos. "These are from Europe. This is Mongibello," she said, showing Tom a picture of Dickie in a boat on the sand. "And here's the girl, the only other American who lives there."

"Marge Sherwood," Mr. Greenleaf said. The girl was in a swimsuit on the beach, her arms around her knees. There was also a good picture of Richard in shorts, sitting on the wall of a terrace.

Tom noticed that Mrs. Greenleaf was staring down at the floor in front of her. He saw tears in her eyes. Mr. Greenleaf had told him that Mrs. Greenleaf was seriously ill and got emotional very easily. She was worried she would never see Dickie again. Her husband came over to comfort her.

"Mrs. Greenleaf," Tom said softly, "I want you to know that I'll do everything I can to make Dickie come home."

"Thank you, Tom." She pressed Tom's hand tightly.

"Emily, don't you think it's time for you to go to bed?" Mr. Greenleaf asked.

Tom stood up as Mrs. Greenleaf did. Mr. Greenleaf went out of the room with her.

Tom remained standing, his hands at his sides. In a large mirror on the wall he could see himself: the serious, hard-working young man again. He was doing the right thing, behaving the right way, but he had a feeling of guilt.

He felt himself beginning to sweat, and he tried to relax. What was he so worried about? He'd felt so good tonight. It's like a dream, Tom thought. In a minute, Mr. Greenleaf or somebody else would say, "Tom, Tom!" and he would open his eyes and find himself back in Raoul's with a drink in front of him.

CHAPTER TWO

# A New Start

Tom's mood was calm and happy, but he didn't feel like making friends. He wanted his time for thinking. He began to play a role on the ship, the role of a serious young man with an important job ahead of him.

He had a sudden desire for a hat and so he bought one on the ship, a blue-gray cap of soft English wool. He could look like so many different types of people in the hat. He had always thought that he had the world's dullest face. The cap changed all that. Now he was a young man with a private income, not long out of Princeton, possibly.

He was starting a new life. Goodbye to all of the awful people he had known in New York. Whatever happened with Dickie, he would handle himself well and Mr. Greenleaf would respect him for it. When Mr. Greenleaf's money was gone, he might not come back to America. He might get an interesting job in a hotel. Or he might work as a salesperson for a European company and travel around in the world.

One afternoon, he wrote a polite letter to his Aunt Dottie.

Dear Auntie,

I am on my way to Europe by boat. I had a business offer that I can't explain right now. I had to leave suddenly, so I was not able to come to Boston and I'm sorry because it may be months or even years before I come back.

I wanted to tell you not to worry and not to send me any more checks. Thank you very much for the last one from a month ago. I am well and very happy.

Love, Tom

The letter made him feel better because it separated him from her. No more of the letters comparing him to his father and the stupid checks for six dollars and forty-eight cents or twelve dollars and ninety-five cents when she had some change left over from the store. Aunt Dottie had always told Tom that he had cost her more than his father had left in insurance. But did she have to keep

repeating it? Lots of aunts and even strangers raised a child for nothing and were glad to do it.

After his letter to Aunt Dottie, he got up and walked around the ship. He always got angry when he wrote to her. He hated being nice to her. Until now he had always needed the money she sent him. But he didn't need it now. He would be independent forever.

He had run away from Aunt Dottie at seventeen and had been brought back, and he had done it again at twenty and succeeded. He remembered how innocent he had been, not knowing how the world worked. He remembered how he felt when he had been fired from a job in New York because he wasn't strong enough to lift boxes eight hours a day. He was very upset and thought it wasn't fair. He remembered deciding then that the world was full of selfish people and that you had to be an animal or you wouldn't eat. He remembered right after that, he had stolen a loaf of bread from a store and had taken it home and eaten it quickly, feeling that the world owed him bread, and more.

Tom sat back in his chair again, pulled his hat down over his eyes, and folded his hands over his stomach. His separation from the other passengers was making them notice him. He imagined the others asking, "Is he an American? I think so, but he doesn't act like an American, does he? Most Americans are so noisy. He's very serious, isn't he, and he can't be more than twenty-three. He must have something very important on his mind."

Yes, he had. The present and future of Tom Ripley.

***

A few days later, Tom arrived in Naples, where he stayed overnight. The next morning at eleven, he got on the bus for Mongibello. Now and then he saw little villages by the water's edge and people swimming near the shore. Finally, the driver said loudly, "Mongibello."

Tom jumped down out of the bus and walked into the little post office across the road, where he asked the man behind the window for Richard Greenleaf's house.

After a short walk, Tom found a two-floor house with an iron gate on the road and a terrace that hung over the cliff's edge. Tom rang the bell. An Italian woman came out of the house drying her hands.

"Mr. Greenleaf?" Tom asked.

The woman smiled and answered in Italian as she pointed down toward the sea.

Tom nodded. "Thank you." He didn't have a swimsuit so he went into one of the little shops near the post office and bought a tiny black and yellow one. He put on his shoes again and walked down a road which led to the beach.

Looking down the beach, Tom saw him from a great distance - definitely Dickie, though his skin was a dark brown and his hair looked lighter than Tom remembered it. He was with Marge. Tom approached the pair.

"Dickie Greenleaf?" he asked, smiling.

Dickie looked up. "Yes?"

"I'm Tom Ripley. I met you in the States several years ago. Remember? "

Dickie didn't seem to recognize Tom.

"I think your father said he was going to write you about me."

"Oh, yes!" Dickie said. He stood up. "Tom what is it?"

"Ripley."

"This is Marge Sherwood," he said. "Marge, Tom Ripley." Dickie was looking at him carefully, not in a very friendly manner.

"You don't seem to remember me from New York," Tom said.

"I can't really say that I do," Dickie said, "Where did I meet you?"

"I think - Wasn't it at Buddy Lankenau's?" It wasn't, but he knew Dickie knew Buddy Lankenau, and Buddy was a very nice guy.

After a short swim, Dickie and Marge returned to their towels. Dickie said, "We're leaving. Would you like to come up to the house and have lunch with us?"

"Well, yes. Thanks very much."

Fifteen minutes later, Tom had had a cool shower and was sitting in a comfortable chair on Dickie's terrace with a drink in his hand. He wondered if Marge lived here.

At that moment, Dickie came out and poured himself a drink. "Sorry there's no ice. I haven't got a refrigerator."

Tom smiled. "I have a shirt for you. Your mother said you'd asked for one.

Also some socks."

"Do you know my mother?"

"I met your father just before I left New York, and he asked me to dinner at his house."

"I suppose he offered you a job, too. He's always searching for young men to work for his company."

"No, he didn't." Tom felt that Dickie didn't like him. Had Mr. Greenleaf told Dickie he was coming to persuade him to return home? Or was Dickie just in a bad mood? He probably could have persuaded Dickie to come home if he had met Dickie in a cafe down at the beach, but this way was useless. Tom was angry at himself. Nothing he took so seriously ever worked out. He had learned that years ago.

"What hotel are you staying in?" Marge asked Tom.

Tom smiled. "I haven't found one yet. What do you recommend?"

"The Miramare's the best."

"In that case, I'll try the Miramare," Tom said, standing up. "I must go."

Neither Dickie nor Marge asked him to stay. Dickie walked with him to the gate. Marge wasn't leaving. Tom wondered if Dickie and Marge were sleeping together. Marge was in love with Dickie, Tom thought, but Dickie didn't care much about her.

"It was nice to meet you. Goodbye, Dickie."

"Goodbye."

***

Tom let three days go by. On the fourth morning, he went down to the beach and found Dickie alone.

"Doesn't look like Marge is coming down," Dickie said. "I think I'll go up."

Tom got up. They walked to the Miramare, saying almost nothing to each other. They went up to Tom's room, and Dickie tried the shirt on and held the socks up to his feet. Both the shirt and the socks were the right size and, as Tom had thought, Dickie was very pleased with the shirt.

Now Dickie had everything, Tom thought, everything he had to offer. He would refuse an invitation for a drink, too, Tom knew. "Thanks for delivering the

clothes. It was very nice of you." Dickie held out his hand.

"I think I ought to tell you something else," Tom said with a smile. "Your father sent me over here especially to ask you to come home."

"What do you mean?" Dickie asked. "Paid your way?"

"Yes." It was his last chance to make Dickie laugh or go out and slam the door in disgust. But the smile was coming the way Tom remembered Dickie's smile.

"Paid your way! He's getting desperate, isn't he?" Dickie closed the door again.

"He came up to me in a bar in New York," Tom said. "I told him I wasn't a close friend of yours, but he thought I could help if I came over. I told him I'd try. I don't want you to think I'm taking advantage of your father. I'll try to find a job somewhere in Europe soon, and I'll be able to pay him back. He bought me a round-trip ticket."

"Oh, don't bother! The company will pay for it. I can just see Dad approaching you in a bar. Which bar was it?"

"Raonl's. He followed me from the Green Cage."

Tom and Dickie had a drink in the hotel bar. They drank to Herbert Richard Greenleaf.

CHAPTER THREE

# Friendships and Jealousies

"Come on, Tom, I'll show you some of my paintings."

Dickie led the way into the big room Tom had looked into a couple of times on his way to and from the shower.

"This is one of Marge I'm working on now."

"Oh," Tom said with interest. It wasn't good in his opinion, probably in anybody's opinion.

"And these - a lot of paintings of the seashore. "Dickie obviously wanted Tom to say something nice about them, because he was proud of them. They were all wild and all the same.

"How long are you going to be here?" Dickie asked.

"Oh, at least a week, I think," Tom answered.

"Because - " Dickie's face was red from the wine which had put him in a good mood. "If you're going to be here a little longer, why don't you stay with me? There's no reason to stay in a hotel, unless you prefer it."

"Thank you very much," Tom said.

"There's a bed in the other room, which you didn't see."

***

The next morning, Tom moved in.

"Are we still going to Naples?" Tom asked. "Remember? We talked about it yesterday."

"Certainly." Dickie looked at his watch. "It's only a quarter to twelve. We can make the twelve o'clock bus."

The bus was just arriving as they reached the post office. Dickie stopped running, right in the face of a young man with red hair and a bright sports shirt, an American.

"Dickie!"

"Freddie!" Dickie yelled. "What are you doing here?"

"Came to see you! And the Cecchis. They're giving me a place to stay for a few days."

"I'm off to Naples with a friend. Tom?" Dickie introduced them.

The American's name was Freddie Miles. Tom thought he was disgusting. He hated red hair. Freddie had large red-brown eyes that shook in his head. He was also very heavy.

"See you tonight, Freddie."

About an hour later, the bus left Tom and Dickie in Naples.

"I know a good place for lunch," Dickie said. "A real Neapolitan pizza place. Do you like pizza?"

They sat there until five o'clock. Dickie had spent most of the time talking about Freddie, and Tom had found the conversation as uninteresting as Freddie's face. Then they moved to a cafe called the Galleria.

"This is what I like," Dickie said. "Sitting at a table and watching the people go by. It really improves your attitude toward life."

A well-dressed Italian greeted Dickie warmly and sat down at the table with them. Tom listened to their conversation in Italian, understanding a word here and there.

"Want to go to Rome?" Dickie asked him suddenly.

"Sure," Tom said. "Now?"

The Italian had a long, gray car with a loud radio that he and Dickie seemed happy to shout over. They reached Rome in about two hours and the Italian dropped them in the middle of a street and said a quick goodbye.

In Rome, they bought tickets for a music show that evening. After the show, they had dinner and drank a bottle and a half of wine. They were in a fine mood by one in the morning. They walked with their arms around each other's shoulders, singing and talking. Neither had the slightest idea what street they were on.

"When the sun comes up, we can see where we are," Dickie said cheerfully. He looked at his watch. "Only a couple more hours."

The next morning, they returned to Naples, just in time to catch the bus for Mongibello.

When they reached Mongibello, Marge was annoyed because Dickie hadn't called to say he was spending the night in Rome.

"I don't mind, of course, but I thought you were in Naples, and anything can happen in Naples."

Tom kept his mouth shut. He wasn't going to tell Marge anything they had done. Let her imagine what she pleased. Dickie had made it clear that they had had a very good time. Marge had the look of a mother or an older sister now - the woman's dislike of the rough play of little boys and men. Or was it jealousy? She seemed to know that Dickie had formed a closer friendship with Tom in twenty-four hours, just because he was another man, than she could ever have with Dickie, whether he loved her or not, and he didn't.

***

For the next three or four days, they didn't see much of Marge. Tom, anyway, kept Dickie amused. He had lots of funny stories to tell about New York, some of them true, some of them invented. Obviously, Dickie was enjoying his company.

Tom wrote to Mr. Greenleaf, promising him that Dickie was considering returning to the United States. He had to smile as he wrote the letter, because he and Dickie were talking of visiting the Greek islands this winter. Marge wouldn't be going,Tom was sure. Both he and Dickie left her out of their travel plans when they discussed them.

Dickie was paying attention to Marge because he knew she'd be lonely in Mongibello by herself. But one day when they asked her to go to the Roman ruins at Herculaneum, she refused.

"I think I'll stay home. You boys enjoy yourselves," she said with an effort at a cheerful smile.

"Well, if she won't, she won't," Tom said, and then walked calmly into the house so that she and Dickie could talk alone on the terrace if they wanted to.

After a few minutes, the gate slammed. Marge had left. Tom walked out of the house and onto the terrace.

"Was she angry about something?" Tom asked.

"No. She feels kind of ignored, I suppose."

"I feel like I'm getting in the way of your relationship with Marge."

"Of course not! Getting in the way of what?"

"Well, she might think so."

"No. it's just that I owe her something. And I haven't been particularly nice to her lately. We haven't."

"It's after two. Want to take a little walk and go by the post office?"

They walked down the hill in silence. What had Marge said about him, Tom wondered. Dickie came out of his silence only to greet Luigi, the post office worker, and thank him for his letter. Tom had no mail.

"I think I'll go up to see Marge," Dickie said. "I won't be long, but don't wait."

"All right," Tom said, feeling suddenly desperate. About half way up the hill he had the sudden need to go to Marge's house. He could go with the excuse of apologizing to her, but satisfy his anger by surprising and annoying them. He suddenly felt that Dickie was touching her, at this minute, and partly he wanted to see it, and partly he hated the idea of seeing it.

