

Penguin



Readers



TALENTED

MR. RIPLEY



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CHAPTER ONE

Tom makes a promise

Tom looked behind him and saw the man coming out of the Green Cage bar, heading his way. Tom walked faster, but the man was definitely following him. He had first noticed him five minutes ago, watching him from a table as if he was not quite sure. But he had looked sure enough for Tom to pay for his drink and quickly leave.

Tom ran across Fifth Avenue. Should he go into Raoul's Bar and have another drink? Or should he try to escape the man down Park Avenue? He decided on Raoul's. He went in and ordered himself a **gin and tonic**. Then, he stood at the bar and watched the door.

A few minutes later, the man entered. Was he a policeman or a detective? He did not look like either. He looked like a businessman, somebody's father, well fed and gray-haired. My God, what did he want? "They couldn't give me more than ten years in prison, could they?" Tom thought.

The man came toward him, and Tom suddenly had a moment of terrible **regret**.

"Excuse me, are you Tom Ripley?" the man said.

"Yes."

"My name is Herbert Greenleaf. Richard Greenleaf's father." His face was friendly, smiling, and hopeful. "You're a friend of Richard's, aren't you?"

Tom started to remember. Dickie Greenleaf. A tall blond

man who Tom had known for a while. He had a lot of money.

“Oh, Dickie Greenleaf. Yes,” he said.

“And you know Charles and Marta Schriever, don’t you? They’re the ones that told me about you, that you might—um, do you think we could sit down at a table?”

“Yes,” said Tom, happily, and picked up his gin and tonic. He followed the man to an empty table. “I’m safe!” he thought. No one was going to arrest him. This was about something else. Maybe Richard needed help. Or maybe his father just needed advice. Tom knew what to say to a man like Mr. Greenleaf.

“I’ve seen you once before, I think,” said the man, sitting down. “Didn’t you come up to the house once with Richard?”

“I think I did.”

“The Schrievers gave me a description of you.” He turned to order a beer from the waiter. “We’ve all been trying to find you, then someone told them that you sometimes go to the Green Cage bar. The Schrievers seem to think you knew Richard quite well.”

“I remember him, yes, but I don’t think I’ve seen him for a couple of years.”

“He’s been in Europe for two years,” said Mr. Greenleaf. “The Schrievers speak very highly of you and thought you might have some **influence** on Richard. I want him to come home. We need him here, but he won’t listen to me or his mother. You see, I know so few of Richard’s friends now.”

Tom remembered going to a **cocktail** party at the Schrievers' with Dickie Greenleaf. So that's how it had happened. He had only met the Schrievers three or four times in his life—the last time was to help with Charley Schriever's tax bill and make it lower for him. Had Charley told Mr. Greenleaf that he was intelligent, honest, and happy to help people? That was a mistake.

"Why won't Richard come home?" asked Tom.

"He says he prefers living over there. But his mother's quite ill right now—she has **cancer** and may not live another year. He says he's painting, but he's not talented enough to be a painter. He could create beautiful boats though. You're the first of Richard's friends who has been happy to listen. They all think that I'm trying to control his life."

Tom could easily understand that. "I wish I could help," he said, politely. He remembered now that Dickie's money came from a shipbuilding company. Small sailing boats. His father must want him to come home and run the family business.



Tom was on the edge of his chair, about to stand up. But he could feel Mr. Greenleaf's disappointment. "Where's Dickie staying in Europe?" Tom asked, not caring where he was staying.

"In a village called Mongibello, south of Naples. Spends all his time sailing and painting. He's bought a house there. Richard has an **income** from a **trust fund**—nothing huge, but enough to live in Italy, he says. Are you working now?"

"I'm in the accounting department of a small company at the moment," Tom said.

Mr. Greenleaf watched him hungrily.

"How old is Dickie now?" Tom asked.

"He's twenty-five."

"So am I," thought Tom. Dickie was probably having a wonderful time in Italy. A trust fund, a house, a boat. Why should he want to come home? Dickie was lucky. What was he, Tom, doing at 25? Living from week to week. No bank account. Running away from the police now for the first time in his life. He was suddenly bored of the conversation with Mr. Greenleaf and wanted to be back at the bar by himself.