Tom stopped near Marge's apartment. One of her bras was hanging out of the window. Through the window, he could see that Dickie's arm was around her waist. Dickie was kissing her, little kisses on her cheek, smiling at her. Tom was disgusted. He knew Dickie didn't mean it; he knew Dickie was using this cheap, easy way to hold on to her friendship.

Tom turned away and ran down the steps, wanting to scream. He ran all the way to Dickie's house and sat on the couch in Dickie's living room for a few moments, his mind shocked and empty.

He went into Dickie's bedroom and walked around for a few moments, his hands in his pockets. He wondered when Dickie was coming back. Or was he going to stay all afternoon, really take her to bed with him? He opened Dickie's closet door and looked in. There was a new-looking gray suit. Tom took it out. He took off his shorts and put on the gray pants. He put on a pair of Dickie's shoes. Then he opened the bottom drawer and took out a clean blue and white shirt.

"Marge, you must understand that I don't love you," Tom said into the mirror in Dickie's voice. "Marge, stop it!" Tom turned suddenly and made a move in the air pretending to grab Marge's throat. He shook her, twisted her down to the floor. He was breathing heavily. "You know why I had to do that,"

he said, addressing Marge, though he watched himself in the mirror. "You were coming between Tom and me - No, not that! But there is something between us!"

He turned, stepped over the imaginary body, and went to the window. He could see the bottom of the steps that led up to Marge's house. Maybe they were sleeping together, Tom thought with disgust. He ran back to the closet and took a hat from the top shelf. He put it on. It surprised him how much he looked like Dickie with the top part of his head covered. Really it was only his darker hair that was very different from Dickie. But his nose, his narrow jaw, his eyes -

"What're you doing?"

Tom turned around quickly. Dickie was in the doorway." Oh - just amusing myself. Sorry, Dickie."

Dickie slammed the door loudly. "Please get out of my clothes."

"Are you and Marge OK?" Tom tried to calm himself as he hung up the suit.

"Marge and I are fine," Dickie yelled. "Another thing I want to say," he said, looking at Tom, "I'm not in love with you. I don't know if you have the idea that I am or not."

"In love with me?" Tom smiled weakly." I never thought you were."

"Well, Marge thinks you're in love with me."

"Why?" Tom felt the blood go out of his face. "What have I ever done?"

"It's just the way you act," Dickie said, and went out of the door.

Tom quickly put his shorts back on and followed Dickie. Just because Dickie liked him, Tom thought, Marge had spread her dirty ideas about him to Dickie. "Are you in love with Marge?"

"No, but I feel sorry for her. I care about her. She's been very nice to me. We've had some good times together. You don't seem to be able to understand that. I'm going to keep her friendship."

"Well, have I done anything to prevent you? I told you, Dickie, I'd rather leave than do anything to hurt your friendship with Marge."

Dickie looked at Tom. "No, you haven't done anything, specifically, but it's obvious you don't like her around."

"I'm sorry," Tom said sincerely. He was sorry he hadn't made more of an

effort, that he had done a bad job.

"Well, let's forget it. Marge and 1 are OK." Dickie turned away and stared out at the water.

Tom went into the kitchen to make himself some coffee. This wasn't the time to be too friendly with Dickie. Dickie had his pride. He would be silent for most of the afternoon, then come back in by about five o'clock after he had been painting for a time, and everything would be the same as before. One thing Tom was sure of: Dickie was glad to have him here. Dickie was bored with living by himself, and bored with Marge, too. Tom still had three hundred dollars left, and he and Dickie were going to use it on a trip to Paris.

CHAPTER FOUR

# A Loss of Control

The next day, Tom walked down to the post office. There were two letters, one to him from Dickie's father, one to Dickie from someone in New York who Tom didn't know. He walked quickly home as he opened Mr. Greenleaf's letter, unfolding the typewritten sheet respectfully.

Nov. 10,19

My dear Tom,

Since you have been with Dickie over a month and he shows no more sign of coming home than before you went, it is clear to me that you haven't been successful. I realize that you reported sincerely that he is considering returning, but honestly, I don't see it anywhere in his letter of October 26. He seems more determined than ever to stay where he is.

I want you to know that my wife and I appreciate whatever efforts you have made for us. From today, I have no further need of your assistance. I hope you have not troubled yourself greatly by your efforts of the last month, and I sincerely hope the trip has given you some pleasure despite the failure of its main goal.

Both my wife and I send you greetings and our thanks.

Sincerely, H. R. Greenleaf

Tom walked into the house. It was the end. Mr. Greenleaf had simply fired him. He had failed. He stood at the corner of the terrace, staring out at the city and thinking of nothing, feeling lost and alone. He turned as he heard the gate open. Dickie walked up the path, smiling, but Tom thought it was an unnatural, polite smile.

"Here's a letter for you." He handed Dickie his letter and put the one from Mr. Greenleaf into his pocket.

When Dickie had finished reading his letter - a letter that made him laugh out loud as he read it - Tom said, "Do you think Marge would like to go up to Paris with us when we go? "

Dickie looked surprised. "I think she would."

"Well, ask her," Tom said cheerfully.

"I don't know if I should go up to Paris," Dickie said. "I wouldn't mind getting away somewhere for a few days, but Paris -" He lighted a cigarette. "I'd rather go to San Remo or even Genoa."

"But Paris - Genoa can't compare with Paris, can it?"

"No, of course not, but it's a lot closer."

"But when will we get to Paris?"

"I don't know. Any time. Paris'll still be there."

Tom ran from the hall into the kitchen and fixed himself an iceless drink. His hands were shaking. Only yesterday Dickie had said, "Are you going home for Christmas?" very quietly in the middle of a conversation, but Dickie knew he wasn't going home for Christmas. He didn't have a home and Dickie knew it. He had told Dickie all about Aunt Dottie in Boston. It was simply what Dickie wanted, that was all. Marge was full of plans for Christmas. He couldn't bear to imagine it. All right, he'd leave.

He'd do anything rather than spend Christmas with them.

***

Marge said she didn't care to go with them to San Remo. She was busy working on her book. The book must be awful, Tom thought. He had known writers. You didn't write a book while spending half the day on the beach.

They took only one suitcase of Dickie's for the two of them, because they planned to be away only three nights and four days. Dickie was in a slightly more cheerful mood, but the awful feeling was still there, the feeling that this was the last trip they would make together anywhere.

Dickie said absolutely nothing on the train to San Remo. Tom sat opposite him, staring at his handsome, expressionless face, at his hands with the two rings: one green and one gold. Tom decided to steal the green ring when he left. He would do it the very last day, he thought. He stared at Dickie's closed eyes. A crazy emotion of hate, of warmth, of impatience, and frustration was rising in him, preventing his breathing. He wanted to kill Dickie.

It was not the first time he had thought of it. Before, once or twice or three times, it had been a desire that went away immediately and left him with a feeling of shame. Now he thought about it for a whole minute, two minutes,

because he was leaving Dickie anyway, and what was there to be ashamed of any more? He had offered Dickie friendship, and respect, everything he had to offer, and Dickie had answered with coldness and now dislike. Dickie was just pushing him out in the cold. If he killed him on this trip, Tom thought, he could simply say that there had been an accident. He could - He had just thought of something brilliant: he could become Dickie Greenleaf himself. He could do everything that Dickie did. He could go back to Mongibello first and collect Dickie's things, tell Marge a story, rent an apartment in Rome or Paris, receive Dickie's check every month, and sign Dickie's name on it. He could step right into Dickie's shoes. He began to think of how.

The water. But Dickie was such a good swimmer. The cliffs. It would be easy to push Dickie off a cliff when they took a walk, but he imagined Dickie grabbing at him and pulling him off with him, and he felt nervous. He would have to make his hair more blond. But he wouldn't live in a place, of course, where somebody who knew Dickie lived. He had only to look enough like Dickie to be able to use his passport.

Dickie opened his eyes, looking right at him, and Tom relaxed, putting his head back and shutting his eyes quickly.

"Tom, are you OK?" Dickie asked, shaking Tom's knee.

"OK," Tom said, smiling a little. He saw Dickie sit back with a look of anger, and Tom knew why; because Dickie had hated giving him even that much attention. Tom smiled to himself, amused at pretending to be asleep. That had been the only way to hide his thoughts from Dickie.

San Remo. Flowers. A main street along the beach, shops and stores, and French, English, and Italian tourists. Tom searched his brain. Where? In one of these little streets tonight? In the water? It was slightly cloudy, though not cold. It would be easy in the hotel room, too, but how would he get rid of the body? That left only the water, and Dickie was very comfortable in the water. There were boats, rowboats and little motorboats, that people could rent down at the beach. In each motorboat, Tom noticed, was a heavy, round, cement anchor tied to a rope to prevent the boat from floating away.

"Why don't we take a boat, Dickie?" Tom asked, trying not to sound eager.

"Well, all right. For an hour around the port," Dickie said.

The Italian boatman started the motor for them. Then Dickie took the

wheel and they headed straight out from the town.

"Where're you going?" Tom shouted.

"Does it matter?" Dickie smiled.

No it didn't.

"You dare me to jump in?" Tom asked, beginning to take off his jacket.

Dickie only laughed at this suggestion, opening his mouth wide, keeping his eyes fixed on the distance in front of the boat. Tom kept on undressing. He had his shoes and socks off. Under his pants he wore his swimsuit, like Dickie.

"I'll go in if you will!" Tom shouted. "Will you?" He wanted Dickie to slow down.

"Will I? Sure!" Dickie slowed the motor. He let go of the wheel and took off his jacket. The boat moved up and down, losing its speed. "Come on," Dickie said, nodding at Tom's pants. "Take them off."

Tom looked at the land. They were a long way from the white sand and pink houses of San Remo now. He picked up the oar slowly, playing with it between his knees, and when Dickie was pulling his pants down, Tom lifted the oar and swung it down hard on the top of Dickie's head.

"Hey!" Dickie yelled, sliding half off the wooden seat.

Tom stood up and brought the oar down again.

"What the...!" Dickie said, as he lost consciousness.

Tom hit him on the side of the neck three times. Finally the body relaxed and stopped moving. Tom straightened, getting his breath back painfully. He looked around him. There were no boats, nothing, except far, far away a little white one moving from left to right.

Tom stopped and pulled at Dickie's green ring. He put it in his pocket. The other ring was tighter, but it came off, over the bleeding hand. Then he reached for the rope that was tied to the heavy weight. He guessed the rope was about fourteen or fifteen meters long. He began to feel cooler and calmer. The cement weight should be just enough to hold a body down, he thought. The body might move around a little, but it wouldn't come up to the surface.

Tom pulled the body toward the edge of the boat, sliding it along the side. He began with Dickies head and shoulders, turned Dickie's body on its stomach,

and pushed him out little by little. Dickie's head was in the water. Tom took a breath and pushed hard. Dickie went over the side of the boat.

Tom started the boat cautiously and headed toward the shore, north of San Remo. Maybe he could find a place, an empty area on the shore, where he could stop the boat and get out. He couldn't think of a way to get rid of the boat. He moved it toward a shallow, short beach until he felt it hit ground. Tom decided to sink the boat.

The little beach gave him a feeling of safety and privacy. There was no sign that a human foot had ever touched the place.

Tom began to gather stones and to drop them into the boat one by one. He worked without stopping because he was afraid somebody might find him if he stopped to rest. When the stones reached the top of the boat, he pushed the boat away from the beach and pushed it down, more and more, until water entered over the sides. As the boat began to sink, he gave it another push toward deeper water and walked with it until the water was up to his waist and the boat sank below his reach. Then he walked back to shore and lay down for a time, face down on the sand. He began to plan his story for the return to Mongibello.

***

Tom stepped off the bus almost directly in front of Marge. She was in her swimsuit and the white jacket she always wore to the beach.

"Where's Dickie?" she asked.

"He's in Rome," Tom smiled easily, absolutely prepared for Marge's questions. "He's staying up there for a few days. I came down to get some of his stuff to take up to him."

"Is he staying with somebody?"

"No, just in a hotel."

Tom began to walk toward the house and Marge followed him. Tom took the big iron key to the terrace door from its usual place. The table had been moved a little, and there was a book on the chair. Marge had been here since they left, Tom thought.

"Can I fix you a drink? "

"No, thanks. How long do you think Dickie's going to be away?

Tom frowned thoughtfully. "Well, I don't really know. He says he wants to

see a lot of art shows up there. I think he's just enjoying a change of scene."

"How long are you staying?"

"Just overnight. I'll be going up to Rome tomorrow. Probably in the afternoon."

"I don't suppose I'll see you again, unless you're at the beach. Have a good time in case I don't see you. And tell Dickie to write a postcard. What hotel is he staying at?"

"Oh - uh - what's the name of it? Near the Piazza di Spagna?"

"The Inghilterra?"

"That's it. But I think he said to use the American Express as a mailing address."

"All right. Bye." Marge walked down the path to the iron gate, and out.

Tom picked up the suitcase and ran upstairs to Dickie's bedroom. He opened the drawers quickly and emptied them into the suitcase. There were letters, keys, address books, and clothes.

He wanted to take all of Dickies stuff straight away to Rome, but he worried about what Marge might think if he took so much for such a short time. He decided it would be better to pretend that Dickie had later made a decision to move to Rome.

The next day, Tom worked calmly and thoroughly, expecting Marge to come by at any minute, but it was after four before she came.

"Still here?" she asked as she came into Dickie's room.

"Yes. I had a letter from Dickie today. He's decided he's going to move to Rome." Tom stood up and smiled a little. It seemed to be a surprise to him, too. "He wants me to pick up all his things, all I can carry."

"Move to Rome? For how long? "

"I don't know. The rest of the winter, at least."

"He's not coming back all winter?" Marge sounded lost already.

"No. He said he might even sell the house."

"He's still going to Cortina, isn't he?" Marge asked. Dickie and Marge had been planning to go on a Christmas vacation to Cortina with Freddie Miles.

"No, he's not. He said he was going to write Freddie and tell him he decided not to go."

Tom watched her shocked face. He knew she was wondering whether he was going to live with Dickie or not, and that she was probably deciding, because of his cheerful manner, that he was. Tom felt the question move up to her lips - and then she asked him: "Are you going to stay with him in Rome?"

"Maybe for a time. I'll help him with his apartment. I want to go to Paris this month, then I suppose around the middle of December I'll be going back to the States."

A few minutes later, Marge stood up and said goodbye. Tom suddenly felt that she might be going to telephone Dickie today. Or maybe even go up to Rome. But what could she do if she did go? People change hotels. And there were enough hotels in Rome to keep her busy for days. When she didn't find him, she would suppose that he had gone to Paris or to another city with Tom Ripley.

CHAPTER FIVE

# A New Identity

Tom left Mongibello by taxi around six o'clock, after a cup of coffee at Giorgio's, where he said goodbye to his and Dickie's village friends. To all of them he told the same story, that Mr. Greenleaf was staying in Rome for the winter, and that he sent his greetings until he saw them again.

On the train, Tom wrote a letter to Marge. As soon as he arrived at the hotel in Rome, he typed it on Dickie's typewriter.

Rome

November 28

Dear Marge,

I've decided to take an apartment in Rome for the winter, just to have a change of scene and get away from old Mongy. I feel a need to be by myself. I'm sorry it was so sudden and that I didn't get a chance to say goodbye, but actually I'm not far away, and I hope I'll see you now and then. I just didn't feel like going to pack my stuff, so I gave the job to Tom.

You had the wrong idea about Tom. He's going back to the States soon. He's really not a bad guy and I don't dislike him. He has nothing to do with us anyway, and I hope you realize that.

Write me at the American Express, Rome, until I know where I am. I'm terribly sorry about Christmas, darling, but I don't think I should see you so soon, and you can hate me or not for that.

All my love, Dickie

Tom had kept his hat on when he entered the hotel, and he gave Dickie's passport in at the desk instead of his own. He also signed in with Dickie's signature. He spent that evening practicing Dickies signature for the bank checks. Dickie's monthly income was going to arrive from America in less than ten days.

Tom moved the next day to the Hotel Europa near the Via Veneto. He held

imaginary conversations with Marge and Freddie in his hotel room. He spoke to her as Dickie in case she called. He had done so little to change his appearance, but even his expression, Tom thought, was like Dickie's now. He wore a smile that was dangerously welcoming to a stranger, a smile perfect to greet an old friend or a lover. It was Dickie's best and most typical smile when he was in a good mood.

On January 4 there was a letter from Marge. She was giving up her house on March 1, she said. She wrote:

When am I going to see you? I hate missing a summer in Europe after I've lived through another awful winter, but I think I'll go home in early March. Darling, it would be so wonderful if we could go home on the same boat together.

Is there a possibility? I don't suppose there is. You're not going back to the US even for a short visit this winter?

As ever, Marge

On January 10, Tom wrote back to Marge:

I'm painting with a man called Di Massimo and am quite pleased with the results. I miss you, too, but if you can still live with my plan, I'd prefer not to see you for several more weeks. Hello to Giorgio and his wife...

It was a letter like all of Dickie's letters, a letter that couldn't be called warm or cold, and said almost nothing.

Tom was receiving Dickie's checks now, so he had enough money to live as he wanted. He had found an apartment in a large apartment house in the Via Imperiale, near the Pincian Gate. He had signed a contract to stay a year, though he didn't plan to spend most of his time in Rome, especially the winter. He only wanted a home, after years of not having one. And Rome was exciting. Rome was part of his new life. He wanted to be able to say in Majorca or Athens or Cairo or wherever he was:

"Yes, I live in Rome, I keep an apartment."

"Keep" was the way the international upper classes referred to their apartments. The apartment had a large living room, a bedroom, a kind of sitting room, kitchen, and bath. It suited the respectable neighborhood and the respectable life he wanted to lead.

Tom carefully avoided the Americans in Rome who might expect him to come to their parties and ask them to his, though he loved to chat with Americans and Italians in the Cafe Greco and in the students' restaurants in the Via Margutta. He told his name only to an Italian painter named Carlino, whom he met in a Via Margutta bar; told him also that he painted and was studying with a painter called Di Massimo. If the police ever asked, this man could now tell them that Dickie Greenleaf had been painting in Rome in January.

He had a ticket for Majorca - by train to Naples, then the boat from Naples to Palma over the night of January 31 and February 1. He had bought two new suitcases from Guccis, the best leather products store in Rome.

While Tom was packing his suitcases one morning, his doorbell rang. He supposed it was a salesperson, or a mistake. He had no name on his doorbell downstairs because he didn't like people to visit him. It rang for the second time, and Tom still ignored it, and went on with his lazy packing. He loved to pack, and he took a long time about it, a whole day or two days, laying Dickie's clothes carefully into suitcases, now and then trying on a good-looking shirt or a jacket in front of the mirror. He was standing in front of the mirror with one of Dickie's shirts, when there was a knock at his door.

It might be someone from Mongibello - someone who had found his address and wanted to surprise him. That was silly, he told himself. But his hands were cool with sweat as he went to the door. He felt faint, and was afraid he would fall down. He opened the door with both hands, though only a few centimeters.

"Hello!" the American voice said out of the darkness of the hall. "Dickie? It's Freddie."

Tom took a step back, holding the door open. "He's - Won't you come in? He's not here right now. He should be back a little later."

Freddie Miles came in, looking around. His fat, ugly face turned in every direction. How had he found the place, Tom wondered. Tom took his rings off quickly and pocketed them. And what else? He, too, looked around the room.

"You're staying with him?" Freddie asked, with that strange stare that made his face look stupid and rather scared.

"Oh, no. I'm just staying here for a few hours," Tom said, calmly removing Dickie's shirt. He had another shirt on under it. "Dickies gone for lunch. Otello's, I think he said. He should be back around three at the latest." One of the apartment owners had probably let Freddie in, Tom thought, and told him which bell to press, and told him Mr. Greenleaf was in, too. Freddie had probably said he was an old friend of Dickie's. Now he would have to get Freddie out of the house without seeing Signora Buffi downstairs, because she always called out, "Hello, Mr. Greenleaf."

"I met you in Mongibello, didn't I?" Freddie asked. "Aren't you Tom? I thought you were coming to Cortina."

"I couldn't go, thanks. How was the trip?"

"Oh, fine. What happened to Dickie?"

"Didn't he write to you? He decided to spend the winter in Rome. He told me he'd written to you."

"Not a word. Marge told me he'd moved to Rome, but she didn't have the address except the American Express office. It was only by luck that I met somebody at a restaurant last night who knew where he lived."

Freddie had walked toward the bedroom and stopped, looking at the suitcases on the bed. "Is Dickie leaving for somewhere, or did he just get here?" he asked, turning.

"He's leaving. Didn't Marge tell you? He's going to Sicily."

"When?"

"Tomorrow. Or late tonight. I'm not quite sure."

"So what's the matter with Dickie lately?" Freddie asked, frowning. "What's the idea of hiding from everybody?"

"He says he's been working pretty hard this winter," Tom said.

"He seems to want privacy, but as far as I know he's still friendly with everybody, including Marge."

Tom turned around and saw Freddie staring at the silver identification bracelet on his left wrist. It was Dickie's bracelet, which Tom had never seen him

wearing, but had found with Dickie's clothes. Freddie had clearly seen it before. Tom put on his coat slowly and calmly.

Freddie was looking at him now with a different expression, with a little surprise. Tom knew what Freddie was thinking. He sensed danger.

"Ready to go?" Tom asked.

"You live here, don't you?"

"No!" Tom protested, smiling. The fat, ugly face stared at him from under the bright red hair. If they could get out without seeing Signora Buffi downstairs, Tom thought he would be safe.

"Let's go."

"I see you're wearing Dickie's jewelry."

Tom couldn't think of a single thing to say, a single joke to make. "Oh, just for a day or two," he said in his deepest voice. "Dickie got tired of wearing it, so he told me to wear it." He meant the identification bracelet, but there was also the silver pin on his tie, with the G on it. Tom had bought the pin himself. He could feel the anger growing in Freddie Miles. Tom was afraid of his eyes.

"Yes, I'm ready to go," Freddie said seriously, getting up.

"I've just remembered I have to make a telephone call," Tom said. "I'll meet you there."

Freddie walked to the door and turned with a swing of his broad shoulders. "That's the Otello not far from the Inghilterra?"

"Yes," Tom said. "He's supposed to be there by one o'clock."

Freddie nodded. "Nice to see you again," he said in an unfriendly manner, and closed the door.

Tom whispered a curse. He opened the door slightly and listened to the sound of Freddie's shoes going down the stairs. He wanted to make sure Freddie left without speaking to one of the Buffis again. Then he heard Freddie's "Hello, ma'am."

Freddie was talking with Signora Buffi. The woman's voice came more clearly.

"... only Mr. Greenleaf," she was saying. "No, only one... Mr. Who?... No, sir... I do not think he has gone out today at all, but I could be wrong!" She

laughed.

Tom twisted his hands, imagining that they were around Freddie's neck. Then he heard Freddie's footsteps running up the stairs. Tom stepped back into the apartment and closed the door. He could go on saying that he didn't live here, that Dickie was at Otello's, or that he didn't know where Dickie was, but Freddie wouldn't stop now until he found Dickie. Or Freddie would drag him downstairs and ask Signora Buffi who he was.

Freddie knocked on the door. The handle turned. It was locked. Tom picked up a heavy glass ashtray. He couldn't get his hand around it, and he had to hold it by the edge. He tried to think just for two seconds more: wasn't there another solution? What would he do with the body? He couldn't think. This was the only way. He opened the door with his left hand. His right hand, with the glass ashtray, was pulled back and down.

Freddie came into the room. "Listen, would you mind telling..."

The hard edge of the ashtray hit the middle of his head. Freddie looked shocked. Then his knees bent and he went down like a bull hit between the eyes with a hammer, Tom kicked the door shut. He slammed the edge of the ashtray into the back of Freddie's neck. He hit the neck again and again, scared that Freddie might be only pretending and that one of his great arms might suddenly grab his legs and pull him down. Then he felt Freddie's wrist for a pulse. There was a faint one, though it seemed to stop as he touched. In the next second it was gone.

He searched Freddie's pockets. A wallet. The American passport in the inside pocket of the overcoat. Mixed Italian and some other kind of coins. Two car keys on a ring that said FIAT. He searched the wallet for a license. There it was, with all the details. He went to the front window, then nearly smiled because it was so simple: there stood the black car across the street, almost directly in front of the house. He could not be sure, but he thought there was no one in it.

He suddenly knew what he was going to do. He set Freddie up against the wall, and poured some strong alcohol from a bottle down his throat. He had hours of time, but he didn't stop until the room was ready, the two dozen smoked cigarettes and a glass of alcohol broken and only half-cleaned up from the bathroom floor. The curious thing was that he knew he would have the whole apartment cleaned up by eight o'clock. According to the story he was going to

tell, Freddie would leave his house by seven, and Dickie Greenleaf was a fairly neat young man, even with a few drinks in him. Tom was dirtying the house only so that he would believe the story he was going to tell.

At ten to eight, Tom dragged Freddie's dead body out of the apartment and began to walk down the stairs. On the way down he stopped, hearing someone come out of an apartment on the second floor. He waited for a moment and then continued. He didn't want to rest going down the stairs. Fortunately nobody else came out of any of the apartments or in the front door.

The street looked normal. If anyone came over, Tom thought, he would blow such a breath of alcohol in his face that there wouldn't be any reason to ask what was the matter. He paused a moment for a car to pass and then took a few heavy steps to Freddie's car. He pushed Freddie's head and one shoulder through the open window of the car while he breathed deeply.

"Can I help you?" a voice asked in Italian.

"Ah, no, no, thanks," Tom replied with drunken happiness. " I know where he lives," he said in English.

The man nodded, smiling a little, too, and walked on.

Tom swung Freddie out on the door, pulled him around the door and onto the car seat, came around the car, and pulled Freddie into the seat beside the drivers seat. He put Freddie's key in and the car started quickly. They were off. Down the hill to the Via Veneto, past the American Library, over to the Piazza Venezia, through the Forum, past the Colosseum, a grand tour of Rome that Freddie could not appreciate.

Tom began to look around for the right spot. There was a place ahead with three or four trees near the edge of the road and surely a tomb behind them. Tom pulled off the road by the trees and shut off his lights. He waited a moment, watching both ends of the straight, empty road.

Freddie's body was still soft. Tom dragged him roughly now through the dirt and stopped behind the last tree, behind what remained of a tomb, which was probably only a meter high, he thought, and quite good enough for this pig. Tom cursed his ugly weight and kicked him suddenly in the chin. Then he walked back to his car on his exhausted, weak legs and turned the car around toward Rome again. He was tired, tired to the point of crying, and sick of the sight of Freddie Miles.

CHAPTER SIX

# The Hunt for Clues

Tom went out before eight in the morning to buy the papers. There was nothing. They might not find Freddie for days, Tom thought. Nobody was likely to walk around an unimportant tomb like the one he had put Freddie behind.

He was dressed by nine and had even spoken to Signora Buffi to tell her he would be gone for at least three weeks.

The telephone rang, and Tom picked it up.

"Mr. Greenleaf?" asked the Italian voice.

"Yes."

The voice stated that the body of Frederick Miles had been found that morning and hadn't Mr. Miles visited him yesterday afternoon?

"Yes, that is true."

"Would you be kind enough to answer some questions? A police officer will come to you."

"I will be very glad to help if I can," Tom said in slow, careful Italian, "but can the officer come now? It is necessary for me to leave the house at ten o'clock."

The voice made a little sound and said probably not, but they would try.

Tom hurried to push a couple of suitcases under the bed, and carried the other to a closet and shut the door. He didn't want the police to think he was planning to leave town. But what was he nervous about? They probably didn't have any clues.

Maybe a friend of Freddies had known that Freddie was going to try to see him yesterday, that was all. Tom picked up a paint brush and put it in a cup of water. He didn't want to look too upset by the news of Freddie's death to do a little painting while he waited for them, though he was dressed to go out. He was going to be a friend of Freddie's, but not a very close friend.

Signora Buffi let the police in at ten-thirty. There were two: an older man in the uniform of an officer and a younger man in an ordinary police uniform. The older man greeted him politely and asked to see his passport. Tom produced

it, and the officer looked carefully from Tom to the picture of Dickie, more carefully than anyone had ever looked at it before. Tom thought the officer would ask him about it, but he didn't. He handed Tom the passport with a little smile.

"How was he killed?" Tom asked.