"I remember fishing with Dickie at a weekend party on Long Island," he said. "He was talking about going to Europe then. I'm sorry I'm not free or I'd be very happy to go over there and try to **influence** him into coming home."

"If you or somebody like you could get at least a couple

of months off from their job,” said Mr. Greenleaf, “I’d be happy to pay for the **voyage** by sea and the living costs, in order to send them over to talk to him.”

Tom’s heart suddenly jumped in his chest, then he made himself look thoughtful. “I might be able to,” he replied, carefully.

“Do you really think you might be able to arrange it? During this fall? I think Richard would listen to you.”

It was already the middle of September. Tom stared at the thick gold ring on Mr. Greenleaf’s little finger and smiled. “I think I might,” he said. “I’d be glad to see Richard again—especially if you think I could help.”

Mr. Greenleaf offered to take him home in a taxi, but Tom had not wanted him to see where he lived—in a dirty little apartment between Third and Second Avenue. He was staying with a man called Bob Delancey who he hardly knew, but who had offered him a room when he needed one. He had not invited any of his friends to Bob’s place and had not told anyone where he was living. He was too **ashamed**. He knew he would not be living there for long, and now Mr. Greenleaf had **turned up**. Something *always* turned up, that’s what Tom believed.

But there was one good thing about staying at Bob’s place. He could get his George McAlpin post sent there without anyone finding out what he was really doing. He walked into his small bedroom and looked at the letters

that had arrived addressed to a “George McAlpin” that morning. There was a **check** for \$119, to be paid to the Collector of **Internal Revenue** from that lovely Mrs. Edith W. Superaugh. And paid without any complaining at all! This increased his total in checks to \$1,863. He wished he could actually **cash** them. It was just a game really. He played it using some forms that he had stolen from the Department of Internal Revenue when he had worked for them for a short time. He was not stealing anything. But perhaps he should call just one more person before he sailed for Europe. He would tell them the same thing, that they owed extra tax to the Revenue, and see if they believed him. He was just waiting for one of the idiots to pay him in **cash**.

The next night, he went to dinner with the Greenleafs at their huge apartment on Park Avenue. Mr. Greenleaf welcomed him in a friendly voice that promised many drinks and a good dinner, and then he introduced Tom to his wife. “Emily, this is Tom Ripley!”

“I’m so happy to meet you!” she said, warmly. She was what he had expected—blond, tall, and slim—and very polite and nice. “I don’t think we’ve met before. Are you from New York?”

“No, I’m from Boston,” Tom said. That much was true.

Mr. Greenleaf led them into the dining room. They ate three **courses** that were brought to them by a **maid**, on a beautifully lit table. The dinner was wonderful and the conversation boring. They talked about Tom’s job in

“accounting,” and his schooling. “Did you go to school in Boston?” asked Mr. Greenleaf.

“No, sir. I went to Princeton for a while.” He hoped Mr. Greenleaf would ask him about Princeton, but he did not. Tom had been very friendly with a Princeton student and had gotten lots of information about the place from him. Tom told the Greenleafs some of the truth though—that he had been brought up by his Aunt Dottie in Boston. She had taken him to Denver when he was 16, and he had only finished high school there—he had not gone to Princeton or any other university. After he told them about his aunt, he felt uncomfortable, like he was in a movie, and suddenly someone would shout, “Cut!”

When they had finished the final course, Mrs. Greenleaf brought in some photos of Dickie in Europe. There was one of him in a café in what looked like Paris and another of him on a beach.

“This is Richard in Mongibello—on his boat,” Mrs. Greenleaf said, pointing to a picture of Dickie in a boat next to a girl with curly blond hair who looked healthy, but not very **sophisticated**.

“And that’s Marge Sherwood,” Mrs. Greenleaf continued, “the only other American who lives there.” Then, she looked down at the carpet.

“Mrs. Greenleaf,” Tom said, gently. “I’m going to do everything I can to make Dickie come back.”