"He was hit on the head and in the neck by a heavy object," the officer replied, "and robbed. We think he was drunk. Was he drunk when he left your apartment yesterday afternoon?"

"Well - a little. We had both been drinking."

The officer wrote this down in his book, and also the time that Tom said Freddie had been there, from, about twelve until about six.

"Do you know where he was going when he left?" the officer asked.

"No, I don't."

"But you thought he was able to drive?"

"Oh, yes. If he had been too drunk to drive, I would have gone with him."

The officer asked another question that Tom pretended not quite to understand. The officer asked it a second time, choosing different words, and smiled at the younger police officer. The officer wanted to know what his relationship to Freddie had been.

"A friend," Tom said. "Not a very close friend. I had not seen or heard from him in about two months. I was terribly upset to hear about the disaster this morning." Tom let his anxious face express what his rather simple vocabulary couldn't. He thought he succeeded. He thought the questioning wasn't very serious, and that they were going to leave in another minute or two.

"He said nothing about making a trip to the Via Appia when he left your apartment?"

"No," Tom said.

"What did you do yesterday after Mr. Miles left?"

"I stayed here," Tom said, moving his open hands as Dickie had done," and then I had a little sleep, and later I went out for a walk around eight or eight-thirty." A man who lived in the house, whose name Tom didn't know, had seen him come in last night at about a quarter to nine, and they had said good evening

to each other.

"You took a walk alone? "

"Yes."

"And Mr. Miles left here alone? He was not going to meet anybody?"

"He didn't say so." Tom wondered if Freddie had had friends with him at his hotel, or wherever he had been staying. Tom hoped that the police wouldn't introduce him to any of Freddie's friends who might know Dickie. Now his name - Richard Greenleaf - would be in the Italian newspapers, Tom thought, and also his address. He'd have to move. It was awful. He cursed to himself. The police officer saw him, but it looked like a curse against the sad end of Freddie, Tom thought.

"We are searching the car now. Maybe the murderer was somebody he picked up to give a ride to. Shall we be able to reach you here for the next few days, in case there are any more questions? "

Tom hesitated. "I was planning to leave for Majorca tomorrow."

"I am sorry, but we may need to contact you in the next couple of days," he stated quietly. He was not giving Tom the opportunity to argue about it, even if he was an American. "We shall inform you as soon as you may go. I am sorry if you have made travel plans. Perhaps there is still time to change them. Good day, Mr. Greenleaf."

"Good day." Tom stood there after they had closed the door. He could move to a hotel, he thought, if he told the police what hotel it was. He didn't want Freddie's friends or any friends of Dickie's coming to see him after they saw his address in the newspapers.

Before an hour had passed, he was at the Inghilterra. His three suitcases, two of them Dickie's and one his own, depressed him: he had packed them for such a different purpose. And now this!

He went out at noon to buy the papers. Every one of the papers had the news:

AMERICAN MURDERED ON THE VIA APPIA ANTICA... SHOCKING MURDER OF WEALTHY AMERICAN FREDERICK MILES LAST NIGHT ON THE VIA APPIA... VIA APPIA MURDER OF AMERICAN WITHOUT CLUES...

Tom read every word. There really were no clues, at least not yet, and no suspects. But every paper gave the name Herbert Richard Greenleaf and gave his address as the place where Freddie had last been seen by anybody.

The phone didn't ring all afternoon. At about eight, when it was dark, Tom went downstairs to buy the evening papers. He sat in a little restaurant a few streets away, reading them. Still no clues.

Tom drank his glass of wine slowly, and looked through each of the papers for the last-minute articles that were sometimes put into Italian papers just before they came out. He found nothing more on the Miles case. But on the last page of the last newspaper he read: SUNKEN BOAT WITH BLOODSTAINS FOUND NEAR SAN REMO

He read it rapidly, with more terror in his heart than he had felt when he had carried Freddie's body down the stairs, or when the police had come to question him. This was like a bad dream come true. The boat was described in detail and it brought the scene back to him - Dickie smiling in the boat, Dickie smiling at him, Dickie's body sinking through the water. The article said that the stains were believed to be blood, not that they were. It didn't say what the police or anybody else planned to do about them. But the police would do something, Tom thought. His imagination went in several directions: what would they think if they searched for Dickie's body and found it? They would think that it was Tom Ripley's now. Dickie would be suspected of murder. Then Dickie would be suspected of Freddie's murder, too. Tom sat in his room wondering what would happen if he did nothing, and what he could make happen by his own actions.

Marge would come up to Rome. She had obviously called the Rome police to get his address. If she came up, he would have to see her as Tom, and try to persuade her that Dickie was out, as he had with Freddie. He mustn't see Marge, that was all. Everything would be a disaster if he saw her. It'd be the end of everything! But if he could be patient, nothing at all would happen. It was just this moment, he thought, just this murder, that made things so difficult. But absolutely nothing would happen to him, if he could keep doing and saying the right things to everybody. Afterward everything would be OK again.

He picked up the telephone, and told the man at the hotel desk that if Miss Marjorie Sherwood called again, he would accept the call. He thought he could persuade her in two minutes that everything was all right and that Freddie's murder didn't concern him at all. He would say that he had moved to a hotel to

avoid annoying telephone calls from strangers but still be within reach of the police in case they wanted him to identify any suspects they picked up.

He lay down on the bed, tired, but not ready to undress. Tom imagined Dickie smiling at him, dressed in the suit that he had worn in San Remo. The suit and tie were completely wet. Dickie bent over him, shaking him. "I swam!" he said. "Tom, wake up! I'm all right! I swam! I'm alive!" Tom moved away from his touch. He heard Dickie laugh at him, Dickie's happy, deep laugh. "I swam!" Dickie's voice yelled, ringing and ringing in Tom's ears.

Tom looked around the room, looking for Dickie in the yellow light under the lamp, in the dark corner. Tom felt his own eyes open wide, frightened, and though he knew his fear was silly, he kept looking everywhere for Dickie, below the curtains at the window, and on the floor on the other side of the bed. He pulled himself up from the bed and walked, almost falling, across the room, and opened a window. He felt drugged. He sat beneath the window, breathing the cold air in. Finally he went into the bathroom and wet his face at the sink. He had let his imagination go crazy. He had been out of control.

***

The first thing he thought of when he woke up was Marge. He reached for the telephone and asked if she had called during the night. She hadn't. He had a terrible feeling that she was coming up to Rome.

Very strangely, there was nothing in the papers about either the Miles case or the San Remo boat. It frightened him.

The telephone rang and he jumped for it obediently. It was either Marge or the police.

"There are two officers of the police downstairs to see you, sir."

A minute later, he heard their footsteps in the carpeted hall. It was the same older officer as yesterday, with a different younger policeman.

They took the chairs Tom offered. "Are you a friend of the American Thomas Ripley?" the older officer asked.

"Yes," Tom said.

"Do you know where he is?"

"I think he went back to America about a month ago."

"I see. That will have to be checked. You see, we are trying to find Thomas

Ripley. We think he may be dead."

"Dead? Why?"

The officer seemed to be smiling between each sentence. The smile had bothered Tom a little yesterday, too. "You were with him on a trip to San Remo in November, were you not? "

They had checked the hotels. "Yes."

"Where did you last see him? In San Remo?"

"No. I saw him again in Rome." Tom remembered that Marge knew he had gone back to Rome after Mongibello, because he had said he was going to help Dickie in his new apartment in Rome.

"When did you last see him?"

"I don't know the exact date. Something like two months ago, I think. I think I had a postcard from - from Genoa, saying that he was going back to America. Why do you think he is dead?"

"Did you take a boat ride with Thomas Ripley in San Remo?"

"I think we did. Yes, I remember. Why?"

"Because a little boat has been found with some kind of stains on it that may be blood. It was lost on November 25 - the day you were in San Remo with Mr. Ripley." The officer's eyes rested on him without moving.

The friendliness of the look angered Tom. It wasn't honest, he felt. But he made an effort to behave well. "But nothing happened to us on the boat ride. There was no accident."

"Did you bring the boat back?"

"Of course." It was obvious what was going on in the officer's head: Dickie Greenleaf had twice been on the scene of a murder, or near enough. The missing Thomas Ripley had taken a boat ride on November 25 with Dickie Greenleaf. "Are you saying you do not believe me when I tell you that I saw Tom Ripley in Rome around December 1?"

"Oh, no, I didn't say that! I wanted to hear what you would say about your travels with Mr. Ripley after San Remo, because we cannot find him." He smiled again.

"If he's not in America, you could try Paris or Genoa."

"We will," the officer said. He put his papers away. He had made at least a dozen notes on them.

"Before you go," Tom said in a nervous voice, "I want to ask you when I can leave the city. I was planning to go to Sicily. I would very much like to leave today if it is possible. I plan to stay at the Hotel Palma in Palermo. It will be very simple for you to reach me if I am needed."

"Palermo," the officer repeated. "Well, that may be possible."

After making a phone call to his station, the officer turned to Tom, smiling. "Yes, you may go to Palermo today."

"Thank you." He walked with the two of them to the door. "If you find where Tom Ripley is, please let me know, too," he said sincerely.

"Of course! We shall keep you informed, sir. Good day!"

CHAPTER SEVEN

# The Waiting Game

Tom had no plan to try to run away from anything. He just wanted to get out of Rome. He was desperate to get out! He threw the last objects into his suitcase and slammed the lid down and locked it.

The phone again! Tom picked it up quickly. "Hello?"

"Oh, Dickie - !"

It was Marge and she was downstairs, he could tell from the sound. Surprised, he said in Tom's voice," Who's this?"

"Is this Tom?"

"Marge! Well, hello. Where are you?"

"I'm downstairs. Is Dickie there? Can I come up?"

"You can come up in about five minutes," Tom said with a laugh.

"Is Dickie there? "

"Not at the moment. He went out about a half an hour ago, but he'll be back soon. I know where he is, if you want to find him."

"Where?"

"At the eighty-third police station. No, excuse me, it's the eighty-seventh."

"Is he in any trouble? "

"No, just answering questions. He was supposed to be there at ten. Want me to give you the address?" He wished he hadn't started talking in Tom's voice: why hadn't he pretended to be a servant, some friend of Dickie's, anybody, and told her that Dickie was out for hours?

Marge wasn't happy. "No - o. I'll wait for him."

"Here it is!" Tom said, pretending to find the address. "Twenty-one Via Perugia. Do you know where that is?" Tom didn't, but he was going to send her in the opposite direction from the American Express, where he wanted to go for his mail before he left town.

"I don't want to go," Marge said." I'll come up and wait with you if it's all right."

"Well, it's -" He laughed the laugh that Marge knew so well. "The thing is, I'm expecting somebody any minute. It's a business interview. About a job. Believe it or not, old Ripley's trying to put himself to work."

"Oh," said Marge, not in the least interested. "Well, how is Dickie? Why does he have to talk to the police?"

"Oh! Just because he had some drinks with Freddie that day. You saw the papers, didn't you? "

"How long has Dickie been living here?"

"Here? Oh, just overnight. I've been up north. When I heard about Freddie, I came down to Rome to see him. If it hadn't been for the police, I'd never have found him! I'm awfully glad you're in town, Marge. Dickie'll be so happy to see you. He's been worried about what you might think of all this in the papers."

"Oh, has he?" Marge said, surprised, but obviously pleased.

"Why don't you wait for me in Angelo's? It's that bar right down the street in front of the hotel as you go toward the Piazza di Spagna steps. I'll see if I can come out and have a drink or a coffee with you in about five minutes, OK?"

"Oh, all right. Angelo's?"

"You can't miss it. On the street straight in front of the hotel. Bye-bye."

Tom quickly called for his bill to be prepared and for somebody to carry his luggage, and then he walked downstairs.

He wanted to see if Marge was still in the hotel, waiting there for him, or possibly still there making another telephone call.

She wasn't there. Tom paid his bill. "If anybody asks for me, would you say that I've left the city?" Tom asked the man at the desk.

Tom went out to his waiting taxi. "Would you take me to the American Express, please?" he asked the driver.

***

The boat approached Palermo harbor slowly. He had spent two days in Naples, and there had been nothing of any interest in the papers and the police had made no attempt to contact him. But maybe they had just not bothered to look for him in Naples, he thought, and were waiting for him in Palermo at the hotel. But there were no police on the dock and no police in the hotel either. Tom

felt so happy that he went over to the mail counter and asked boldly if there was any message for Mr. Richard Greenleaf. The clerk told him there wasn't.

Then he began to relax. There wasn't even a message from Marge. Maybe Marge had given Dickie up after this situation. Maybe she'd realized that Dickie was running away from her.

He dressed, put on one of his new traveling suits, and walked out into the Palermo early evening. There across the square was the great cathedral he had read about in a guidebook. Tomorrow he would begin his visit, but this moment was wonderful, he thought, as he stopped to stare at the tall cathedral in front of him. Wonderful to look at the dusty walls and to think of going inside tomorrow, to imagine its smell, made up of hundreds and hundreds of years.

Beyond Sicily came Greece. He definitely wanted to see Greece. He wanted to see Greece as Dickie Greenleaf, with Dickie's money, Dickie's clothes, Dickie's way of behaving with strangers. But would it happen that he couldn't see Greece as Dickie Greenleaf? Would one thing after another happen to stop him - murder, the police, people? He hadn't wanted to murder, it had been necessary. The idea of going to Greece, walking over the Acropolis as Tom Ripley, American tourist, held no charm for him at all. He would rather not go. Tears came in his eyes as he stared up at the cathedral, and then he turned away.

There was a fat letter from Marge the next morning. Tom squeezed it between his fingers and smiled. He was sure he knew what it said because it was so fat. He read it at breakfast. He enjoyed every line of it with his breakfast. It was all he had hoped for and more.

...If you really didn't know that I had come by your hotel, that only means that Tom didn't tell you, which gives me my answer. It's pretty obvious now that you're running out and can't face me. Why don't you admit that you can't live without your little friend? I'm only sorry, old boy, that you didn't have the courage to tell me this before and directly. What do you think I am, a small-town fool who doesn't know about such things?

Success Number Two of my Roman holiday is informing the police that Tom Ripley is with you. They seemed in a desperate hurry to find him. (I wonder why? What's he done now?) I also informed the police in my best Italian that you and Tom are always together and that I could not imagine how they found you and missed Tom.

I'll be leaving for the States around the end of March. I'm not angry, Dickie

boy I just thought you had more courage.

Thanks for all the wonderful memories. They're like something in a museum already. Best wishes for the future,

Marge

Five days passed, calm, lonely but very pleasant days in which he wandered around Palermo, stopping here and there for an hour or two in a cafe or a restaurant and reading his travel books and the newspaper. He visited a palace, the Palermo library, with its paintings and papers in glass cases. He wrote letters to people in New York.

But he was lonely. He had imagined himself making a bright new group of friends with whom he would start a new life with new attitudes, standards, and habits that would be much better and clearer than the ones he had had all his life. Now he realized that it couldn't be. He would have to keep a distance from people, always. He was alone, and it was a lonely game he was playing. The friends he might make were most of the danger, of course. If he had to wander around the world alone, well, there was much less chance that he would be found out. That was one cheerful side of it, anyway, and he felt better after he had thought of it.

He changed his behavior slightly, to suit the role of an observer of life. He was still polite and smiling to everyone, to people who wanted to borrow his newspaper in restaurants and to workers he spoke to in the hotel, but he carried his head even higher and he spoke a little less when he spoke. There was a sadness about him now. He enjoyed the change. He imagined that he looked like a young man who had had an unhappy love affair or emotional disaster, and was trying to recover by visiting some of the more beautiful places on the earth.

"Hello! How are you?" He greeted the man behind the hotel desk with a smile.

"A letter for you, sir. Very urgent," the man said, smiling, too.

It was from Dickie's bank in Naples. Inside the envelope was another envelope from Dickie's bank in New York. Tom read the letter from the Naples bank first.

February 10

Dear Sir:

It has been brought to our attention by the Wendell Trust Company of New York, that there exists a doubt whether your signature on your check of five hundred dollars of last January is your own. We are informing you as quickly as possible so that we can take the necessary action.

We have already decided that it is best to inform the police, but we shall wait for your reply. Any information you may be able to give us will be most appreciated, and we beg you to communicate with us as soon as possible.

Most respectfully,

Emilio di Braganzi Secretary General,

the Bank of Naples

P.S. If the signature is in fact yours, we ask you to visit our office in Naples as soon as possible to sign your name again for our permanent records.

Tom tore open the letter from the New York bank.

February 5

Dear Mr. Greenleaf:

Our Department of Signatures has reported to us that in its opinion your signature of January on your regular monthly check, No. 8747, is not yours. We inform you so that you may let us know if you signed the check or inform us that the check has been stolen. We have brought this to the attention of the Bank of Naples also.

We are sending you a card for our permanent signature file which we request you to sign and return to us. Please let us hear from you as soon as possible.

Sincerely, Edward T. Cavanach Secretary

Tom wet his lips. He would write to both banks that he was not missing any money at all. But would that stop them for long? He had signed three checks, beginning in December. Were they going to go back and check on all his signatures now? Would somebody be able to tell that all three signatures were

not Dickie's?

Tom went upstairs and immediately sat down at the typewriter. Most false signatures took months to be discovered, he thought. Why had they noticed this one in four weeks? Wasn't it because they were checking on him in every department of his life, since the Freddie Miles murder and the San Remo boat story? They wanted to see him personally in the Naples bank. Maybe some of the men there knew Dickie by sight. A terrible fear ran over his shoulders and down his legs. For a moment he felt weak, too weak to move. He saw himself surrounded by a dozen policemen, Italian and American. They were asking him where Dickie Greenleaf was, and he was unable to produce Dickie Greenleaf or tell them where he was, or prove that he existed. He imagined himself trying to sign "H. Richard Greenleaf" under the eyes of a dozen witnesses, and falling apart suddenly and not being able to write at all.

February 12

Dear Sirs:

In reply to your letter concerning my January check:

I signed the check myself and received all of the money. If I had missed the check, I would of course have informed you at once.

I am returning the card with my signature for your permanent record as you requested.

Sincerely, H. Richard Greenleaf

He signed Dickie's signature several times on the back of the bank's envelope before he signed his letter and then the card.

Then he wrote a similar letter to the Naples bank, and promised to go to the bank within the next few days and sign his name again for their permanent record. He marked both envelopes "Urgent," and then mailed them.

CHAPTER EIGHT

# The Return of Tom Ripley

83 Police Station Rome February 14

Dear Mr. Greenleaf:

You are urgently requested to come to Rome to answer some important questions concerning Thomas Ripley. Your presence would be most appreciated and would greatly speed up our work.

Failure to come to us within a week will cause us to take certain steps which will be annoying for us and for you.

Most respectfully yours Captain Enrico Farrara

So they were still looking for Tom. But maybe it meant that something had happened on the Miles case, too, Tom thought. The Italians didn't call in an American using words like these. In the last paragraph they were actually threatening him. And, of course, they knew about the signature on the check by now.

He stood with the letter in his hand, looking around the room. He saw himself in the mirror; the corners of his mouth were turned down, his eyes were anxious and scared, and because the way he looked was the way he felt, he suddenly became twice as frightened. He folded the letter and pocketed it, then took it out of his pocket and tore it into pieces.

He began to pack rapidly. This was the end of Dickie Greenleaf, he knew. He hated becoming Thomas Ripley again, hated being nobody, hated putting on his old set of habits again. Now people would look down on him and be bored with him unless he put on an act for them. Tom Ripley always felt stupid and unable to do anything with himself except entertain people for minutes at a time. He hated going back to himself as he would hate putting on a dirty old suit of clothes, a suit of clothes that had not been very good even when it was new. His tears fell on Dickie's blue and white shirt that lay on top in the suitcase. It had Dickie's initials on it. He began to count up the things of Dickie's that he could still keep because they had no initials, or because no one would remember that they were Dickie's and not his own.

Tom paid his bill at the hotel, but he had to wait until the next day for a

boat away from the island. He reserved the boat ticket in the name of Greenleaf, thinking that this was the last time he would ever reserve a ticket in the name of Greenleaf, but that maybe it wouldn't be, either. He couldn't give up the idea that the problem might go away. Just might. And for that reason it was senseless to give up hope. There was no point in being desperate, anyway, even as Tom Ripley. Tom Ripley had never really been desperate, though he had often looked it. Hadn't he learned something from these last months? If you wanted to be cheerful or sad, or hopeful, or thoughtful, or polite, you simply had to act those things.

A very cheerful thought came to him when he awoke on the last morning in Palermo: he could leave all Dickie's clothes at the American Express in Venice under a different name and pick them up at some future time, if he wanted to or had to, or else never pick them up at all. It made him feel much better to know that Dickie's good shirts, his identification bracelet, and his wrist-watch would be safely stored somewhere, instead of lying at the bottom of the ocean or in a trashcan in Sicily.

So, after removing the initials from Dickie's two suitcases, he sent them, locked, from Naples to the American Express Company in Venice, together with two paintings he had begun in Palermo. He sent them in the name of Robert S. Fanshaw, to be stored until they were collected.

***

Tom took a train from Naples up through Rome, Florence, Bologna, and Verona, where he got out and went by bus to the town of Trento about sixty kilometers away. He didn't want to buy a car in a town as big as Verona, because the police might notice his name when he obtained his license plates, he thought. In Trento, he bought a used car for about eight hundred dollars. He bought it in the name of Thomas Ripley, as his passport read, and took a hotel room in that name to wait the twenty-four hours until his license plates would be ready. By noon the next day he had his plates on his car and nothing had happened. There was nothing in the papers about the search for Thomas Ripley. It made him feel rather strange, rather safe and happy; perhaps the whole situation was unreal. He began to feel happy even in his boring role as Thomas Ripley. He took a pleasure in it, almost overdoing the old Tom Ripley shyness with strangers. Would anyone, anyone, believe that such a person had ever committed a murder? And the only murder he could possibly be suspected of was Dickie's in San Remo, and the police didn't seem to be getting very far on that. Life as Tom Ripley had

one positive, at least: it freed his mind of guilt for the stupid, unnecessary murder of Freddie Miles.

The next night he spent in Venice. He found Venice much bigger than he had imagined. He found he could walk across the whole city by the narrow streets and bridges without setting foot in a boat. He chose a hotel very near the Rialto bridge called the Costanza, a hotel which was neither famous nor a cheap one on the back streets. It was clean, inexpensive, and convenient to places of interest. It was just the hotel for Tom Ripley.

As he spent a couple of hours in his room, Tom imagined the conversation he was going to have with the police before long... Well, I haven't any idea. I saw him in Rome. If you've any doubt of that, you can ask Miss Marjorie Sherwood... Of course I'm Tom Ripley! (He would give a laugh.) I can't understand what all the problem is about!... San Remo? Yes, I remember. We brought the boat back after an hour... Yes, I came back to Rome after Mongibello, but I didn't stay more than a couple of nights. I've been wandering around the north of Italy... I'm afraid I haven't any idea where he is, but I saw him about three weeks ago...

Tom got up from his chair smiling, changed his shirt and tie for the evening, and went out to find a pleasant restaurant for dinner. A good restaurant, he thought. Tom Ripley could order something expensive for once. His pocket was so full of money that it wouldn't bend. He had cashed a thousand dollars' worth of travelers' checks in Dickie's name before he left Palermo.

Tom entered a small, lighted street. It was full of restaurants, and he chose a very large and respectable-looking place with white tablecloths and brown wooden walls, the kind of restaurants which experience had taught him by now concentrated on food and not appearance. He took a table and opened one of the newspapers.

And there it was, a short article on the second page:

POLICE SEARCH FOR MISSING AMERICAN Dickie Greenleaf, Friend of the Murdered Freddie Miles, Missing After Sicilian Holiday

The article stated that H. Richard (Dickie) Greenleaf, a close friend of Frederick Miles, the American murdered three weeks ago in Rome, had disappeared after taking a boat from Palermo to Naples. Both the Sicilian and Roman police had been informed and were looking for him. A final paragraph said that Greenleaf had just been requested by the Rome police to answer

questions concerning the disappearance of Thomas Ripley, also a close friend of Greenleaf. Ripley had been missing for about three months, the paper said.

The next morning there was a long story in another newspaper, saying in only one small paragraph that Thomas Ripley was missing, but stating very boldly that Richard Greenleaf's absence was "making the police suspect his guilt," and that he should go immediately to the police to discuss the situation. The paper also mentioned the forged checks.

On his walk around the city the next morning, he decided that he had to identify himself, immediately. It would look worse for him, whatever happened, the longer he waited. When he left the cathedral, he inquired of a policeman where the nearest police station was. He asked it sadly. He felt sad. He wasn't afraid, but he felt that identifying himself as Thomas Phelps Ripley was going to be one of the saddest things he had ever done in his life.

"You are Thomas Ripley?" the captain of police asked, with no more interest than if Tom had been a dog that had been lost and was now found. "May I see your passport?"

Tom handed it to him. "I don't know what the trouble is, but when I saw in the papers that I am believed to be missing - " It was all sad and boring, just as he had expected. "What happens now?" Tom asked the officer.

"I shall telephone to Rome," the officer answered calmly, and picked up the telephone on his desk.

There was a few minutes' wait for the Rome line, and then the officer announced to someone in Rome that the American, Thomas Ripley, was in Venice. Then the officer said to Tom, "They would like to see you in Rome. Can you go to Rome today?"

Tom frowned. "I wasn't planning to go to Rome."

"I shall tell them," the officer said, and spoke into the telephone again.

Now he was arranging for the Rome police to come to him. There were still some advantages to being an American citizen, Tom supposed.

Tom spent the rest of the day in his room, quietly thinking, reading, and making small changes to his appearance. He thought it quite possible that they would send the same man who had spoken to him in Rome.

At eight-thirty that evening his telephone rang, and the man from the hotel

desk announced that Lieutenant Roverini was downstairs.

"Would you have him come up, please?" Tom said.

Tom opened the door in a lazy way. "Good evening."

"Good evening. Lieutenant Roverini from the Roman Police." Behind him came another tall, silent young police officer - not another, Tom realized suddenly, but the one who had been with the lieutenant when Tom had first met Roverini in the apartment in Rome.

"You are a friend of Mr. Richard Greenleaf?" the lieutenant asked, obviously not recognizing him.

"Yes."

"When did you last see him and where?"

"I saw him for a short time in Rome, just before he went to Sicily."

"And did you hear from him when he was in Sicily?"

The lieutenant was writing it all down in the notebook that he had taken from his brown case.

"No, I didn't hear from him."

"You did not know when you were in Rome that the police wanted to see you?"

"No, I did not know that. I cannot understand why people think I am missing."

"Mr. Greenleaf did not tell you in Rome that the police wanted to speak to you?"

"No."

"Mr. Ripley, where have you been since the end of November?"

"I have been traveling. I have been mostly in the north of Italy." Tom made a mistake here and there, and his Italian sounded quite different from Dickie's.

"Where?"

"Milan, Torino, Faenza."

"We have searched the hotels in Milan and Faenza. Did you stay all the time with friends? "

"No, I - slept quite often in my car." It was obvious he didn't have much money, Tom thought.

"May I see your passport?"

Tom pulled it out of his inside jacket pocket. The lieutenant studied the picture closely, while Tom waited with the slightly anxious look, the firmly open lips, of the passport photograph. The lieutenant looked quickly at the few marks that only partly filled the first two pages of the passport.

"You have been in Italy since October 2?"

"Yes."

The lieutenant smiled, a pleasant Italian smile now, and leaned forward. "Well, that settles one important matter - the mystery of the San Remo boat."

Tom frowned. "What is that?"

"A boat was found sunk there with some stains that were believed to be blood. Naturally, when you were missing, or we thought you were missing, immediately after San Remo - We thought it might be a good idea to ask Mr. Greenleaf what had happened to you. We did that. The boat was missed the same day that you two were in San Remo."

Tom pretended not to see the joke.

"Did you also know Frederick Miles?" the lieutenant asked.

"No, I only met him once when he was getting off the bus in Mongibello. I never saw him again."

"Ah-hah." The lieutenant was silent.

"I have read in a newspaper that the police may believe that Mr. Greenleaf is guilty of the murder of Freddie Miles if he does not speak to them. Is it true that they think he is guilty?"

"Ah, no, no, no!" the lieutenant protested. "But it is important that he comes forward! Why is he hiding himself? You have absolutely no idea where Mr. Greenleaf might be at this moment?"

"No, absolutely no."

"Mr. Greenleaf and Mr. Miles didn't have an argument that you know of? "

"I don't know, but - "

"What about the girl, Marjorie Sherwood?"

"I suppose it is possible," Tom said, "but I do not think so."

Tom waited, silent. The lieutenant was waiting for him to say something more. Tom felt quite comfortable now. He felt suddenly innocent and strong.

"Do you think they had an argument, Mr. Miles and Mr. Greenleaf, about Miss Sherwood?"

"I cannot say. It is possible. I know that Mr. Miles was very fond of her, too."

His story painted a picture of Dickie as an unhappy lover, Tom thought, not willing to let Marge go to Cortina to have some fun, because she liked Freddie Miles too much.

"Do you think Dickie is running away from something, or do you think it is an accident that you cannot find him?"

"Oh, no. This is too much. First, the matter of the checks. He denied the false signatures, but when the bank wishes to see him and also the police in Rome wish to see him about the murder of his friend, and he suddenly disappears -"

The lieutenant threw out his hands. "That can only mean that he is running away from us." The lieutenant stood up. "Well, thank you so much for your help, Mr. Ripley. I hope we can find you more easily the next time we have questions to ask you."

"If you like I shall keep in touch with you in Rome so you will always know where I am. I am as much interested as you in finding my friend."

The lieutenant handed him a card with his name and the address of his station in Rome. "Thank you, Mr. Ripley. Good day." The younger policeman waved to him as he went out, and Tom said goodbye and quietly closed the door.

He felt like flying - like a bird, out of the window, with spread arms! The fools! All around the thing and never guessing it! Never guessing that Dickie was running from the signature questions because he wasn't Dickie Greenleaf at all!

Tonight he was going to have a wonderful dinner. And look out at the moonlight on the water. He was suddenly very hungry. He was going to have something delicious and expensive to eat.

He had a bright idea while he was changing his clothes: he ought to have an envelope hidden in his suitcase, with a note on it saying that it should not be opened for several months. Inside it should be a will signed by Dickie, leaving Tom his money and his income. That was an idea!

CHAPTER NINE

# A Visit from Marge

Venice February 28

Dear Mr. Greenleaf:

I thought I ought to write you with whatever personal information I have about Richard, since I was one of the last people, it seems, who saw him.

I saw him in Rome around February 2 at the Inghilterra Hotel. As you know, this was only two or three days after the death of Freddie Miles. I found Dickie upset and nervous. He said he was going to Palermo as soon as the police finished questioning him about Freddie's death, and he seemed eager to get away. I wanted to tell you that there was a certain unhappiness under all this that troubled me much more than his obvious nervousness. I had the feeling that he would try to do something violent - perhaps to himself.

I believe it is possible that Richard has killed himself. At the time of writing he has not been found. I certainly hope he will be before this reaches you. This is a sad message to send you and I regret it. I thought it my duty to write you this...

Munich March 3

Dear Tom

Thanks for your letter. It was very kind of you. I've answered the police in writing, and one came up to see me. I won't be coming by Venice, but thanks for your invitation. I am going to Rome the day after tomorrow to meet Dickie's father, who is flying over. Yes, I agree with you that it was a good idea for you to write to him.

I did want to say to you that I don't agree with you at all that Dickie would commit suicide. He just isn't the type. I know you're going to say people never act like they're going to do it. But no, not Dickie. Maybe he was murdered in a back street in Naples - or even Rome. I can also imagine him running out on duties. I think that's what he's doing now.

Nice to know your address finally. Thanks again for your letter, your advice, and invitations.

Best, Marge

She had decided to be friends with him, Tom supposed. She'd probably changed her attitude about him to the police, too.

Dickie's disappearance was causing a lot of interest in the Italian newspapers. Marge, or somebody, had provided reporters with photographs. There were pictures of Dickie sailing his boat in Mongibello, pictures of Dickie on a beach, and a picture of Dickie and Marge. One of the articles mentioned that "Mr. Ripley, one of the wealthy young American visitors in Italy, now lives in a palace looking out on San Marco in Venice."

That pleased Tom most of all. He cut out and saved that article.

He was now so confident that he even wrote Aunt Dottie with a calm, loving attitude that he had never wanted to use before, or had never before been able to use. He asked about her health and her little group of nasty friends in Boston. After he had finished the letter, he typed Dickie's will, leaving him his income and the money he had in various banks, and signed it Richard Greenleaf. The signature was perfect, exactly like the thin, confusing signature on Dickie's passport. Tom practiced for half an hour before he signed the will, relaxed his hands, then signed a piece of paper, then the will, in rapid order. Tom put an envelope into the typewriter and addressed it to "To Whom It May Concern," with a note that it shouldn't be opened until June of this year. He placed it in a side pocket of his suitcase to suggest that he had been carrying it there for some time and hadn't bothered unpacking it when he moved into the house.

***

About ten days after Marge's letter, Tom began to worry because Mr. Greenleaf hadn't written or telephoned him from Rome. He sometimes imagined that the police had told Mr. Greenleaf that they were playing a game with Tom Ripley, and had asked Mr. Greenleaf not to talk to him.

Each day he looked eagerly in his mailbox for a letter from Marge or Mr. Greenleaf. His house was ready for their arrival. His answers to their questions were ready in his head. Tom wanted to take a trip, the famous trip to Greece. He had bought a travel book about Greece, and he had already planned his journey through the islands, but he couldn't go until something happened.

Then, on the morning of April 4, he got a telephone call from Marge. She

was in Venice at the railroad station.

***

"I'll come and pick you up!" Tom said cheerfully. "Is Mr. Greenleaf with you?"

"No, he's in Rome. I'm alone. You don't have to pick me up."

"Nonsense!" Tom said, wanting something to do at last. "You'll never find the house by yourself."

"Yes, I will. It's next to della Salute, isn't it? I take a boat from San Marco's."

She was right. "Well, if you really want to come alone." He had just thought that he had better take one more good look around the house before she got there." Have you had lunch?"

"No."

"Good! We'll lunch together somewhere."

They hung up. He walked seriously and slowly through the house, into both large rooms upstairs, down the stairs, and through the living room. Nothing, anywhere, that belonged to Dickie. He hoped the house didn't look too upper class.

Tom made two drinks and arranged the glasses and a plate of snacks on a small table in the living room. When he heard a knock, he went to the door and swung it open.

"Marge! Good to see you! Come in!" He took the suitcase from her hand.

"How are you, Tom? Is all this yours?" She looked around her, and up at the high ceiling.

"I rented it very cheaply," Tom said quickly "Come and have a drink. Tell me what's new. You've been talking to the police in Rome?" He carried her overcoat and her raincoat to a chair.

"Yes, and to Mr. Greenleaf. He's very upset - naturally." She sat down on a sofa.

Tom sat opposite her. "Have they found anything new? One of the officers there has been keeping me informed, but he hasn't told me anything that really matters."

"Well, they found out that Dickie cashed over a thousand dollars' worth of travelers' checks before he left Palermo, just before. Maybe he went somewhere with it, like Greece or Africa. Certainly he didn't go off to kill himself after just cashing a thousand dollars, anyway."

"No," Tom agreed. "Well, that sounds hopeful. I didn't see that in the papers."

"I don't think they put it in."

"How is Mr. Greenleaf?"

Marge shook her head. "I feel so sorry for him. He keeps saying the American police could do a better job and all that, and he doesn't know any Italian, so that makes it twice as bad."

"What's he doing in Rome?"

"Waiting. What can any of us do?"

Tom drank his drink slowly while he thought. "I certainly didn't mean to upset anybody when I said what I did about Dickie's sadness. I felt it was kind of a duty to tell you and Mr. Greenleaf."

"I understand. No, I think you were right to tell us. I just don't think it's true." She smiled, her eyes shining with a belief that struck Tom as completely crazy.

During lunch, Marge asked him more questions than any police officer about Dickie's feelings while he was in Rome. Tom was questioned about everything from Di Massimo, the painter Dickie had worked with, to Dickie's eating habits and the hour he got up in the morning.

"How do you think he felt about me? Tell me honestly. I can take it."

"I think he was worried about you," Tom said seriously. "I think - well, it was one of those situations that happen quite often, a man who's afraid of marriage to begin with-"

"But I never asked him to marry me! " Marge protested.

"I know, but -" Tom forced himself to continue, though the subject was sour in his mouth. "Let's say he couldn't face the responsibility of you caring so much about him. I think he wanted a less complicated relationship with you." That told her everything and nothing.

They were silent a few minutes, then Tom asked her about her life and work. Marge answered very enthusiastically. Tom had the feeling that if she had Dickie back she would probably just explode with happiness, make a loud, attractive pop! And that would be the end of her.

"Do you think I should offer to talk to Mr. Greenleaf, too?" Tom asked. "I'd be glad to go to Rome -" but he wouldn't be so glad, he remembered, because Rome had simply too many people in it who had seen him as Dickie Greenleaf. "Or do you think he'd like to come here?"

"I think it'd be nice if you called him. I'll write the address down for you."

"That's a good idea. He doesn't like me, does he?" Marge smiled a little. "Well, to be honest, no. I think he thinks you used Dickie, to your advantage."

"Well, I didn't. I'm sorry the idea didn't work about my getting Dickie back home, but I explained all of that. I wrote him the nicest letter I could about Dickie when I heard he was missing. Didn't that help? "

"I think it did, but - Oh, I'm terribly sorry, Tom! All over this wonderful tablecloth!" Marge had turned her drink over. She wiped at the tablecloth rapidly.

Tom came running back from the kitchen with a wet cloth. "Perfectly all right," he said, watching the wood of the table turn white in spite of his wiping. It wasn't the tablecloth he cared about, it was the beautiful table.

"I'm so sorry," Marge went on protesting.

Tom hated her. He suddenly remembered her bra hanging over the window in Mongibello. Her underwear would be hanging over his chairs tonight, if he invited her to stay here. The idea disgusted him. He forced himself to smile across the table at her. "I hope you'll honor me by accepting a bed for the night. Not mine," he added, laughing, "but I've got two rooms upstairs and you're welcome to one of them."

"Thanks a lot. All right, I will." She smiled broadly at him.

Tom called Mr. Greenleaf from a public telephone at about seven o'clock. Mr. Greenleaf sounded friendlier than Tom had expected, and sadly hungry for any information about Dickie.

"I've told Marge all I know," Tom said, "so she'll be able to tell you anything I've forgotten. I'm only sorry that I can't provide anything of real importance for the police to work on."

"These police!" Mr. Greenleaf said angrily. "I'm beginning to think Richard is dead. For some reason the Italians don't want to admit he might be."

Tom was shocked at Mr. Greenleaf's honesty about Dickie's possible death.

"Do you really think Dickie's killed himself, Mr. Greenleaf?" Tom asked quietly.

Mr. Greenleaf thought about it for a minute. "I don't know. I think it's possible, yes. I never thought much of my son's mental health, Tom."

"I'm afraid I agree with you," Tom said. "Would you like to talk to Marge? She's here with me."

"No, no, thanks. When's she coming back? "

"I think she said she'd be going back to Rome tomorrow. If you'd like to come to Venice, just for a slight rest, Mr. Greenleaf, you're welcome to stay at my house."

But Mr. Greenleaf refused the invitation.

Tom and Marge walked to a restaurant. Marge was in the mood to talk and that annoyed Tom through their long dinner, but he made an enormous effort not to get angry. The worst was coming later tonight, Tom thought: the boat ride.

Marge wanted a private boat, of course, not the regular service that took people over from San Marco's to the steps of Santa Maria della Salute. It was one-thirty in the morning. He felt exhausted and lay back in the boat's seat as lazily as Marge, careful to keep his leg from touching hers.

CHAPTER TEN

# The Arrival of Mr. Greenleaf

Tom was awakened very early the next morning by a banging on his door. He grabbed his pants and went down. It was a telegram, and he had to run back upstairs to get a tip for the man. He stood in the cold living room and read it: CHANGED MY MIND. WOULD LIKE TO SEE YOU. ARRIVING 11:45 A.M. H. GREENLEAF.

Tom shook with fear. Well, he had expected it, he thought. But he hadn't really. He wasn't looking forward to it.

He ran upstairs and got back into his warm bed to try to catch some more sleep. He kept wondering if Marge would come in or knock on his door because she had heard that loud knock, but he finally decided that she had slept through it. He imagined greeting Mr. Greenleaf at the door, shaking his hand firmly, and he tried to imagine his questions, but his mind was too tired and that made him feel frightened and uncomfortable.

Marge and Tom went to the railroad station to meet Mr. Greenleaf at eleven forty-five. It was raining, and so windy and cold that the rain felt like ice on their faces. Finally there was Mr. Greenleaf, serious and gray. Marge rushed forward to kiss him on the cheek, and he smiled at her.

"Hello, Tom," he said loudly, putting out his hand. "How're you?"

"Very well, sir. And you?" Tom suggested they go straight to his house, but Mr. Greenleaf wanted to go to a hotel first.

"I'll come over as soon as I check in. I thought I'd try the Gritti. Is that anywhere near your place? " Mr. Greenleaf asked.

"Not too close, but you can walk to San Marco's and take a boat over," Tom said. "We'll come with you, if you want, if you just want to check in. I thought we could all have lunch together - unless you'd rather see Marge by yourself first." He was the old Ripley again.

"Came here mainly to talk to you," Mr. Greenleaf said.

"Is there any news?" Marge asked.

Mr. Greenleaf shook his head. He was looking around nervously. He hadn't answered Tom's question about lunch. Tom folded his arms, put a pleasant look

on his face, and didn't try to talk any more. Mr. Greenleaf and Marge were talking very quietly about some people they knew in Rome. Tom observed that Marge and Mr. Greenleaf were very friendly, though Marge had said she had not known him before she met him in Rome.

At lunch, Mr. Greenleaf talked a little more, but his face kept its serious look, and he still looked around as he spoke, clearly hoping that Dickie would come walking in at any moment. The police hadn't found anything that could be called a clue, he said, and he had just arranged for an American private detective to come over and try to solve the mystery.

This made Tom swallow thoughtfully - he, too, believed that American detectives were better than the Italians.

The questions, Tom thought, would come at the house, probably when he and Mr. Greenleaf were alone. He knew Mr. Greenleaf wanted to talk to him alone, and therefore he suggested coffee at the restaurant where they were before Marge could suggest having it at home. But Marge sat around with them in the living room for half an hour after they got back. Finally Tom frowned at her and looked at the stairs and she got the message, put her hand over her mouth, and announced that she was going up to have a short rest.

"Well, Tom," Mr. Greenleaf began heavily, " this is a strange end, isn't it? "

"End?"

"Well, you living in Europe now, and Richard - "

"None of us has suggested yet that he might be back in America," Tom said pleasantly.

"No. That couldn't be. The officials in America have been watching for him." Mr. Greenleaf continued to walk, not looking at him. "Where do you really think he may be? "

"Well, sir, he could be hiding in Italy - very easily, if he doesn't use a hotel where he has to sign in."

"Are there any hotels in Italy where one doesn't have to sign in?"

"No, not officially. But anyone who knows Italian as well as Dickie might manage it."

"And is that your idea of what he may be doing?" Mr. Greenleaf looked at him suddenly, and Tom saw that sad expression he had noticed on the first

evening he had met him.

"No, I - It's possible. That's all I can say about it." He paused. "I'm sorry to say it, Mr. Greenleaf, but I think there's a real possibility that Dickie is dead."

Mr. Greenleaf's look didn't change. "Because of that sadness you mentioned in Rome? What exactly did he say to you?"

"It was his general mood," Tom said. "The Miles thing had obviously upset him. He's the sort of man - He really does hate attention of any kind, violence of any kind." Tom bit his lips. "He did say that if one more thing happened, he would just go crazy - or he didn't know what he would do."

"I'm afraid I don't agree with you that Richard committed suicide," Mr. Greenleaf said.

"Well, neither does Marge. I just said it's a possibility. I don't even think it's the most likely thing that's happened."

"You don't? What do you think is? "

"That he's hiding," Tom said. "You know he could be in several other countries besides Italy, too. Perhaps he went to Greece or France or anywhere else after he got back to Naples, because no one was looking for him until days later."

"I know, I know," Mr. Greenleaf said tiredly.

Later that evening, Tom and Marge called Mr. Greenleaf at his hotel. It was still early for dinner, so they had drinks at a cafe in a street near Mr. Greenleaf's hotel. Tom tried hard to be pleasant and to talk in a friendly manner during dinner. Mr. Greenleaf was in a good mood, because he had just telephoned his wife and found her in very good spirits and feeling much better.

It was a quiet dinner. Tom told a clean, slightly funny joke, and Marge laughed loudly. Mr. Greenleaf refused to let Tom pay for the dinner, and then he said he was going back to his hotel because he didn't feel too good. He was going back to Rome tomorrow, and Marge decided to go with him. They walked back to the hotel and said goodnight.

"I'm very sorry I wasn't able to spend more time with you," Tom said.

"So am I, my boy. Maybe some other time." Mr. Greenleaf touched his shoulder.

Tom walked back home with Marge in a kind of fog of happiness. It had

all gone very well, Tom thought. Marge talked to him as they walked, laughing because she had broken her bra and had to hold it up with one hand, she said.

Tom was thinking of the letter he had received from Bob Delancey this afternoon, the first letter he had received from Bob in many weeks. Tom had lived in a room in Bob's house before leaving New York. In the letter, Bob said that the police had questioned everybody in his house about an income tax crime of a few months ago. The criminal, it seemed, had used Bob's address to receive his checks, and had gotten the checks by the simple means of taking the letters out of the mailbox, where the mailman had put them. The mailman had been questioned, too, Bob had said, and remembered the name George McAlpin on the letters. Bob seemed to think it was rather funny. The mystery was, who took the letters addressed to George McAlpin?

It was a very comforting letter for Tom. That income tax situation had been worrying him because he had known the police would find out about it at some time. He was glad the wait had ended. He couldn't imagine how the police would ever, could ever, connect Tom Ripley with George McAlpin.

He sat down in the living room to read Bob's letter again when he got home. Marge had gone upstairs to pack her things and to go to bed. Tom was tired, too, but the freedom of tomorrow, when Marge and Mr. Greenleaf would be gone, was a pleasant thought. He took his shoes off so he could put his feet up on the sofa, lay back on a pillow, and continued reading Bob's letter.

"The police think it's somebody who came by occasionally to pick up his mail, because none of the people in this house look like criminals... How are the girls in Venice? How long are you staying there anyway?"

Forever, Tom thought. Maybe he'd never go back to the States. It wasn't really Europe itself that made him feel this way, but the evenings he had spent alone, here and in Rome. Evenings by himself simply looking at maps, or lying around on sofas going through travel books. Evenings looking at the clothes - his clothes and Dickie's - and feeling Dickie's rings, and running his fingers over the suitcase he had bought at Gucci's.

He loved objects, not mountains of them, but a certain few that he wanted to keep. They gave a man respect for himself. The things he possessed reminded him that he existed, and made him enjoy his life. It was as simple as that. He existed. Dickie's money gave him the opportunity to see Greece, to collect whatever he wanted, to join art societies if he cared to, and to give money to

their work.

He thought he might rest, then read some of his book, whatever the hour. He felt warm and sleepy, in spite of the coffee he had drunk. The edge of the sofa fitted his shoulders like somebody's arm, or better than somebody's arm. He decided he would spend the night here. It was more comfortable than the sofa upstairs. In a few minutes he might go up and get a blanket.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

# Dickie's Rings

"Tom?"

He opened his eyes. Marge was coming down the stairs. Tom sat up. She had his brown leather box in her hand.

"I just found Dickie's rings in here," she said as if she was having trouble breathing.

"Oh. He gave them to me. To take care of." Tom stood up.

"When?"

"In Rome, I think." He took a step back and picked up one of his shoes, mostly in an effort to seem calm.

"What was he going to do? Why'd he give them to you?"

She'd been looking for a needle to sew her bra, Tom thought. Why hadn't he put the rings somewhere else, like in an inside pocket of that suitcase? "I don't really know," Tom said. "A moment of stupidity or something. You know how he is. He said if anything ever happened to him, he wanted me to have his rings."

Marge looked confused. "Where was he going? "

"To Palermo." He was holding the shoe in both hands, in a position to use it as a weapon. A plan went quickly through his head: hit her with the shoe, then drag her out by the front door, and drop her into the water. He'd say shed fallen, slipped on the rocks. And she was such a good swimmer, he'd thought she could save herself.

Marge stared down at the box. "Then he was going to kill himself."

"Yes - if you want to look at it that way, the rings - They make it look more likely that he did."

"Why didn't you say anything about it before?"

"I think I absolutely forgot them. I put them away so they wouldn't get lost and I never thought of looking at them since the day he gave them to me."

"He either killed himself or changed his identity - didn't he?"

"Yes." Tom said it sadly and firmly.

"You'd better tell Mr. Greenleaf."

"Yes, I will. Mr. Greenleaf and the police."

"I think we're getting closer to the truth," Marge said.

Tom was twisting the shoe in his hands like a pair of gloves now, but still keeping it in position, because Marge was staring at him in a funny way. She was still thinking. Was she playing games with him? Did she know now?

Marge said seriously, "I just can't imagine Dickie ever being without his rings," and Tom knew then that she hadn't guessed the answer.

He relaxed and sank down on the sofa and pretended to busy himself with putting on his shoes.

"No," he agreed, automatically.

"If it weren't so late, I'd call Mr. Greenleaf now. He's probably in bed, and he wouldn't sleep all night if I told him, I know."

"I'm sorry I didn't mention it sooner," he said. "It was just one of those - "

"Yes, it makes it kind of silly at this point for Mr. Greenleaf to bring a private detective over, doesn't it?" Her voice shook.

Tom looked at her. She was going to cry. This was the first moment, Tom realized, that she was admitting to herself that Dickie could be dead, that he probably was dead. Tom went toward her slowly. "I'm sorry, Marge. I'm really sorry that I didn't tell you sooner about the rings."

He put his arm around her. He almost had to, because she was leaning against him.

***

Marge called Mr. Greenleaf at eight-thirty the next morning to ask how soon they could come over to his hotel. But Mr. Greenleaf probably noticed that she was upset. Tom heard her starting to tell him the story of the rings. She used the same words that Tom had used to her about the rings - obviously Marge had believed him - but Tom couldn't tell what Mr. Greenleaf's reaction was.

"What did he say?" Tom asked when Marge had hung up.

Marge sat down tiredly on a chair across the room.

"He seems to feel the way I do. He said it himself. It seems that Dickie meant to kill himself."

Tom sat up on the edge of the sofa and loosened his tie. He had slept in his clothes on the sofa, and Marge had awakened him when she had come down a few minutes ago. He felt awful. He stood up suddenly. "I'm going upstairs to wash," he called to Marge.

Tom undressed in the room next to Marge's, then went into the bathroom and turned on the shower. After a look at himself in the mirror he decided to shave first, and he went back to the room to get his electric razor which he had removed from the bathroom for no particular reason when Marge had arrived. On the way back he heard the telephone ring. Marge answered it. Tom leaned over the stairs, listening.

"Oh, that's fine," she said. "Oh, that doesn't matter if we don't... Yes, I'll tell him... All right, we'll hurry. Tom's just washing up... Oh, less than an hour. Bye-bye."

He heard her walking toward the stairs, and he stepped back because he wasn't dressed.

"Tom?" she called up. "The detective from America just got here! He just called Mr. Greenleaf and he's coming from the airport!"

"Fine!" Tom called back. He turned the shower off, and picked up his razor. He would be glad when she was gone, and he hoped she left this morning. Unless she and Mr. Greenleaf decided to see what the detective was going to do with him. Tom knew that the detective had come to Venice especially to see him. If he hadn't, he would have waited to see Mr. Greenleaf in Rome. Tom wondered if Marge realized that too. Probably she didn't.

Tom and Marge took the boat to San Marco and then walked to Mr. Greenleaf's hotel. They telephoned up to Mr. Greenleaf's room. Mr. Greenleaf said that Mr. McCarron was there, and asked them to come up.

Mr. Greenleaf opened his door for them. "Good morning," he said. He pressed Marge's arm like a father.

"Tom -"

Tom came in behind Marge. The detective was standing by the window, a short, fat man of about thirty-five. His face looked friendly but serious.

"This is Alvin McCarron," Mr. Greenleaf said. "Miss Sherwood and Mr. Ripley."

"I understand you're a friend of Richard's?" he asked.

"We both are," Tom said.

"Do you have the rings?" McCarron asked, looking from Tom to Marge.

"Yes," Marge said seriously, getting up. She took the rings from her purse and gave them to McCarron.

McCarron turned to Tom. "When did he give them to you?"

"In Rome. As close as I can remember, around February 3, just a few days after the murder of Freddie Miles," Tom answered.

"What did he say when he gave them to you? "

"He said that if anything happened to him, he wanted me to have them. I asked him what he thought was going to happen to him. He said he didn't know, but something might." Tom paused on purpose. "He didn't seem more upset at that particular moment than a lot of other times. I'd talked to him, so it didn't enter my mind that he was going to kill himself. I knew he planned to go away, that was all."

"Where?" asked the detective.

"To Palermo," Tom said. He looked at Marge. "I'm quite certain he gave them to me the day you spoke to me in Rome - at the Inghilterra. That day or the day before. Do you remember the date?"

"February 2," Marge said in a quiet voice.

"What else?" McCarron asked Tom. "What time of day was it? Had he been drinking?"

"No. He drinks very little. I think it was early afternoon. He said it would be better if I didn't mention the rings to anybody, and of course I agreed. I put the rings away and completely forgot about them, as I told Miss Sherwood - I suppose because I'd told myself so strongly that he didn't want me to say anything about them."

"What did you do with the rings?"

"I put them in an old box that I have - just a little box I keep odd buttons in."

McCarron looked at him for a moment in silence. Out of that calm but bright Irish face could come anything, a difficult question, a direct statement that

he was lying. In his mind, Tom concentrated on his own facts, determined to defend them to his death. In the silence, Tom could hear Marge's breathing, and a cough from Mr. Greenleaf almost made him jump. Mr. Greenleaf looked very calm, almost bored. Tom wondered if he had fixed up some plan with McCarron against him, based on the rings story?

"Did he have any enemies that you know of?" McCarron asked.

"Absolutely none," Tom said. "I've thought of that."

"Any reason you can think of why he might want to hide, or take another identity?"

Tom said carefully, "Possibly - but it's almost impossible in Europe. He'd need a different passport. Any country he wanted to enter, he would have to have a passport. He'd need one even to get into a hotel."

"Well, how do you see it, Mr. Ripley?"

McCarron wasn't nearly finished, Tom thought. McCarron was going to see him alone later. "I'm afraid I agree with Miss Sherwood that it appears that he's killed himself. I've said that before to Mr. Greenleaf."

"When was the last time you saw him, Miss Sherwood?"

"On November 23, when he left for San Remo," Marge said quickly.

"You were then in Mongibello?" McCarron asked.

"Yes," Marge said. "I just missed seeing him in Rome in February, but the last time I saw him was in Mongibello."

"He was trying to avoid everyone in Rome," Tom added. "That's why, when he first gave me the rings, I thought he had some idea of getting away from everyone he had known, living in another city, and just being alone for a time."

"Why, do you think? "

Tom explained, mentioning the murder of his friend Freddie Miles and its effect on Dickie.

"Do you think Richard knew who killed Freddie Miles?"

"No, I certainly don't."

"Think a minute," McCarron said to Tom. "Do you think that might explain his behavior? Do you think he's avoiding answering the police by hiding

out now? "

Tom thought for a minute. "He didn't give me a single reason to think that."

"Do you think Dickie was afraid of something? "

"I can't imagine of what," Tom said.

McCarron was staring at Tom, but whether he was considering his honesty or thinking over all they had said to him, Tom couldn't tell. McCarron looked like a typical salesman, Tom thought. He didn't think too much of him, but, on the other hand, it wasn't wise to ignore your enemy. McCarron's small, soft mouth opened as Tom watched him, and he said, "Would you mind coming downstairs with me, Mr. Ripley, if you've still got a few minutes."

"Certainly," Tom said, standing up.

"We won't be long," McCarron said to Mr. Greenleaf and Marge.

They walked toward the elevator. Was this the way they did it? Tom wondered. A quiet word alone. He would be handed over to the Italian police, and then Mr. McCarron would return to the room just as he had promised. Tom turned to McCarron as the elevator stopped, and said seriously, showing his teeth in a smile, " Is this your first trip to Venice? "

"Yes," said McCarron. He passed by the hotel desk. "Shall we go right in here?" He pointed at the coffee bar. He spoke very politely.

"All right," Tom agreed. Would McCarron accuse him in a place like this, quietly laying down fact after fact on the table? He took the chair that McCarron pulled out for him. McCarron sat with his back to the wall.

McCarron looked at him. His small mouth smiled on one side. Tom imagined three or four different beginnings: "You killed Richard, didn't you? The rings are just too much, aren't they?" Or "Tell me about the San Remo boat, Mr. Ripley, in detail." Or simply leading up quietly, "Where were you on February 15, when Richard landed in... Naples? All right, but where were you living then? Where were you living in January, for example?... Can you prove it? "

McCarron was saying nothing at all, only looking down at his fat hands now, and smiling weakly.

Tom heard himself speaking, in an amazingly calm voice. "Did you have

time to speak to Lieutenant Roverini when you came through Rome?" As he asked it, he realized that he wanted information: to find out if McCarron had heard about the San Remo boat.

"No, I didn't," McCarron said. "How would you describe Richard's character?"

"He wanted to be a painter," Tom began, "but he knew he'd never be a very good painter. He tried to pretend he didn't care, and that he was perfectly happy and leading exactly the kind of life he wanted to lead over here in Europe." Tom wet his lips. "But I think he was beginning to get depressed. His father didn't like his lifestyle, as you probably know. And Dickie had gotten himself into a difficult situation with Marge."

"How do you mean? "

"Marge was in love with him, and he wasn't with her, and at the same time he was seeing her so much in Mongibello, she kept on hoping -"

Tom began to feel on safer ground, but he pretended to have difficulty in expressing himself. "He never actually discussed it with me. He always spoke very highly of Marge. He was very fond of her, but it was obvious to everybody - Marge, too - that he would never marry her. But Marge never quite gave up. I think that's the main reason Dickie left Mongibello."

"What do you mean never gave up? What did she do?"

"She kept writing to him, wanting to see him. He wanted to be by himself. Particularly after the Miles murder, he wasn't in the mood to see Marge, and he was afraid that she'd come up to Rome from Mongibello when she heard of all the trouble he was in."

"Why do you think he was nervous after the Miles murder? Do you think Richard killed Freddie? "

"No, I don't. I never thought of it. I don't know what kind of people are likely to kill somebody. I've seen him angry - "

"When?"

Tom described the two days in Rome when Dickie, he said, had been angry and frustrated because of the police questioning, and had actually moved out of his apartment to avoid phone calls from friends and strangers. Tom also talked again about the growing frustration in Dickie, because he had not been

progressing as he had wanted to in his painting. He described Dickie as a proud young man who was determined to ignore his father's wishes. "If he killed himself," Tom said, "I think it was because he realized certain failures in himself. It's much easier for me to imagine him as a suicide than a murderer."

"But I'm not so sure that he didn't kill Freddie Miles. Are you?"

McCarron was perfectly sincere. Tom was sure of that. McCarron was even expecting him to defend Dickie now, because they had been friends. Tom felt some of the terror leaving him, but only some of it, like something melting very slowly inside him. "I'm not sure," Tom said, "but I just don't believe that he did."

"I'm not sure either. But it would explain a lot, wouldn't it?"

"Yes," Tom said. "Everything."

***

McCarron called the next day from Rome, wanting the names of everyone Dickie had known in Mongibello. Most of the names Marge had already given him, but Tom went through them all.

"Well, I guess that's about all. Thanks very much, Mr. Ripley."

"You're very welcome. Good luck."

Then Tom waited quietly in his house for several days, just as anybody would do if the search for a missing friend had reached its most serious point.

On the evening of the sixth day after Mr. Greenleaf and McCarron had left, Tom called Mr. Greenleaf in Rome. He had nothing new to report, but Tom hadn't expected anything. Marge had gone back to the United States.

Mr. Greenleaf said he would be leaving at the end of the week, travelling first to Paris, where the French police were also carrying on the search. McCarron was going with him, and if nothing happened in Paris they were both going home. "It's obvious to me or to anybody," Mr. Greenleaf said, "that he's either dead or hiding from us. There's not a corner of the world where the search for him hasn't been written about in the newspapers."

CHAPTER TWELVE

# Tom Ripley's Heroic Journey

Venice June 3

Dear Mr. Greenleaf:

While packing a suitcase today, I found an envelope that Richard gave me in Rome, and which for some reason I had forgotten until now. On the envelope is written, "Not to be opened until June" and, as it happens, it is June. The envelope contains Richard's will, and he leaves his income and everything else to me. I am shocked by this, as you probably are, but he seemed to know what he was writing.

I am only very sorry I did not remember having the envelope. If I had, it would have proven much earlier that Dickie planned to kill himself. I put it into a suitcase pocket, and then I forgot it. He gave it to me on the last occasion I saw him, in Rome, when he was so depressed.

On second thoughts, I am sending a copy of the will so that you may see it for yourself. This is the first will I have ever seen in my life, and I don't know what happens. What should I do?

Please give my kindest hello to Mrs. Greenleaf and realize that I feel deeply for you both, and regret the need to write this letter. Please let me hear from you as soon as possible. My next address will be: c/o American Express, Athens, Greece.

Most sincerely yours, Tom Ripley

In a way it was asking for trouble, Tom thought. It might make people think again about the signatures, on the will and on the checks. But that was the mood he was in. He had bought his ticket for Greece in the middle of May, and the days had grown finer and finer, making him more and more anxious. He had only two thousand dollars in his own name, moved from Dickie's bank and saved out of Dickie's income.

The risk of trying to get all of Dickie's money, the danger of it, was exciting to him. He was so bored after the quiet weeks in Venice when each day that went by seemed to remind him of the dullness of his life. Roverini had

stopped writing to him. Alvin McCarron had gone back to America, and Tom supposed that he and Mr. Greenleaf had decided that further search was useless.

Tom had decided in Venice to make his journey to Greece a heroic one. He would see the islands, swimming for the first time into his view, as a living, breathing, brave individual - not as a frightened little nobody from Boston. If he sailed right into the arms of the police in Greece, at least he would first experience standing in the wind at the front of a ship, crossing the dark sea like an ancient hero.

So he had written the letter to Mr. Greenleaf and mailed it three days before sailing from Venice. Mr. Greenleaf would probably not get the letter for four or five days, so there would be no time for Mr. Greenleaf to hold him in Venice with a message and make him miss his ship. Besides, it looked better if he was calm about the matter, unable to receive messages for another week or two until he got to Greece. It was better to pretend he didn't care whether he got the money or not; he hadn't let the fact of the will delay even a little a trip he had planned to make.

Two days before he sailed, he went to tea at the house of a woman he had met the day he had started looking for a house in Venice. The woman, Titi, greeted him: "Ah, hello, Thomas! Have you seen the afternoon paper? They have found Dickie's suitcases and his paintings! Right here in the American Express in Venice!" Her gold earrings shook with excitement.

"What?" Tom hadn't seen the papers. He had been too busy packing that afternoon.

"Read it! Here! All his clothes, left there only in February! They were sent from Naples. Perhaps he is here in Venice!"

Tom was reading it. The string around the paintings had fallen off, the paper said, and while wrapping them again a worker had discovered the signature of R. Greenleaf on the paintings. Tom's hands began to shake, and he had to hold the sides of the paper to calm himself. The paper said that the police were now examining everything carefully for fingerprints.

"Perhaps he is alive!" Titi shouted.

"I don't think - I don't see why this proves he is alive. Perhaps somebody killed him or he killed himself after he sent the suitcases. The fact that the paintings are under another name - Fanshaw - "

He had the feeling that his friend, who was sitting on the sofa staring at him, was surprised by his nervousness, so he calmed himself down quickly and said, "You see? They're looking through everything for clues. They wouldn't be doing that if they were sure Dickie had sent the suitcases himself. Why should he leave them in the name of Fanshaw, if he expected to pick them up again himself? His passport's even here, it says. He packed his passport."

"Perhaps he is hiding himself under the name of Fanshaw! Oh, my dear, you need some tea! "

"It says here that the suitcases contained everything - razor, toothbrush, shoes, overcoat," Tom said, hiding his terror in sadness. "He couldn't be alive and leave all that. The murderer probably took everything from his body and left his clothes there because it was the easiest way of getting rid of them."

"Will you not be so sad until you know what the fingerprints are? You are supposed to go on a pleasure trip tomorrow."

The day after tomorrow, Tom thought. Plenty of time for Roverini to get his fingerprints and compare them with the prints on the paintings and in the suitcases.

He tried to turn his thoughts to Greece. He saw handsome buildings and blue skies. He didn't want to go to Greece with the worry about the fingerprints in Venice hanging over him. Tom put his face in his hands and cried. Greece was finished, exploded like a golden ball.

The worst of all was that Roverini, whose messages had been so friendly until now, sent him no information at all about the discovery of the suitcases. Tom didn't sleep that night and then spent a day walking around his house while he tried to finish the endless little duties before leaving for Greece. He expected the police to come knocking at his door at any time of the day or night.

***

By the time he got onto the ship for Greece, Tom felt like a walking ghost. He was sleepless, foodless, full of coffee, carried along only by his nerves. He remembered last night lying face down on his bed with one arm twisted beneath him, and being too tired to change his position. When he awoke, he felt better except that the arm he had been lying on hung uselessly at his side.

An angry courage rose in him. What would happen if the radioman was receiving at this minute a message to arrest Tom Ripley? He would stand up just

as bravely as he was standing now. Or he might throw himself into the sea. He wasn't afraid. This was it. This was the way he had hoped he would feel, sailing to Greece. To look out at the black water all around him and not be afraid was almost as good as seeing the islands of Greece coming into view.

He considered that he had been lucky beyond reason in escaping arrest for two murders, lucky from the time he had taken Dickie's identity until now. The first part of his life had been completely unfair, he thought, but the period with Dickie and afterwards was like a wonderful dream. But something was going to happen now in Greece, he felt, and it couldn't be good. His luck had held for too long.

The only thing he regretted was that he had not seen all the world yet. He wanted to see Australia. And India. He wanted to see Japan. Then there was South America. Just to look at the art of those countries would be a pleasant, rewarding life's work, he thought. He had learned a lot about painting, even while trying to copy Dickie's bad paintings. At the art museums in Rome, he had discovered an interest in paintings that he had never realized before, or perhaps that had not been in him before.

When the boat approached Greece, Tom was standing looking at the land. It wasn't a dream ahead of him, it was a solid hill that he could walk on, with buildings that he could touch - if he got that far.

The police were waiting on the dock. He saw four of them, standing with folded arms, looking up at the ship. Tom turned and walked slowly toward the policemen. He wouldn't cause trouble, he thought, he'd just tell them himself who he was. There was a big newsstand behind the policemen, and he thought of buying a paper. Perhaps they would let him. The policemen stared back at him from over their folded arms as he approached them. They wore black uniforms with caps. Tom smiled at them weakly. One of them touched his cap and stepped to one side. The others didn't move closer. Now Tom was almost between two of them, right in front of the newsstand, and the policemen were staring forward again, paying no attention to him at all.

Tom bought several newspapers and walked back to the dock to wait for his luggage. Under the R's he stopped and opened the oldest Italian paper, which was four days old.

NO ONE NAMED ROBERT S. FANSHAW FOUND IN MYSTERY OF GREENLEAF LUGGAGE.

Only the fifth paragraph interested him:

The police discovered a few days ago that the fingerprints on the suitcases and paintings are the same as the fingerprints found in Greenleaf's apartment in Rome. Therefore, it is believed that Greenleaf left the suitcases and paintings himself...

Tom quickly opened another page:

There is the possibility that he committed suicide. Another possibility is that he exists at present under the false name of Robert S. Fanshaw or another name. A third possibility is that he was murdered after leaving his bags in Venice.

Anyway, it is useless to search for "Richard Greenleaf" any longer, because, even if he is alive, he does not have his "Richard Greenleaf" passport...

Tom couldn't believe his good luck. It meant he wasn't suspected at all. It meant that the fingerprints really had guaranteed his innocence. It meant that he was not going to jail, and not going to die, but also that he wasn't suspected at all. He was free. Except for Dickie's will.

Tom boarded the bus for Athens. The will could ruin it all. He looked out the window but he didn't notice anything. Maybe the Greek police were waiting for him at the American Express office. Maybe the four men he had seen hadn't been police but some kind of soldiers. He got off the bus and jumped in a taxi to go to the American Express.

He sat up when he saw the American Express sign, and looked around the building for policemen. Maybe the police were inside. Tom looked in. Nothing unusual.

There was a letter waiting for him from Mr. Greenleaf. He opened it.

June 9

Dear Tom,

Received your letter yesterday.

It was not so much of a surprise to my wife and me as you may think. We both realized that Richard was very fond of you, in spite of the fact that he never actually told us this in any of his letters. As you said, the will does suggest that Richard has taken his own life.

My wife agrees with me that we should follow Richard's wishes. So you have, as far as the will is concerned, my personal support. I have given the copy you sent to my lawyers, who will keep you informed about their progress in putting Richard's money and other properties in your name.

Once more, thank you for your assistance when I was overseas. Let us hear from you.

With best wishes,

Herbert Greenleaf

Was it a joke? But the paper in his hand felt real. Besides, Mr. Greenleaf wouldn't joke like this, not in a million years. Tom walked to the waiting taxi. It was no joke. It was his! Dickie's money and his freedom. He could have a house in Europe, and a house in America too, if he chose.

He grew suddenly worried, and his dreams disappeared. Was he going to see policemen waiting for him on every dock that he ever approached? In Alexandria? In Istanbul? Bombay? Rio? No use thinking about that. No use ruining his trip thinking about imaginary policemen.

"Where to? Where to?" the taxi driver was asking.

"To a hotel, please," Tom said with a laugh. "The best hotel. The best, the best!"

- THE END -

Hope you have enjoyed the reading!

Come back to http://english-e-books.net/ to find more fascinating and exciting stories!